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MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE NATIONAL

COMMISSION FOR THE PRINCIPALSHIP PERFORMANCE DOMAINS IN

RELATION TO THEIR PRESENT JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

by

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**GRADUATE COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA**

Middle School Principals' Perceptions of the

National Commission for the Principalship Performance Domains

in Relation to Their Present Job Responsibilities

Christopher B. Deibler, Ed.D.

University of Nebraska, 2000

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The purpose for conducting this mixed methods study was to determine middle school principals' perceptions of the importance of the twenty-one performance domains of the principalship in relation to their present job responsibilities. Specifically, the researcher attempted to determine: (a) principals' perceptions of the level of importance for what principals must know (knowledge base) and be able to do (skill base) in each of the twenty-one performance domains, (b) which five of the domains principals perceive to be the most vital in their roles, and (c) if principals refer to the performance domains while describing their work.

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected in two distinct phases from nine middle school principals in Nebraska. Initially, principals were asked to respond to a forty-two item survey by rating the importance of having the knowledge and skill bases in each of the domains. Also, principals were asked to list the five domains they perceived to be the most vital for today's school leaders.

The second phase of data collection was conducted through the use of personal interviews. Interviewees were asked to describe their work as middle school principals through the use of broad, open-ended questions about the role of the principal. Responses were coded as principals made references to the twenty-one performance domains.

Findings for the study were reported in two formats. A narrative

description of each case was presented to describe the setting and the work of each principal. Survey data were reported in table format. All of the performance domains were perceived by principals to be very important. When asked to list them, principals identified Instruction and the Learning Environment, Leadership, Judgment, Motivating Others, Organizational Management, and Problem Analysis to be the most vital performance areas. When asked to describe their work as school leaders, principals most often referred to Instruction and the Learning Environment, Sensitivity, Leadership, Student Guidance and Development, and Public and Media Relationships.

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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Today's society requires more from the school systems than ever before. The variety of unique student needs has never been greater (Daresh & Playko, 1997). As a result the demands placed on all educators are increased, especially those placed on the building principal. The building principal has been identified as the most important administrator (Hughes, 1999). In order to be effective school administrators, building principals must have a wide base of knowledge of the educational program in addition to the necessary administrative skills (National Commission for the Principalship, 1990).

Background of the Study

In 1989, the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the National Association of Elementary School Principals agreed to sponsor jointly the National Commission for the Principalship (NCP) to redesign preparation programs and begin planning a national certification process. The basis for this initiative comes from an opinion that preparation programs have failed to be progressive, and that most licensing requirements are unrelated to current job demands. Expectations for school principals have changed dramatically as have the needs of the clientele in today's schools. It is vital to know if principals are prepared to administer schools of previous decades or the schools of the new times.

The National Commission for the Principalship developed a framework for preparing principals based upon the realities of the workplace. This framework focused upon programs and operations within today's changing school environment. An induction model was used to gather information about

the administration of today's school rather than relying on traditional deductive approaches alone. This knowledge base reflected the outcomes of a task analysis as well as a conceptual model of the principalship. The primary sources for data gathering were principals, their immediate supervisors, and their immediate subordinates (NCP, 1990, p. 17).

The central question addressed was this: What must principals do in today's changing school and what knowledge and skills are required to do it well? Guided by this theme, the National Commission for the Principalship began developing "performance domains" for the principalship. These domains define the scope of responsibility faced by principals and the knowledge and skills required to accomplish the tasks of the job.

Briefly, the developmental process utilized to develop the performance domains included:

- Conducting a task analysis of the principalship.

- Convening focus groups of (a) principals, (b) assistant principals, and (c) assistant superintendents to identify the knowledge and skills necessary to perform these tasks.

- Utilizing a conceptual model and "Taxonomy of Standards" for the principalship developed with the Principals' Center at Texas A&M to identify the knowledge and skills theoretically applicable to the role.

- Integrating the outcomes of the two approaches, one inductive and task driven and the other deductive and theoretically driven to develop an initial list of performance domains. A team of industrial psychologists at the University of Houston, led by professor Milt Hakel, assisted with this process.

- Distributing the initial list of domains to a national Jury of 50
which included prominent educators and a nominated group of
principals, superintendents, and professors for their review and
comment.

- Consolidating the recommendations of the Jury of 50 to develop
a revised list of performance domains.

- Receiving comment on the revised list from the Jury and making
minor adjustments for the final definition of performance domains
(NCP, 1990, pp. 18-19).

The twenty-one domains, organized into four areas, blend the traditional
content-driven curricula with leadership and process skills to create a new
framework for preparing principals. This framework recognizes the functional
leadership skills and interpersonal competencies required of principals to
succeed in today's school environment as well as the priority of the educational
program and the changing nature of the context within which schools live (NCP,
1990, p. 19).

<div align="center">Functional Domains</div>

These domains address the organizational processes and techniques by which
the mission of the school is achieved. They provide for the educational program
to be realized and allow the institution to function.

1. Leadership: Formulating goals with individuals or groups; initiating and
maintaining direction with groups and guiding them to the accomplishment of
tasks; setting priorities for one's school in the context of community and district
priorities and student and staff needs; integrating own and others' ideas for task
accomplishment; initiating and planning organizational change.

2. Information Collection: Gathering data, facts, and impressions from a variety

of sources about students, parents, staff members, administrators, and community members; seeking knowledge about policies, rules, laws, precedents, or practices; managing the data flow; classifying and organizing information for use in decision making and monitoring.

3. Problem Analysis: Identifying the important elements of a problem situation by analyzing relevant information; framing problems; identifying possible causes; identifying additional needed information; framing and reframing possible solutions; exhibiting conceptual flexibility; assisting others to form reasoned opinions about problems and issues.

4. Judgment: Reaching logical conclusions and making high quality, timely decisions given the best available information.

5. Organizational Oversight: Planning and scheduling one's own and others' work so that resources are used appropriately, and short- and long-term priorities and goals are met; monitoring projects to meet deadlines.

6. Implementation: Making things happen; putting programs and plans into action; applying management technologies; applying methods of organizational change including collaborative processes; facilitating tasks; establishing progress checkpoints; considering alternative approaches; providing "mid-course" corrections when actual outcomes start to diverge from intended outcomes; adapting to new conditions.

7. Delegation: Assigning projects or tasks together with clear authority to accomplish them and responsibility for their timely and acceptable completion.

Programmatic Domains

These domains focus on the scope and framework of the educational program. They reflect the core technology of schools, instruction, and the related supporting services, developmental activities, and resource base.

8. Instructional Program: Envisioning and enabling instructional and auxiliary programs for the improvement of teaching and learning; recognizing the developmental needs of students; insuring appropriate instructional methods; designing positive learning experiences; accommodating differences in cognition and achievement; mobilizing the participation of appropriate people or groups to develop these programs and to establish a positive learning environment.

9. Curriculum Design: Interpreting school district curricula; planning and implementing with staff a framework for instruction; initiating needs analyses and monitoring social and technological developments as they affect curriculum; responding to international content levels; adjusting content as needs and conditions change.

10. Student Guidance and Development: Providing for student guidance, counseling, and auxiliary services; utilizing community organizations; responding to family needs; enlisting the participation of appropriate people and groups to design and conduct these programs and to connect schooling with plans for adult life; planning for a comprehensive program of student activities.

11. Staff Development: Identifying with participants the professional needs of individuals and groups; planning and organizing programs to improve staff effectiveness; supervising individuals and groups; engaging staff and others to plan and participate in recruitment and development; initiating self-development.

12. Measurement and Evaluation: Determining what diagnostic information is needed about students, staff, and the school environment; examining the extent to which outcomes meet or exceed previously defined standards, goals, or

priorities for individuals or groups; drawing inferences for program revisions; interpreting measurements or evaluations for others; relating programs to desired outcomes; developing equivalent measures of competence.

13. Resource Allocation: Planning and developing the budget with appropriate staff; seeking, allocating, and adjusting fiscal, human, and material resources; utilizing the physical plant; monitoring resource use and reporting results.

Interpersonal Domains

These domains recognize the significance of interpersonal connections in schools. They acknowledge the critical value of human relationships to the satisfaction of personal and professional goals, and to the achievement of organizational purpose.

14. Motivating Others: Building commitment to a course of action; creating and channeling the energy of self and others; planning and encouraging participation; supporting innovation; recognizing and rewarding effective performance; providing coaching, guidance, or correction for performance that needs improvement; serving as a role model.

15. Sensitivity: Perceiving the needs and concerns of others; dealing with others tactfully; working with others in emotionally stressful situations or in conflict; managing conflict; obtaining feedback; recognizing multi-cultural sensibilities.

16. Oral Presentation: Making oral presentations that are clear and easy to understand; clarifying and restating questions; responding, reviewing, and summarizing for groups; utilizing appropriate communicative aids; adapting for audiences.

17. Written Expression: Expressing ideas clearly in writing; writing appropriately for different audiences such as students, teachers, and parents;

preparing brief memoranda.

Contextual Domains

These domains reflect the world of ideas and forces within which the school operates. They explore the intellectual, ethical, cultural, economic, political, and governmental influences upon which schools including traditional and emerging perspectives.

18. Philosophical and Cultural Values: Acting with a reasoned understanding of the role of education in a democratic society and in accord with accepted ethical standards; recognizing philosophical and historical influences in education; reflecting an understanding of American culture, including current social and economic issues related to education; recognizing global influences on students and society.

19. Legal and Regulatory Applications: Acting in accordance with relevant laws, rules, and policies; recognizing governmental influences on education; working within local rules, procedures, and directives; administering contracts.

20. Policy and Political Influences: Identifying relationships between public policy and education; recognizing policy issues; examining and affecting policies individually and through professional and public groups; relating policy initiatives to the welfare of students; addressing ethical issues.

21. Public and Media Relationships: Developing common perceptions about school issues; interacting with parental and community leaders; understanding and responding skillfully to the electronic and printed news media; initiating and reporting news through appropriate channels; enlisting public participation; recognizing and providing for market segments (NCP, 1990, p. 21-25).

Statement of the Problem

The National Commission for the Principalship developed the twenty-one performance domains for the principalship to establish a descriptive list of knowledge and skill areas determined to be necessary for principals to be effective in today's schools. In this study nine middle school principals in the Omaha Public Schools were asked to complete a survey relating to the twenty-one performance areas. Respondents indicated the degree in which a principal must possess both the knowledge base and the skill to be effective in each of the performance areas. Principals were also asked to list in rank order the five performance domains they perceived to be the most vital for them in their jobs as school leaders. In addition to the completion of the survey principals were interviewed. The purpose of the interviews was to determine if the principals referred to the twenty-one performance domains of the principalship when discussing their present job responsibilities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe middle school principals' perceptions of the twenty-one performance domains of the principalship and how they relate to their present job responsibilities. Quantitative data were gathered through the use of a forty-two item Likert Scale survey and qualitative data were taken from personal interviews with each principal. The survey provided a means to quantify the principals' responses regarding the domains they perceived to be most important. The personal interviews helped determine if the respondents referred to the performance domains when asked about what they do in their present jobs as middle school principals.

Research Questions

Three research questions guided this study. What levels of knowledge

and skill in the twenty-one performance domains do middle school principals perceive to be necessary to be successful in their jobs? Which five of the twenty-one performance domains do middle school principals perceive to be the most important in order to be successful in their jobs? Do middle school principals refer to the performance domains when describing their work as principals?

Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical perspective used in this study was role theory. A question administrators often ask is: What is or should be the principal's role? According to Sybouts and Wendel (1994) the principal who possesses an understanding of role relations has taken a significant step toward effective performance in the principalship. In recent years emphasis has been placed on the leadership aspect of the principal's role.

There are critical functions and tasks in school administration (Daresh & Playko, 1997). The NCP domains of the principalship defined and categorized these functions for the purpose of establishing accepted criteria for principal skills and knowledge at a national level.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions will be used in this study.

Middle School Principals. The head administrators in school buildings with all possible grade configurations of grades four through eight.

National Association of Elementary School Principals. A national organization made up of administrators representing elementary schools.

National Association of Secondary School Principals. A national organization made up of administrators representing middle schools, junior high schools, and high schools.

National Commission for the Principalship. A group of individuals formed in 1986 by National Association of Secondary School Principals to define the issues, objectives, and processes leading to the development of the twenty-one performance domains of the principalship.

National Policy Board for Education Administration. An organization jointly sponsored by: The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, The Association of School Business Officials, The Council of Chief State School Officers, Thea National Association of Secondary School Principals, The National School Boards Association, The American Association of School Administrators, The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, The National Association of Elementary School Principals, The National Council of Professors of Educational Administration, and the University Council for Educational Administration to develop a comprehensive knowledge and skills resource base for elementary, middle, and high school principals.

Omaha Public Schools. The public school district of Omaha, Nebraska having an enrollment of 44,200 students.

Performance Domains. The twenty-one areas making up the skill and knowledge base determined by the National Commission for the Principalship to be necessary for school principals to be effective administrators.

Principal Preparation Survey. A forty-two item instrument developed by Dr. Barbara Phillips to determine the level of preparedness experienced by new administrators.

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to nine middle school principals in the Omaha Public Schools. These principals graduated from different administrative preparation programs and have had a variety of administrative experiences.

Because the study was limited to nine middle school principals in the Omaha Public Schools, generalizations derived from this study may not be applicable to principals in other school districts in other communities.

Significance of the Study

The National Commission for the Principalship was sponsored jointly by the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NCP, 1990). The commission went through an extensive process to develop the twenty-one performance domains for the principalship. The objective of the commission was to develop acceptable base criteria for the principalship at the national level constructed from theoretical and pragmatic checkpoints.

In this study nine middle school principals in the Omaha Public Schools were asked to assess the level of importance of the twenty-one performance domains of the principalship in relation to present job responsibilities. A personal interview was conducted to discuss the knowledge and skills each principal attributes to being a successful school administrator. Demographic information was collected to be used for grouping data gathered in both processes. The principals' assessments of the importance of the domains and the information gathered in the personal interview were analyzed to see if middle school principals report that the performance domains are an important part of their work as principals.

Principals working in metropolitan areas such as Omaha, Nebraska serve a wide range of clientele in schools with a variety of unique needs. Information gathered in this study will assist universities and school districts in the preparation and development of middle school administrators so that they can be successful leaders in today's changing schools.

Chapter II

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

An abundance of literature regarding preparation and performance of

school principals is available. Principal performance categories can be found

in the literature on effective schools (e.g. Blase, 1987; Johnson & Holdaway,

1990; Persell & Cookson, 1982; Shoemaker & Fraser, 1981; Short & Greer,

1997; Sweeney, 1982), school administrator education or certification (e.g.,

Kowalski et al., 1992; Murphy & Hallinger, 1987; Snyder & Drummond, 1988;

Sybouts & Wendel, 1994), school administration (e.g. Beckner, 1990; Farris,

1989; Grace, Buser & Stuck, 1987; Hughes, 1999; Lyons, 1993; Sergiovanni,

1991; Thomson, 1989; Vonder Haar, 1987; Walker, 1990; Willis & Bartell, 1990),

and evaluation of administrators (e.g., Furtenwengler, 1994; Hales, 1994; Hill,

1994; Johnson, 1989; Johnston, 1992; Valentine et al., 1993; Williams & Pantili,

1992).

Contained in the previously mentioned literature are many attempts at

categorizing principal skills and behaviors related to overall school

administrator performance. Of the literature studied in preparing this project, it

seemed that Principals for our changing schools: Knowledge and skill base

(NPBEA ,1993) was the best vehicle to summarize and categorize the

performance indicators necessary for school principals to be effective.

Worthen, Borg, and White state in their text Measurement and evaluation in the

schools (1993) that,

"The basic issue in content validation is representativeness. In

other words, how adequately does the content of the [instrument]

represent the entire body of content to which [its] user intends to

generalize? . . . Ideally, a[n instrument] should sample all

important aspects of the content" (p. 181, emphasis in original).

Substantively, the adequacy of an instrument "is a matter of judgment"

(Worthen, Borg, & White, 1993, p. 188). Procedurally, steps can be taken to

increase the validity, reliability and credibility of instrument content. In essence,

these steps demonstrate a systematic invitation to colleagues or experts to

comment on the important aspects of a topic, and consideration and synthesis

of their comments (Baldridge, 1996).

To arrive at the twenty-one performance domains of the principalship the

NCP considered both time-logged observations and comments from people

with varying relationships to school administrator evaluation. The

developmental steps were:

- Conducting a task analysis of the principalship which identified

158 usual tasks performed by a national sample of principals.

- Convening focus groups of (a) principals, (b) assistant principals,

and (c) assistant superintendents to identify the knowledge and

skills necessary to perform these tasks. After the groups identified

85 areas of knowledge, skills and abilities required to accomplish

the task, they classified 20 as "essential."

- Utilizing a conceptual model and "Taxonomy of Standards" for

the principalship developed with the Principals' Center at Texas

A&M to identify the knowledge and skills theoretically applicable to

the role.

- Integrating the outcomes of the two approaches, one inductive

and task driven and the other deductive and theoretically driven to

develop an initial list of performance domains. A team of industrial

psychologists at the University of Houston, led by professor Milt

Hakel, assisted with this process.

- Distributing the initial list of domains to a national Jury of 50

which included prominent educators and a nominated group of

principals, superintendents, and professors for their review and

comment.

- Consolidating the recommendations of the Jury of 50 to develop

a revised list of performance domains.

- Distributing the revised domains to the Jury, Receiving comment

on the revised list from the Jury and making minor adjustments for

the final definition of performance domains (NPBEA, 1993, p.xvi;

National Commission for the Principalship (NCP), 1990, pp. 18-

19).

The result is "a typology or convenient classification system [to] better examine,

understand, and prepare for the principalship" (NPBEA, 1993 p. xiii).

It is reasonable to conclude that through the measures described above

the important aspects of excelling in school administration were adequately

considered and, therefore, that the categories sufficiently describe the topic.

The NPBEA itself "encourages state certification bodies to consider the domains

as a comprehensive framework for a two-level performance-based approach to

certification" (NPBEA, 1993, p. xv).

Once the parameters of a topic are specified, Worthen, Borg and White

suggest that it be divided into "more specific topics, subject-matter areas, or

clusters of objectives" (1993, p. 182). The NCP does this by dividing the content

into four broad groups: functional domains, programmatic domains,

interpersonal domains, and contextual domains (NPBEA, 1993). As an added

level of self-analysis, the eleven domains found in the functional and interpersonal groups are described as more "process or skill oriented" and the ten found in the programmatic and contextual groups are considered "more content focused; most however, synthesize knowledge and skill: (NPBEA, 1993, p.xiii).

In the following sections each of the twenty-one performance domains of the principalship is briefly described. Comments from the literature indicating the importance of the literature are included. Although the literature does not exactly mirror the NCP domain definitions, the discussion of each domain highlights related groups of comments in the literature.

The Functional Domains

Leadership

The NCP defines Leadership as:

Formulating goals with individuals or groups; initiating and maintaining direction with groups and guiding them to the accomplishment of tasks; setting priorities for one's school in the context of community and district priorities and student and staff needs; integrating own and others' ideas for task accomplishment; initiating and planning organizational change

(NCP, 1990, p. 21-22).

The importance of leadership to administrator success is widely supported in the literature and is fittingly the first domain described in the NCP list. Leadership and initiative have continued to be considered in assessment centers for the selection of administrators in business as well as education since the 1970's (Strausbaugh & Wagman, 1977). When NASSP created the handbook for its assessment center it defined leadership as: "Ability to get

others involved in solving problems; ability to recognize when a group requires direction , to interact effectively with a group to guide them to accomplish a task" (NASSP, 1975, p.31).

More recent studies continue to stress the importance of leadership. In 1992, Williams and Pantili used the NASSP definition to conduct a synthesis of twenty-six studies that ranked principal skill dimensions. They found that 21.4% of the time that one of the NASSP skills were discussed, the topic was leadership. Again, effective schools research refers to strong leadership as one of the five primary correlates of effective schools. Leadership, along with organizational focus on basic skills, an orderly climate with the focus on learning, high expectations for student achievement, and frequent monitoring of student progress complete the list (Janey, 1988).

In their roles as leaders, successful school administrators "engage in 'visioning' (Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Sashkin, 1988), 'purposing' (Sergiovanni, 1990), and agenda setting' (Kotter, 1988)" (NPBEA, 1993, p.1-3). Having a vision of what the school can become and how it will get there is common to strong school leaders (Armstrong, 1990; Ornstein, 1993). Effective school administrators have a strong mission and communicate their commitment to it (Cox, 1994; Johnston, 1992). Effective school leaders "facilitate the development of shared visions and thus create desired changes in culture and values" (NPBEA, 1993, p. 1-3).

Outstanding principals "demand excellence of themselves and their staff members -- and usually get it. Additionally, they work to make the school a better place to learn and work" (Grace, Buser & Stuck, 1987, p. 73). "Leaders must have courage and be willing to take risks. Yet their assertiveness must be tempered with sincerity, creativity, perseverance, and wisdom to solve the

complex problems that often accompany the job. In addition, successful

principals must be prepared to make great personal sacrifices for their staffs

and schools" (Kotter, 1995).

Information Collection

      NCP defines information collection as:

      Gathering data, facts, and impressions from a variety of sources

      about students, parents, staff members, administrators, and

      community members; seeking knowledge about policies, rules,

      laws, precedents, or practices; managing the data flow; classifying

      and organizing information for use in decision making and

      monitoring (NCP, 1990 p.22).

      Processing enough key data is important to any decision made in the

operation of the school. Information sources are abundant if the principal

understands where and how to collect data essential in long and short-term

decisions. Data gathering is crucial when formulating solutions to school

problems, when determining program effectiveness, and when undergoing goal

setting in school (Ubben & Hughes, 1997).

      Schmuck and Runkel (1988) have suggested that data gathering should

occur in problem solving, communication, conflict management, and decision

making. Data sources that are important in understanding organizational

communication include observations of how teachers and staff interact both

formally and informally. It is important to note the active listening skills of

participants, group process skills within the school, and the amount of conflict

that occurs as a result of poor communication and lack of information. When

conflict occurs, data relative to participant perceptions concerning

communication effectiveness are critical in understanding what went wrong

(Yukl, 1990).

Information collection is an integral preliminary step toward effectiveness in the domains of Problem analysis, Judgment, and Organizational Oversight. Evaluation experts emphasize the consideration of research or actively seeking information from appropriate sources (Langlois & McAdams, 1992). Despite the importance of information collection, it frequently goes unmentioned in descriptions of excellent administrators and job evaluations. This is probably because performance in other areas may be taken to demonstrate sufficient ability in this domain as well. Lackluster performance in those domains would render proficiency at information collection fruitless (Baldridge, 1996).

Problem Analysis

NCP defines problem analysis as:

Identifying the important elements of a problem situation by analyzing relevant information; framing problems; identifying possible causes; identifying additional needed information; framing and reframing possible solutions; exhibiting conceptual flexibility; assisting others to form reasoned opinions about problems and issues (NCP, 1990, p.22).

Problems arise in schools out of frustration resulting from discrepancies between desired situations and the current state of affairs. These frustrations may eventually involve all aspects of organizational life. In facing and solving problems, principals must analyze all aspects of the organization to provide leadership which will deal with problems and frustrations (Rossow, 1990). Drake and Roe (1994) suggest that in the early stages of problem framing the principal must determine what is known and unknown about the issues and clarify significant factors surrounding the situation. Secondly, data sources

should be identified and their objectivity determined. It is recommended that the principal analyze the seriousness of problems, including the need for quick decisions in problem resolution (Drake & Roe, 1994).

Educational leaders are expected to "be adaptable to a changing world, demonstrate intellectual skills and possess knowledge" (Vonder Haar, 1987). Vonder Haar also writes that they must also "be able to resolve conflict, solve problems, and make decisions and judgments based on competent information. Heitmuller and associates' study found that "problem solving and decision making: using a variety of strategies to clarify and analyze problems and make decisions" was the dimension whose level of importance was eighth most frequently ranked "strongly agree" in a national survey of educational leaders (1993, p. 28).

When principals ask the right questions, when they effectively define and analyze the problem at hand, they increase their chances of resolving it successfully (Scribner, 1986, p.21). Scribner continues with "Skilled practical thinking involves problem formation as well as problem solution. Expertise is practical problem solving frequently hinges on apt formulation or redefinition of the initial problem." Skill in problem analysis can be developed through individual and group processes (Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995).

Judgment

NCP defines judgment as:

Reaching logical conclusions and making high quality, timely

decisions given the best available information (NCP, 1990, p.22).

"Judgment is at the very heart of the decision-making process" according to Principals for our changing schools: Knowledge and skill base. The roots of

the Judgment Domain are visible in the NCP definition of it. Logic and timeliness are both included. In a social context Grace, Buser and Stuck (1987) found that staff members "perceive [outstanding principals] as fair, objective persons who don't play favorites with staff, students, or community members. They ensure that everyone understands the school's rules and then enforce the rules firmly and consistently for all" (p. 73). Blase (1987) found that principals who are considered effective are considered reasonable and fair, but they need to take into account the "needs and problems of individual teachers, students, parents, programs, and departments" (p. 604). Before a decision is made a good principal acquires adequate information, makes a fair decision, and then has the courage to stand behind it (Farris, 1989).

The timeliness aspect of Judgment is clearly linked to NASSP skill dimensions. For the purpose of its assessment centers, observers are trained to identify "Ability to recognize when a decision is required and to act quickly (disregarding the quality of the decision)" (McCleary & Ogawa, 1989. pp. 107-08). This ability was also found to be important for successful administrators by Schmitt and Cohen (1990).

Organizational Oversight

NCP defines Organizational Oversight as:

Planning and scheduling one's own and others' work so that

resources are used appropriately, and short- and long-term

priorities and goals are met; monitoring projects to meet deadlines

(NCP, 1990, p. 22).

In order to carry out the responsibilities of the principalship, it is important that principals have skills in planning and organizing. Both short- and long-range planning provide a framework for accomplishing the goals of the

organization. Planning facilitates utilization of resources to meet the goals of the school. In addition, planning requires monitoring the work of the organization toward goals and objectives. Demonstrating administrative competence - from organizing to managing, from monitoring to empowering - is one of the most commonly lauded qualities of excellent organizational leaders (Baldridge, 1996). In Schmitt and Cohen's research (1990), it is ranked in the top twelve dimensions of outstanding principals. Johnson (1989) places it among the top five most important attributes; in Queen's (1989) and Valentine and associates' studies (1993) it is number one. Williams and Pantili found it the third most discusses aspect in their 1992 literature review.

Good management literally begins with good planning. "Poor Managers focus on yesterday's problems, good managers focus on today's problems, and truly outstanding managers focus on tomorrow's problems. Focusing on tomorrow's problems requires planning" (NPBEA p. 5-3).

Implementation

NCP defines Implementation as:

Making things happen; putting programs and plans into action; applying management technologies; applying methods of organizational change including collaborative processes; facilitating tasks; establishing progress checkpoints; considering alternative approaches; providing "mid-course" corrections when actual outcomes start to diverge from intended outcomes; adapting to new conditions (NCP, 1990, p. 22).

Implementation involves putting into action those plans developed to bring about change in the school. Principals engage in change efforts on a

daily basis. Efforts to bring about change through innovation is perhaps one of the greatest challenges to principals. Principal skills at implementing innovation are critical (Schmuck & Runkel, 1988). Principals may meet resistance to change on two levels: organizational and individual. At the organizational level, the bureaucratic structures of schools, by their very nature, may impede the implementation of change strategies. This is due to the hierarchical, standardized roles within the organization as well as values of control and top-down communication (Hanson, 1991). At the individual level, variables affecting implementation of change can include vested interest in a particular program or project that could be the focus of the change effort (Hanson, 1991).

McCleary and Ogawa (1989) point out that persistence is a quality that is seldom mentioned, but is highly necessary for implementation. Queen (1989) found competence in getting things done the second most essential quality for principals, and Farris (1989) states that to be successful principals must cultivate a "drive to accomplish assignments even when discouraged (p.41). Perseverance on the part of the leader in an organization can sometimes make the difference between success and failure (Sarason, 1996).

Making mid-course corrections when projects are stalled or misdirected are crucial for a school leader. "Effective principals study their schools, learn from their mistakes, and adjust their practices based on what they learned" (Cox, 1994). Queen's nationwide questionnaire regarding essential qualities for principals revealed that flexibility ranked seventh (Queen, 1989).

Delegation

NCP defines Delegation as:

Assigning projects or tasks together with clear authority to

accomplish them and responsibility for their timely and acceptable completion (NCP, 1990, p. 22).

Delegation provides opportunities for principals to build greater school involvement by permitting decision making by those closest to the problems. In other respects delegation allows for the division of labor and responsibility among school participants. Delegation can be difficult for those leaders who believe that to get it done right, they have to do it themselves. Further, in delegating decisions, principals do give up some influence over decisions (Yukl, 1990).

One key element of becoming a successful delegator is flexibility. The person delegating must be willing to allow others to individualize the way they do assigned tasks (NPBEA, 1993). They must allow room for delegatees to breathe, experiment and learn (Blase, 1987; Farris, 1989). Farris's advice to principals is to "hire only competent, talented, energetic, and bright staff members. Once responsibility has been delegated; however, principals should not interfere unless their assistance is requested" (Farris, 1989, p. 41).

<u>Programmatic Domains</u>

<u>Instructional Program</u>

NCP defines Instructional Program as:

Envisioning and enabling instructional and auxiliary programs for the improvement of teaching and learning; recognizing the developmental needs of students; insuring appropriate instructional methods; designing positive learning experiences; accommodating differences in cognition and achievement; mobilizing the participation of appropriate people or groups to develop these programs and to establish a positive learning

environment (NCP, 1990, p.23).

"Instructional Program: supporting and coordinating efforts to improve the instructional program" was ranked third by a national sample of 1629 outstanding school leaders (Heitmuller et al., 1995, p. 28). "Instructional leadership begins with an attitude, an expressed commitment to student productivity, from which emanate values, behaviors, and functions designed to foster student satisfaction and achievement" (NPBEA, 1993, p. 8-6 (citing Pellicer et al., 1990, p. 57)). Because of this attitude, effective principals "organize their day so that their time and attention are focused on instructional rather than the routine matters" (NPBEA, 1993, p. 8-5 (citing, Smith & Andrews, 1989)). Principals and teachers agree that knowledge of school programs fosters confidence in a principal's ability to lead (Grace, Buser & Stuck, 1987). The Instructional Program domain requires both knowledge and skill.

"The principal establishes, implements, and monitors, with staff, structures that ensure an orderly environment for teaching and learning and the physical and emotional safety of students" (Leithwood & Duke, 1993, p. 305). In the area of developing a positive learning climate Shoemaker and Fraser (1981) state:

> "Climate" includes many things, ranging from what an observer can see on entering a building or a classroom to what an observer can feel during time spent in a school. Schools that can be characterized as orderly, purposeful, and peaceful are schools in which achievement is higher. In an orderly school there are rules, regulations, and guidelines, and teachers are expected to know and observe them. No one - student or teacher - is out to test the limits of these rules.

They are clear and just and accepted by most (Shoemaker & Fraser, 1981, p. 180).

Effective schools research has long shown student achievement to correlate with an orderly environment (Janey, 1988; Ornstein, 1993). Emphasis on discipline is crucial in this effort (Johnson & Holdaway, 1990) as is attention to the physical plant (Garrett & Flanigan, 1991). School leaders will energize others others to achieve if they themselves exhibit a drive to excel (Farris, 1989), and a clear vision of the goals for their school. Those who have these qualities serve as "hard-working and fair-minded role models who expect of their teachers only what they are willing to give themselves" (Farris, 1989).

In conjunction with the effective schools research, authors have emphasized the importance of choosing instructional methods and materials which "maximize achievement" (Johnson & Holdaway, 1990, p. 177). Usually the focus is on academic subjects such as mathematics, reading and writing (Johnson & Holdaway, 1990), and the principal is expected to lead the staff in communicating their high expectations for learning to the students (Leithwood & Duke, 1993).

In 1982, Persell and Cookson examined 75 research studies and reports to discover why some principals are more successful than others. One attribute of more successful principals is that they take up the role of instructional leader with more vigor than other principals (Banks, 1997). They "become directly involved in instructional policy by sitting down and meeting with their teachers." They convey expectations for high academic achievement, and share "teaching strategies and behaviors that could be used to achieve those expectations" (Persell & Cookson, 1982, p. 22). Thus, through personal interactions and organizational structuring, effective principals influence the improvement and

coordination of instruction (Baldridge, 1996).

Curriculum Design

NCP defines Curriculum Design as:

Interpreting school district curricula; planning and implementing

with staff a framework for instruction; initiating needs analyses and

monitoring social and technological developments as they affect

curriculum; responding to international content levels; adjusting

content as needs and conditions change (NCP, 1990, p.23).

"An understanding of curriculum, broadly conceived, is the heart and soul

of school administration" (NPBEA, 1993, 9-5). Even so, curriculum work is only

rated as a moderately important area of administrator work. Heitmuller and

associates (1993) examined "knowledge, attitudes and skills that contribute to

instructional improvement or professional growth" (p.28) of school

administrators through a literature review by Pajak (1989) and a national survey

of 1,629 outstanding educational leaders. This extensive research placed

"Curriculum: coordinating and integrating the process of curriculum

development and implementation" 7th among the most highly rated dimensions

(Heitmuller, et al., 1993, p.28). Curriculum also received a mid-range response

from principals, assistant principals and leadership team leaders in another

1993 study by Valentine and associates (Valentine et al., 1993).

Despite their moderate support for curriculum as a competency area for

administrators principals and assistant principals in Valentine and associates'

study felt they should spend far more time in program development than they

actually did. Principals wanted to change the time allocation from fifth to first,

while assistant principals wanted to change from ninth to second (Valentine et

al., 1993).

Blase's study of teachers' perceptions of their principals' effectiveness found that they correlate effectiveness to "Knowledge/expertise: Formal knowledge of curriculum and an awareness of the school, maintaining 'real involvement' in all aspects of the school" (1987, p.598) - thus showing that even teachers expect school administrators to know and influence curriculum.

One way school administrators are expected to use their knowledge of the curriculum is in interpreting how to meet simultaneous curricular initiatives, such as emanate from district and state offices. School administrators do this as they participate in curriculum selection and review (Willis & Bartell, 1990). They also do it through oversight in developing, monitoring and reviewing the taught curricula for academic and nonacademic school work (Baldridge, 1996). Administrators must not only consider curricula's conformity to district and state initiates, they must also consider how they fit with previous, parallel and future course work (Glatthorn, 1997). Bringing curriculum leaders together to resolve these issues is an important and difficult administrative task (Leithwood & Duke, 1993).

Student Guidance and Development

NCP defines Student Guidance and Development as:

Providing for student guidance, counseling, and auxiliary services; utilizing community organizations; responding to family needs; enlisting the participation of appropriate people and groups to design and conduct these programs and to connect schooling with plans for adult life; planning for a comprehensive program of student activities.

The principal's role in promoting these functions of the school is key, "for the principal is the one who must communicate to colleagues that student

guidance and activities are central to the educational program and must be fully integrated with instruction if students are to fulfill their potential" (NPBEA, 1993, p.10-3). Student guidance can be aimed at individuals or groups, but its basic purpose is to intervene at crucial junctures to help students grow and develop (Gibson & Mitchel, 1990). Student activities also promote personal growth and personality development, even as they provide learning opportunities supplemental to classroom work" (NPBEA, 1993, p. 10-3).

One of the areas in which leaders of effective schools set high expectations is student behavior (Willis & Bartell, 1990; Thomas & Vornberg, 1991). It may just be that leaders can either spend time promoting high expectations for student behavior or spend it counseling with students about discipline (Baldridge, 1996). Valentine and associates' 1993 study found principals allocating the third largest amount of their time to student behavior and wishing it were eighth. Interestingly, teachers perceive that administering discipline is more important to administrator success than do administrators themselves (Kowalski et al., 1992). Teachers placed it tenth while principals placed it sixteenth. This may be because it is a function of administration that teachers see frequently and appreciate.

Student guidance includes a variety of activities, including health services, advisee programs, and assistance in planning for further school or employment, as well as discipline (Beck & Murphy, 1996). Valentine and associates found that principals, assistant principals, and leadership teams place a higher priority on cocurricular activities than on interscholastic athletics. Maybe this is because cocurricular activities provide more students with "meaningful responsibility and participation" than interscholastic sport (Ornstein, 1993, p.29).

Staff Development

NCP defines Staff Development as:

Identifying with participants the professional needs of individuals

and groups; planning and organizing programs to improve staff

effectiveness; supervising individuals and groups; engaging staff

and others to plan and participate in recruitment and development;

initiating self-development.

If it is true that the quality of a school is a reflection of the quality of its personnel (NPBEA, 1993), then school administrators clearly must devote time and attention to hiring, evaluating and enhancing the abilities of their staffs (Garrett & Flanigan, 1991; Valentine et al., 1993). Principals questioned by Valentine and associates (1993) ranked personnel as their second highest priority. Willis and Bartell's (1990) study revealed that "Providing a supportive climate for teachers" ranked second in importance to the success in instructional leadership of the U.S. principals who were questioned.

In addition to hiring new staff, the principal must supervise them. Through the school organization, school administrators should ensure that staff members receive counsel, guidance and help in their efforts to improve (Baldridge, 1996). This may be done through assistants, senior teachers, clinical supervisors, or other means. Leithwood and Duke (1993) point out just such more subtle aspects of supervision in their evaluation criteria which state:

The principal models assumptions about the teacher of the future

in his or her staff development initiatives and relationships with

teachers, students, and parents; The principal assists staff in

appreciating the potential of a collaborative professional culture;

The principal assists staff in finding opportunities for collaboration;

The principal reinforces, among staff, values that support:

continuing inquiry, dialogue, and improvement of instruction;

constructive diversity of opinion and perspective; and the viewing

of problems as opportunities for continued learning (pp. 305-07).

Heitmuller and associates (1993) found that programs that "facilitate

meaningful opportunities for professional growth" ranked second in importance

to their sample of 1,629 administrators questioned. "Impressive gains in student

achievement and promotion rates have been linked to well designed, ongoing

staff development programs that have clearly established implementation plans

and adequate resources" (Smith & Piele, 1997). When professional

development efforts are effective, expertise becomes more widely shared and

collegiality and collaboration increase (Leithwood & Duke, 1993). Personal

reflection and self improvement efforts "can result in stronger and better

preparation for future encounters" (Farris, 1989, p.41).

Although ranked lower in importance than some categories of

administrative activities, self development ranked as the ninth most time

consuming area of principals' jobs in 1993 (Valentine, et al.). Principals also

indicated that they should it should receive more time.

Measurement and Evaluation

NCP defines Measurement and Evaluation as:

Determining what diagnostic information is needed about

students, staff, and the school environment; examining the extent

to which outcomes meet or exceed previously defined standards,

goals, or priorities for individuals or groups; drawing inferences for

program revisions; interpreting measurements or evaluations for

others; relating programs to desired outcomes; developing

equivalent measures of competence (NCP, 1990, p.23-24).

With new demands on education and educational programs, assessment

systems are constantly being challenged. The driving force behind these

challenges is an attempt to build a new assessment system based on the vague

goals and standards established for schools. Two of the goals for the year 2000

address student achievement directly; challenging subject matter and

replacement of students in first place in mathematics and science achievement

(Richardson, Short & Prickett, 1993).

The National Governors' Association stressed that "Principals should be

held accountable for school performance, especially if they are given the

flexibility and resources to meet the goals set for the school" (NPBEA, 1993, p.

12-4 (citing NGA, 1986)). Leithwood and Duke (1993) point out that the

principal is to "provide support to staff in the design and use of multiple forms of

assessment and develop approaches for assessing individual pupils and the

school as a whole" (p. 305).

Like Johnston (1992), the NPBEA demonstrates a preference for defining

school improvements as outcomes that meet or exceed previously established

standards of performance (NPBEA, 1993). The outcomes usually considered

relate to student, program, or personnel performance. The flaw in some

people's reasoning is in taking standards of performance in these areas to

mean only standardized scores on tests of outcomes in the areas (Wiggins,

1993). The abundant research on effective schools shows that the very effort to

target, then measure, student performance tends to raise it (Janey, 1988). Many

systems evaluate educators on their student performance activities in the hope

that the effort itself may cause improvements (Langlois & McAdams, 1992;
Leithwood & Duke, 1993).

Program evaluation is promoted much in the same way as student
performance evaluation, by focusing on it. Teachers, administrators and
parents have all been found to favor program evaluation (Joyce & Showers,
1995; Kowalski et al., 1992; Langlois & McAdams, 1992; Heitmuller et al., 1993;
Leithwood & Duke, 1993). Some evaluation systems break with the
standardization pack by suggesting that the opinions of these groups as to
program effectiveness should be used in evaluating programs (Baldridge,
1996).

Resource Allocation

NCP defines Resource Allocation as:

Planning and developing the budget with appropriate staff;

seeking, allocating, and adjusting fiscal, human, and material

resources; utilizing the physical plant; monitoring resource use

and reporting results (NCP, 1990, p. 24).

Due to the ever increasing demands for accountability in schools, the
ability to allocate resources well is critical. School improvement requires
leaders who have the creativity to use resources differently in their efforts to
achieve the articulated purpose of their schools (Hoyle et al., 1990). Budgeting
and goals have been linked in much of the literature in the belief that priority
should be given to providing resources to activities that have been shown to
enhance student learning (Campbell & Sparkman, 1990; Heitmuller et al., 1993;
Leithwood & Duke, 1993). Heitmuller and associates (1993) found resource
allocation to be ranked as the ninth most highly rated dimension of instructional
leadership by the 1,629 school leaders surveyed. Lower still, Johnson and

Holdaway (1990) placed "making efficient use of resources" thirty-first among administrator functions (p. 177).

In addition to apportioning and monitoring the use of resources, caring for the physical plant is a basic element of resource allocation. Principals should ensure the conservation and proper use of school buildings, grounds an equipment by appropriate procedures, timely reporting of maintenance needs and the promulgation of understanding (Kowalski et al., 1992).

Interpersonal Domains

Motivating Others

NCP defines Motivating Others as:

Building commitment to a course of action; creating and channeling the energy of self and others; planning and encouraging participation; supporting innovation; recognizing and rewarding effective performance; providing coaching, guidance, or correction for performance that needs improvement; serving as a role model (NCP, 1990, p. 24).

The study of human motivation is difficult and important - difficult because of the subject matter, lack of empirical data, problems of human subjects involved, lack of consensus of a philosophical base; important because of its value and utility of application. Learning theorists dismiss explanations of instinct, psychic forces, as well as reasons why people do what they do, stating instead that all human response is learned (Richardson, Short & Prickett, 1993).

In the way they treat others, allocate resources, and demonstrate active learning, school administrators powerfully influence their school communities. They play a key role in creating work environments that enable staff to do and

be their best. Perhaps modeling what their schools stand for is their most important function, for "it is by practicing what they preach that they inspire and motivate others to achieve equally high work standards and to work enthusiastically toward school goals" (NPBEA, 1993, p. 14-3). Heitmuller and associates (1993) found that "motivating and organizing: helping people to develop a shared vision and achieve collective aims" ranked fifth highest when surveying 1,629 U.S. school leaders.

Educational leaders must channel the energies of groups toward the achievement of goals. Leithwood and Duke advocate that principals be evaluated on their performance regarding possession of "an extensive understanding of, and assistance to staff in developing an understanding of, the needs-based and goal-oriented nature of human motivation" (1993, p. 327). Effective school research indicates that successful leaders teach by example how to maintain "high internal work standards" (Thomson, 1990). School leaders who are themselves honest, hard working leaners inspire others to strive for these qualities (Richardson et al., 1992; Renihan & Renihan, 1992). Further, motivating others comes through appreciation and insistence, example and assistance. These are habits of the heart, not skills or tactics (Baldridge, 1996).

Sensitivity

NCP defines Sensitivity as:

Perceiving the needs and concerns of others; dealing with others tactfully; working with others in emotionally stressful situations or in conflict; managing conflict; obtaining feedback; recognizing multi-cultural sensibilities (NCP, 1990, p. 24).

Principals in twenty-first century schools must exhibit sensitivity to a

variety of constituents. Sensitivity means more than respecting another person's opinion or position. For principals, sensitivity means the ability to empathize with "all kinds of people" (Thomson, 1990, p. 2). Several of the most obvious constituencies include minorities, females, students, faculty, and subordinates.

Outstanding principals are good listeners. Because they tend to be caring and committed, they pay attention to and frequently implement their staff's suggestions. Outstanding administrators are willing to serve others when needed, and receive good service from their staff members in return (Grace, Buser & Stuck, 1987). These leaders treat constituents as human beings, and have compassion and a sense of humor (Vander Haar, 1987). Consistent with this insight, Kowalski and associates (1992) found that "listening to others" was rated as the third most essential trait of successful school administrators by principals while teachers rated it still one higher, at second (p. 302). What the two groups meant by "listen" may be contradictory, however, because principals rated empathizing with others twenty-first, but teachers placed it twelfth. Thus for some, listening to others may be closer to allowing expression rather than feeling their pain (Baldridge, 1996).

Whether one calls sensitive communication being diplomatic (Kowalski et al., 1992), awareness of one's own impact (Cox, 1994), or "humor and a low boiling point" (Armstrong, 1990, p. 3), knowing how to present sensitive issues to others is as important an element of interpersonal sensitivity for school administrators as perceiving others' needs and concerns. Teachers in particular perceive principals' willingness to "stand behind" them in "confrontations with students and parents involving discipline and academic performance" as indicative of principals' effectiveness (Blase, 1987, p. 602).

In addition to being able to perceive others' need, tactfully communicate about sensitive issues, and manage interpersonal conflicts, effective school administrators relate well to people of varying backgrounds (NPBEA, 1993). They are receptive to others' views and attentive to their comments (Queen, 1989). Their empathy for others includes "a sensitivity for cultures and beliefs" (Farris, 1989, p. 41). Kowalski and associates (1992) found social sensitivity to be rated among the top twenty attributes of effective school administrators as stated by teachers and principals.

Oral Presentation

NCP defines Oral Presentation as:

Making oral presentations that are clear and easy to understand; clarifying and restating questions; responding, reviewing, and summarizing for groups; utilizing appropriate communicative aids; adapting for audiences (NCP, 1990, p. 24).

Oral communication is a dynamic process that undergirds virtually all human activity. Communication permeates organization, leadership, structure, and the motivation and decision making by allowing people to discuss the process (Richardson, Short & Prickett, 1993). According to Hoy and Miskel (1991) "communication permeates every aspect of school life" (p.343).

"Principals typically spend more than 70 percent of their time communicating with others and engage in [from] 50 to 200 interactions during a school day" (NPBEA, 1993, p. 16-4 (citing Hoy & Miskel, 1991)). Some administrator evaluation frameworks retain the AT&T emphasis on oral communication as being clarity of presentation (Cox, 1994; Vonder Haar, 1987; Kowalski et al., 1992). These frameworks list categories such as "communicates ideas clearly," (Cox, 1994, pp. 29-34) "able to communicate and

share information," (Vonder Haar, 1987, p. 443) and "communicates effectively" (Kowalski et al., 1992, p. 302, ranked by administrators and teachers as the single most important attribute for principal effectiveness).

While the NCP definition refers to "clarifying and restating questions" and "responding to groups" it appears there is an implication that principals are impromptu thinkers when giving presentations (Thomas & Vornberg, 1991), the literature tends to focus instead on keeping "the lines of communication open with all constituencies" (Grace, Buser & Stuck, 1987, p. 73). Attending to communications with various constituencies tends to foster cooperation among them (Gomez & Stephenson, 1987).

Written Expression

NCP defines Written Expression as:

Expressing ideas clearly in writing; writing appropriately for

different audiences such as students, teachers, and parents;

preparing brief memoranda.

For the principal of the twenty-first century, effective written communication skills are critical. People inside and outside the organization judge principals by the way communications are handled: the way principals write, and the quality of their writing (Richardson, Short& Prickett, 1993). "Reports to target audiences convey as much about the writer as they do about the content of the report," according to Wendel, Hoke & Joekel (1996).

Much of the literature on effective communication tends to make no distinction between written and oral communication. Even so, effective written communication is critically important for leaders (Goldsmith & Brown, 1980), especially as society moves farther into the computer era. Certainly, school leaders write more today than in the past (Paddock, 1981), and as they do, they

set an example of literacy for others in their communities, and set standards for the quality of written discourse in their schools (NPBEA, 1993).

The value for school administrators of being able writers is reflected in the high frequency with which written communication is discussed in studies about school administrator evaluation categories (Williams & Pantili, 1992), and also in the numerous evaluation schemes that include both the clarity and multiple audience prongs that have typified the domain for so long (Cox, 1994). Principals spend most of the writing time producing "memos, letters, reports, articles, and newsletters" (NPBEA, 1993, p. 17-7). Since the writing tasks principals spend most of their time on require prose, attention to writing skills is warranted. Inasmuch as business executives allocate their writing time much the way school leaders do, the areas they name as most problematic are likely to be similar, too. These areas are: "sentence length, paragraph construction, misspellings, succinctness, clarity, purpose, and organization" (NPBEA, 1993, p. 17-6 (citing Rader & Wunsch, 1980)). Overcoming weaknesses in these technical areas will do much to improve the quality of one's writing (Baldridge, 1996).

Effective school leaders communicate well with numerous constituencies, including students, parents, teachers, and central office personnel (Barth, 1981). As discussed in the previous domain, however, much of the literature comments on the communication links rather than the acts of communication. Heitmuller and associates (1993) found that communication - defined as "ensuring open and clear communication among individuals and groups throughout the organization" (p.28), was the most important area of principals' performance to be evaluated.

<u>Contextual Domains</u>

<u>Philosophical and Cultural Values</u>

NCP defines Philosophical and Cultural Values as:

Acting with a reasoned understanding of the role of education in a

democratic society and in accord with accepted ethical standards;

recognizing philosophical and historical influences in education;

reflecting an understanding of American culture, including current

social and economic issues related to education; recognizing

global influences on students and society (NCP, 1990, p. 25).

The Philosophical and Cultural Values Domain does not receive nearly

as high a rating of importance as do some domains in the functional or

interpersonal groups (Williams & Pantili, 1992; Willis & Bartell, 1990).

Regardless of how highly ranked the importance of philosophical values may

be, being a school principal unavoidably causes one to reflect frequently on,

and possibly redefine, one's philosophical and cultural values (NPBEA, 1993).

Awareness of one's own values was first linked to school administrator success

by the NASSP which used the term "educational values" to describe

"possession of a well-reasoned educational philosophy" (Schmitt & Cohen,

1990, p.205). More recently, Hales (1994) determined that school principals'

abilities to "articulate personal values and beliefs when asked" was significant

enough to be included in administrator evaluations.

"Just as the species must reproduce itself biologically to continue its

existence, so, too, must cultural values be reproduced through education to

continue to exist. In practice, this means that public schools are the place in a

pluralistic democracy such as ours where educational administrators are caught

in the crossfire" (NPBEA, 1993, p. 18-4). Thus, schools are expected to

acculturate youth toward democratic institutions and duties, but members of society do not agree on what messages should be taught, so philosophical conflict is a normal part of the school administrator's environment (Baldridge, 1996).

School administrators are often "caught up in the tensions, paradoxes, and ironies that accompany dialectical problem spaces" (NPBEA, 1993, p. 18-4) because the relationship between the way things are and the way different people believe things should be creates a dialectic which is only capable of partial, local resolution. Related to this domain are the notions of "high tolerance of stress" (Stogdill, 1974), how administrators "cope with opposition" (Thomas & Vornberg, 1991, pp. 62-63), and "respecting differences of opinion and fostering open communication among staff" (Langlois & McAdams, 1992, pp. 33-36). When value structures are in conflict the effective leader finds a solution that keeps the organization moving in a positive direction.

Legal and Regulatory Applications

NCP defines Legal and Regulatory Applications as:

Acting in accordance with relevant laws, rules, and policies; recognizing governmental influences on education; working within local rules, procedures, and directives; administering contracts (NCP, 1990, p. 25).

School principals must have a working knowledge of the legal and regulatory aspects of school operations, including the constitutional considerations, school board/district operations, students' rights and responsibilities, and teachers' rights and responsibilities (Richardson, Short & Prickett, 1993). Imber and van Geel (1995) emphasized the need for understanding the legal and regulatory applications which affect the school

administrator. Changes in education as mandated by the courts, starting with the *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* decision in 1954, to the more recent impact of education reform court decisions concerning funding and constitutionality of education, have generated a complex demand on the contemporary school leader. Principals must have an awareness of these legal concerns as well as the skills to stay current with the new laws from policy, statutes, and court decisions (Richardson, Short & Prickett, 1993).

Today's public schools and their officers and employees are confronted with a wide range of constitutional, statutory, and regulatory constraints. Some argue that the tide must turn away from legal mandates to allow greater local decision-making in solving American education because of the pluralistic nature of current political discourse (Valente, 1998). Even so, school administrators must know how to apply legal rules, when to seek legal advice, and how to cope with those who threaten legal challenges to school activities. "With this knowledge, principals can identify legal issues, foresee potential legal liability, and act to reduce or mitigate risks" (NPBEA, 1993, p. 19-4).

Policy and Political Influences

NCP defines Policy and Political Influence as:

Identifying relationships between public policy and education; recognizing policy issues; examining and affecting policies individually and through professional and public groups; relating policy initiatives to the welfare of students; addressing ethical issues (NCP, 1990 p. 25).

Education is a political process. Education is public institution created by and for the people. As such, rules and regulations are necessary to a representative form of government. Politics are concerned with the distribution

and limitation of decision-making power while "policy is the statement of an official decision that guides the making of other decisions" (Richardson, Short & Prickett, 1993). Local school boards typically make policy for individual school districts. Policy making is a public responsibility that should be considered seriously by all involved in making educational decisions. "School boards should consider seriously policy statements and policy positions and how such policy will impact schools and students. Administrators, principals, teachers, and communities should have the opportunity to have input into policy deliberations. Principals should take every opportunity to impact policy decisions" (Richardson, Short & Prickett, 1993).

Of the policy and political influences experienced by school administrators, the NPBEA has this to say,

> Schools are viewed as targets of political influence because they must comply with governmental policies and respond to constituent pressures. In addition, schools are arenas for political influence because they are comprised of actors who shape policies inherited from the larger system and develop policies for their own units. Not surprisingly, principals are pivotal political actors who, like other authorities standing at the boundary of a system, are objects and sources of political influence. . . . In educational arenas, political leadership is exercised when responsible actors mobilize their power and resources with honesty and integrity; when they seek to develop, implement, and sustain viable solutions to pressing problems; and when, in doing so, they promote, protect, and preserve conceptions of the social values of quality, equality, efficiency, and liberty (NPBEA, 1993, p.

20-4).

Instead of stating the importance of policy or political skills, Farris (1989) gives principals practical advice about negotiating: "The principal must be diplomatic when attempting to resolve issues by negotiation: Intimidation and visible overconfidence are inappropriate. Any commitment made in negotiation must be kept if an environment of trust is to be maintained" (p. 41). Farris' comment about maintaining trust applies to the notion of "addressing ethical issues." The ability to deal with ethical issues and having the trust of those in the organization to do it has been identified as an important principal characteristic in numerous studies (Vonder Haar, 1987; Thomas & Vornberg, 1991; Armstrong, 1990).

Public and Media Relationships

NCP defines Public and Media Relationships as:

Developing common perceptions about school issues; interacting with parental and community leaders; understanding and responding skillfully to the electronic and printed news media; initiating and reporting news through appropriate channels; enlisting public participation; recognizing and providing for market segments (NCP, 1990, p. 25).

Effective communication between the school/school district and the community is vital to the success of education. Not only should educators understand the community members and implement programs which meet student and community needs, but the community is the greatest source for support for school programs (Webster, 1994). A primary focus of efforts to build and maintain community support should be quality interactions between the school and students' parents (Valentine et al., 1993). Principals are primarily

responsible for public relations in their schools. A principal can use many communications strategies to "get the message out." Newsletters, surveys, parent-teacher conferences and advisory groups can both be effective at the school level.

Just as important, an effort to communicate positively with the surrounding community must be made (Johnson & Holdaway, 1990; Lyons, 1993). Heitmuller and associates (1993) determined from a survey regarding twelve dimensions drawn from hundreds of statements in the literature collected by Pajak (1989) ranked "establishing and maintaining open and productive relations between the school and its community" as the eleventh highest rated contributor to instructional improvement and professional growth (p. 28). Principals should not overlook the contributions of teachers, staff, and students when implementing the public relations strategies (Richardson, Short & Prickett, 1993).

School principals must be able to "use the media effectively" - setting the agenda rather than reacting to publicity (Vonder Haar, 1987, p. 443). Principals are the primary representatives of their schools to the media and the general public. Because the segment of the population with children in public schools is shrinking, the use of the media to communicate with the public is becoming increasingly important (Baldridge, 1996).

Related Studies

The twenty-one performance domains of the principalship have formed the base from which other studies have been conducted. Samples of studies related to the twenty-one performance domains are summarized in this section.

Thomas Fletcher (1994) analyzed the principal performance domains within the principal evaluation process in Indiana. Fletcher received survey

data from 101 school superintendents in Indiana districts employing five or more principals. The superintendents reported which domains they perceived to be the most important for principals to be successful school leaders, and which of the twenty-one domains were currently being assessed in their respective school districts. The data indicated that the superintendents thought the most important principal performance domains were: Leadership, Instruction and the Learning Environment, Motivating Others, and Judgment. The domains most commonly found to be part of the district assessment instrument for principals were Leadership, and Instruction and the Learning Environment. The majority of the domains were not currently being assessed in the appraisal process for principals at that time. The superintendents agreed that the skills represented by the domains were important and that a need existed to improve the principal appraisal process in Indiana by including these skills.

Two hundred seventy entry-year teachers in Oklahoma were surveyed by Costa (1993) to obtain teachers' perceptions of the knowledge and skills of their principals as leaders in relation to the twenty-one performance domains of the principalship. The sample of teachers was evenly distributed across the elementary, middle, and high school levels as well as from rural, suburban, and urban public school districts. Results of this study indicated that public school principals in Oklahoma districts possess better than average (higher than 3.0) rating of of skills and knowledge in the twenty-one performance domains of the principalship.

A instrument designed to measure the skills and knowledge relating to the twenty-one performance domains of the principalship was used by Russell (1994) to determine which of these performance areas were best learned

during the internships of students from universities participating in the Alliance for the Preparation of Educational Leadership. Former interns from Brigham Young University, East Tennessee State University, Florida State University, and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University responded to the survey. The majority of the former interns were white females slightly over forty years old and holding a masters degree. Twenty-one percent of the respondents held a degree higher than a masters and few were serving as principals. Findings indicated that internships were highly valued, innovative, provided experiences for the domains of competency, and focused primarily on the functional themes.

The twenty-one competency domains and their relation to interagency collaboration was the subject of a study done by Stites (1994) in the southeastern region of the United States. The purpose of the study was to identify the knowledge and skills which school principals need to facilitate an integrated service model. One hundred ninety-five principals participating in the Cities in Schools (CIS) program were surveyed and it was determined that the domains found most significant were: motivating others, sensitivity, leadership, delegation, staff development, judgment, problem analysis, student guidance, and written expression. Conclusions of the study emphasize the importance of the domains when working with an interagency model. Factors such as, the length of time a principal had worked with CIS, the number of agencies involved, the percentage of students receiving free or reduced price lunches and the gender of the responding principal were significant in determining the domains principals selected as important.

In South Carolina Ricciardi (1996) surveyed 140 principals with two or more years experience as principals to determine their professional development needs in relation to the twenty-one performance domains of the

principalship. Findings revealed that principals identified their most important training needs were in the areas of (a) Curriculum Design, and (b) Instruction and the Learning Environment. Data indicated that training needs did not vary significantly related to the demographic characteristics of principals or schools. Principals reported that most of their professional development activities fell into four domain areas: (a) Instruction and the Learning Environment, (b) Curriculum Design, (c) Legal and Regulatory Applications, and (d) Leadership and they reported extremely low participation in training activities falling into eleven of the twenty-one domains. Principals rated a high level of usefulness for most of the professional development activities in which they participated. It was also noted that although the lecture workshop was the primary delivery method for most of these activities, the method received mixed ratings of effectiveness.

The perceptions of beginning and experienced teachers relating to the leadership behaviors that should be exhibited by a principal in order to assist teachers in becoming more effective in the classroom were investigated in a large Arizona school district (McClean, 1998). Teachers from fifteen schools (ten elementary schools, two middle schools, two high schools, and one alternative school) were questioned to determine the principal leadership behaviors that were most desired by the teachers in order to assist them in the process of becoming more effective classroom teachers. The questionnaires contained the twenty-one performance domains for the principalship. The perceptions of beginning teachers and experienced teachers were compared. Little difference was found in the perceptions of the two groups in relation to the domains determined to be the most important in helping them be more effective classroom teachers, with interpersonal qualities and leadership behaviors

heading the list.

Leadership in Today's Schools

"We become more convinced each day that a school's performance is based on the principal's vision. A clearly defined and consistently acted upon vision can coalesce beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of an entire school community" (Galletti, 1999).

Due to the ever-changing needs of today's students and society in which we live it has become clear that effective leaders in today's schools must operate differently than principals of the past. In a description of what principals in modern schools need to be, DuFour (1999) writes:

The principalship has become more complex than ever.

Principals must live with paradox - competing demands that seem

to pull them in opposite directions. They must have a sense of

urgency about improving their schools that is balanced by the

patience to sustain them over the long haul. They must focus on

the future but must also remain grounded in current reality. They

must see the big picture while maintaining a keen, up-close focus

on details. They must encourage autonomy while at the same

time demanding adherence to shared vision and values. They

must celebrate successes but perpetuate discontent with the

status quo. They must be strong leaders who give power to

others. The solutions to these dilemmas will not be found in the

old models of the principal as disciplinarian or the principal as

autocrat. The contemporary principal must orchestrate rather than

dictate. That task demands less command and control and more

learning and leading, less macho and more maestro.

Research now calls for principals who "lead from the center rather than the top" (Louis, Kruse, & Raywid, 1996), and who concentrate on developing the capacity of the staff to function as a "professional learning community" (Newmann, 1996). Anne Lieberman (1995) writes:

> The 1990s view of leadership calls for principals to act as partners with teachers, involved in a collaborative quest to examine practices and improve schools. Principals are not expected to control teachers but to support them and to create opportunities for them to grow and develop.

It is useful to think of the principal's role as a balance between leadership and management. Leadership covers the important role of supervising the curriculum, improving the instructional program, working with the staff to identify a vision and direction for the school, and building a close and congruent working relationship between the school and its community (Portin, Shen & Williams, 1998). Management, which is also important, includes the managing the budget, maintaining the building, completing and submitting required reports, and complying with legislative mandates and state and district regulations. Management tasks tend to be more explicit, so not complying with them can become very visible to others. As a result, principals understandably give high priority to attending to managerial responsibilities, often at the expense of leadership responsibilities (Portin, Shen & Williams, 1998).

In describing the five predictors for leadership success, Davis (1998) writes:

> First, regardless of an administrator's position, it is important to look for evidence that the administrator possesses a genuine

sensitivity to the needs of others. In addition, school administrators who hope to be successful in more responsible leadership positions must possess strong interpersonal and communication skills.

Second, administrative competence as it relates to future success requires an ability to adapt to new workplace conditions and environmental contexts. Administrators who continue to do what they have always done in the way they have always done it are bureaucratic functionaries and are ill-suited for the challenges of contemporary school leadership.

Third, effective administrators can apply different leadership styles as needed to address particular situations. Style flexibility goes hand in hand with effective decision making.

Fourth, effective administrators generally possess an internal locus of control. They tend to view their successes and failures as reflections of their ability, degree of effort, or motivational level. Most important, administrators with internal locus of control tend to make proper use of their mistakes by setting new goals and seeking new skills.

Fifth, effective administrators are intelligent, knowledgeable, and balanced. They are eager to learn new skills and do so quickly. Effective administrators are primarily concerned with doing the right things as opposed to doing things right.

There is a need to continue a focus on the knowledge and skill base of effective principals' behavior. The National Commission for the Principalship and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration have given us

Principals for Our Changing Schools, a clear and articulate map for deep and sustained principal development. Forward looking development will be served effectively by paying attention to this document (Lemley, 1997).

Summary

This chapter has described how the National Commission for the Principalship arrived at the twenty-one performance domains of the principalship. It then described each domain and identified the literature related to it. Each literature citation, in part, denoted the significance of the performance domain in relation to overall principal effectiveness. The purpose of this study was to gather the perceptions of the nine middle school principals in the Omaha Public Schools regarding the twenty-one performance domains of the principalship in relation to their present job responsibilities. It is evident that the knowledge and skills needed to be an effective contemporary principal are identified and described in this literature. This literature review provides a background for what will follow in Chapter Three, where are found the methods and procedures used to determine the perceptions of the nine middle school principals in the Omaha Public Schools of how the twenty-one performance domains relate to their present job responsibilities.

CHAPTER III

THE APPROACH TO THE STUDY

Introduction

This study combined both quantitative and qualitative methodology. Using a survey instrument in phase one, middle school principals were asked to share their perceptions about the twenty-one performance domains of the principalship. Principals rated the relative importance of both the knowledge and skill base in each of the twenty-one domains and identified the five most important performance areas in relation to being successful in their present administrative positions by completing the Principal Preparation Survey. In the second phase of the project, a personal interview was conducted with each principal to allow the subjects to elaborate on what they do in their present roles as middle school leaders that reflects the importance of both the knowledge and skill bases contained in the twenty-one performance domains of the principalship.

The Methodology

A combined methods study is one in which the researcher uses multiple methods of data collection and analysis. These methods might be drawn from "within methods" approaches, such a different types of quantitative data collection strategies (e.g., a survey and an experiment). Alternatively, it might involve "between methods," drawing on quantitative and qualitative data collection procedures (e.g., a survey and in-depth interviews) (Jick, 1979).

Denzin (1978) used the term triangulation to argue for the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon. The concept of triangulation was based on the assumption that any bias inherent in particular

data sources, investigator, and method would be neutralized when used in conjunction with other data sources, investigators, and methods (Jick, 1979) For the purposes of this study data were gathered using two methodologies, a Likert type survey and personal interviews.

Creswell (1994) refers to two-phase and dominant-less dominant designs of mixed-method research. In the two-phase method the researcher proposes to conduct a qualitative phase of the study and a separate quantitative phase. The two phases are clearly separate, but relatively equal in importance to the study. In a dominant-less dominant study the researcher presents the study within a single, dominant paradigm with a smaller component of the study drawn from the alternative paradigm. This study utilized characteristics of both approaches as data were collected and reported in two phases. However, the data collected through the quantitative phase were clearly those that answered the guiding questions proposed by the researcher, making the quantitative methodology the dominant paradigm and the qualitative methodology the less dominant aspect.

Quantitative Methodology

Quantitative methodology was used in this research project by the administration of the Principal Preparation Survey (Appendix C), a forty-two Likert type item survey. The survey has become one of the most used means of collecting data. A survey permits the collection of reliable and reasonably valid data in a simple, cheap, and timely manner (Anderson, 1998). In this case, the surveys were easily distributed by U.S. Mail and collected by the researcher.

The Likert Scale is one of the most useful question forms. The scale is named after Rensis Likert who developed this format in 1932. In its most popular form, the respondent is presented a statement and is asked to agree or

disagree on a three, five, or seven point scale. It is important to note that a question is not asked. Rather, a clear statement is made and the respondent is asked to what degree the statement reflects his or her views (Anderson, 1998).

Likert Scales provide and excellent means of gathering opinions and attitudes and they can relate to terms other than agree or disagree. For the purposes of this study respondents were asked to determine the degree of importance of principals possessing the knowledge and skill bases for each of the twenty-one performance domains. This was accomplished by using a seven point Likert Scale with a response of one (1) indicating extreme unimportance and a response of seven (7) indicating extreme importance of the skill and knowledge bases in each of the domains.

A second form of quantitative data were gathered through the use of a rank ordered list. Respondents were asked to rank order the five domains they believe to be the most vital to principals in today's schools. This provided additional information on the potency of each ranked response and enabled the responses to be weighted during the data analysis.

Surveys

Participants were asked to complete the Principal Preparation Survey. The survey was sent to participants through the U.S. Mail approximately one week before the scheduled interviews occurred. Surveys were collected by the researcher at the time of the personal interview.

The Principal Preparation Survey was developed by Barbara A. Phillips, Ph.D. Phillips used this instrument in her doctoral study to help determine the effectiveness of administration preparation programs in the state of Colorado in 1995. Written permission to use the survey (Appendix F) was given by Dr. Phillips prior to its use in the study. Each survey contains forty-two Likert-type

items which are to be rated on an interval scale which represents a continuum of importance. The Likert scale allows the following responses: a response of 0 represents "Uncertain," a response of 1 indicates "Strongly Unimportant," and a response of 5 indicates "Strongly Important." Demographic items for all respondents were also included.

The instrument was field tested in Colorado schools and was also reviewed by Scott D. Thomson, editor of *Principals for Our Changing Schools: The Knowledge and Skill Base*, Arthur Ellis, Assistant Commissioner of the Colorado Department of Education, to determine that directions and scales were appropriate and all knowledge and skill base domains important for principal preparation were included. In this study the Principal Preparation Survey was used to establish the perceptions of middle school principals regarding the relative importance of the knowledge and skill bases of the twenty-one performance domains from a practitioner's viewpoint. Respondents' hand-written opinions on the five most important domains of the principalship were also solicited. Data gathered from this survey, along with that from the personal interviews were used to answer the three research questions.

Assumptions of Qualitative Research

The qualitative phase of this mixed methods study consisted of interviewing each principal once to specifically listen for their references to the twenty-one performance domains. Qualitative research has become an increasingly important mode of inquiry for applied fields such as education (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). The fields of anthropology, sociology, and psychology provided the beginnings of the qualitative method as a recognized form of research (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998). "Naturalistic -phenomenological philosophy" is often referred to as the basis for qualitative research (Marshall

and Rossman, 1999). Each of these disciplines rests on somewhat different assumptions about what constitutes proper inquiry within the qualitative, or interpretive, paradigm. A fundamental assumption of the qualitative research paradigm is that a profound understanding of the world can be gained through conversation and observation in natural settings rather than through experimental manipulation under artificial conditions (Anderson and Arsenault, 1998). Unlike the quantitative approach which aims to determine the effect of variables on a particular phenomenon, the goal of the qualitative researcher is to develop an understanding of how all of the parts work as a whole (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). Qualitative research questions are not formulated from independent and dependent variables but instead the complexity and context of a topic are discovered through an investigation guided by a research question (Bogdan and Bicklen, 1998). Qualitative researchers are intrigued with the complexity of social interactions expressed in daily life and with the meanings the participants themselves attribute to these interactions. This interest takes qualitative researchers into natural settings rather than laboratories and fosters pragmatism in using multiple methods for exploring the topic of interest. Thus, qualitative research is pragmatic, interpretive, and grounded in the lived experiences of people (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Qualitative researchers make observations, collect documents, and conduct personal interviews in order to create an interpretative record of what happens in the natural setting. Underlying patterns found within the data are used to formulate theory and explain reality. Inferences may be drawn from the formulated theory to guide future action (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Merriam (1998) developed the following six basic philosophical assumptions that identify the unique characteristics of qualitative research and

differentiate it from quantitative methodology.

1. Qualitative researchers primarily focus on the process rather than outcomes or products. How and why specific events occurred interest the researcher rather than quantifying the frequency or the outcomes of an event.

2. Qualitative researchers are concerned with the meaning that people attach to a setting, a situation, or experience. They assume that the perceptions of those involved can be "mediated through the investigator's own perceptions" (p.19).

3. The qualitative researcher becomes the primary instrument for data collection and analysis rather than using machinery, questionnaires, or true experimental designs.

4. Qualitative research involves fieldwork. The researcher must go to the setting, people, or site in order to observe and record the natural setting.

5. Qualitative research is reported in a descriptive form. Researchers present their findings and interpretations using rich, thick description rather than the numerical and statistical form of inferential research.

6. Qualitative research is largely inductive which "builds abstractions, concepts, hypotheses, or theories rather than testing existing theory." The researcher focuses on discovering "new relationships, concepts, and understanding, rather than verification of predetermined hypotheses."

The Role of the Researcher

Qualitative researchers collect data from existing people and institutions rather than from the confines of a laboratory or from within the limits of a structured survey (Yin, 1993). Merriam (1998), described the investigator as the primary instrument for data collection and the views of the world held by the researcher affect the entire process.

Because I am a middle school principal, I bring my own perceptions and biases of what a principal needs to know and be able to do to be successful as a school leader. I have worked as a middle school teacher for eight years, during which time I was an interdisciplinary team leader and activities director. These duties were paramount in my development as a leader and helped provide me an opportunity to become a middle school associate principal before assuming the middle school principalship. My experience as a leader in a middle school setting enables me to be a researcher who has a firm grasp of the issues being studied, to ask relevant questions, and then to interpret the answers.

Although being a middle school principal provides a preexisting knowledge base from which I am able to conduct this research, this same foundation of information could also produce preconceived notions that could bias my perceptions of data collected during interviews or the interpretation of survey data. I will make every effort to be sensitive and responsive to contradictory information I encounter.

In this study, particular attention was paid to middle school principals' responses regarding the perceived importance of the knowledge and skill bases of the twenty-one performance domains established by the National Commission for the Principalship. I expected to find a range of knowledge and skills that were perceived by the principals to be the most influential in their success as middle school leaders.

Bounding the Study

Setting

This study was conducted in one school district, the Omaha Public Schools in Omaha, Nebraska. The Omaha Public School District is the largest

school district in the state of Nebraska. During the year in which the study was conducted the district had an enrollment of approximately 44,200 students in fifty-six elementary schools, nine middle schools, and seven high schools.

Actors

In this investigation, the middle school principals' perceptions of the importance of the knowledge and skill bases outlined in the twenty-one performance domains of the principalship served as the the study's primary focus. The principals in the nine middle schools in Omaha were selected for the study as middle school leadership was the primary area of interest of the researcher. Of the nine participants in the study, four were female and five were male. The level of principal experience ranged from one principal having thirty years of experience to three principals who were in the first year as principal of their respective middle schools. Selection of the principals in the Omaha Public Schools was influenced by the size of the district, availability of the principals, and the enrollment and demographics of the individual schools.

Events

The principals' perceptions of the performance domains of the principalship in relation to their present job responsibilities served as the guiding precept of this study. Because the nine middle school principals were the leaders of middle schools in a metropolitan area in Nebraska they were of particular interest to the researcher. They were asked which they perceive to be the most important skills and knowledge to have to be a good principal at the middle level and what they do in their daily work that makes them successful leaders in their respective schools.

Processes

The knowledge and skill bases principals perceive to be the most

important in doing their present jobs served as the primary focus for this study. The knowledge and skill bases of the twenty-one performance domains of the principalship were noted as they were referred to by principals when asked about how they perform in their roles as middle school principals. The following steps were taken to complete the study:

1. Principals were contacted by the researcher via telephone to determine their willingness to participate in the study.

2. Permission to conduct research in the Omaha Public Schools was obtained from the Omaha Public Schools district administration (Appendix A). An extensive proposal to conduct research in Omaha Public Schools was completed and submitted to the district research committee for approval.

3. Permission to conduct this research as part of a doctoral study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln (Appendix B).

4. Research participants were sent a description of the twenty-one performance domains for the principalship, a Principal Preparation Survey instrument (Appendix C) to rate the importance of both knowledge and skill for each domain, and an informed consent form.

5. Informed consent forms (Appendix D) were signed and returned to the researcher by U.S. mail.

6. Dates and times for personal interviews were established by telephone.

7. Personal interviews were conducted with responses being tape recorded while field notes were also taken. Survey responses were collected at the time of the personal interview.

8. Interview responses were transcribed and returned to the subjects for

verification of accuracy. Verification sheets (Appendix E) accompanied transcriptions and were returned to the researcher via U.S. Mail.

9. All data gathered were interpreted by the researcher and reported in a combination of tables and a narrative format.

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent and protecting the participants from harm are two critical issues to be considered by researchers in maintaining an ethically appropriate study (Bogden and Biklen, 1992). Conducting an ethical study is the responsibility of the investigator. Ethical issues for this study were addressed by using Bogden and Bicklen's (1992) four principles for conducting ethical research as a general guideline:

1. Participants in the study were not identifiable and their identities were protected so that any information they disclosed can not be used to jeopardize their relationship to their employer, the researcher, or the University of Nebraska.

2. Each participant was treated openly and with respect. The purpose of the study, methods of data collection, and how the data will be used was presented verbally and in writing to each participant. Participation in the study was voluntary and each participating principal was required to sign an informed consent form before data were collected. Permission to conduct this research with exempt status was obtained from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

3. The contractual terms of the permission agreement were followed explicitly.

4. Only true findings were reported by the researcher. To ensure that the true responses of the participants were reported, transcripts of taped interviews

were made available to each participant in order to correct any discrepancy in the participants' intended responses. An external auditor was utilized to ensure that transcripts correctly reflected the content of the taped interviews (Appendix G).

Qualitative Data Collection

Data for this study were collected in two major phases. Initially, participating principals completed a forty-two item survey. Additional data were obtained through a personal interview held at the respective schools of the participants. Field notes kept by the researcher throughout the entire investigation were also used as a source of data.

Interviews

Each participant was contacted by telephone and times for personal interviews were scheduled. Interviews were held at the respective schools of the participating principals. Interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim. Transcriptions were returned via U.S. Mail to the participants for their review so that necessary corrections could be made. Transcribed interviews and signed interview verification sheets were returned to the researcher via U.S. Mail.

Field Notes

During the course of this investigation the researcher kept a log of field notes. This log consisted of the researcher's comments and impressions of events that transpired during the study. The interview protocol contained an area for the interviewer to make descriptive notes - the concern was to provide a word-picture of the setting, people, actions, and conversations as recorded. Reflective notes were also kept so the researcher had the opportunity to record personal thoughts - this part captures more of the researcher's frame of mind,

ideas, and concerns (Bogdan and Bicklen, 1998). A demographic information form was also used to record personal and professional information about each participant. Notes were dated and interactions occurring during the process of the investigation were summarized and recorded.

<u>Data Analysis Procedures</u>

Data analysis occurred in two phases. The first phase consisted of determining which of the twenty-one performance domains of the principalship were perceived to be the most important in the present jobs of the nine participants. This was determined from the individual responses to the Principal Preparation Survey. Mean scores were determined for the knowledge and skill bases for each of the twenty-one performance domains by averaging the responses from the nine principals in the forty-two respective categories. A total mean score for each performance domain was calculated by averaging the knowledge base and skill base mean scores. The five performance domains perceived to be the most important in the present jobs of the participants were determined from the total mean scores and from the lists provided by the principals at the conclusion of the Principal Preparation Survey.

During the second phase of data analysis, responses to the personal interview questions were reviewed. Verbatim transcripts were used by the researcher to determine if principals made references to the performance domains when discussing the various aspects of their present jobs. It was noted in the margins of the transcripts when statements occurring within each response made reference to one of the twenty-one performance domains of the principalship. Key words from the domain descriptions were gleaned from the responses to indicate reference to the respective performance domains. The frequency of occurrence for each of the performance domains and the total

number of references to the domains were tallied for each principal, and reported in table format. References to the performance domain themes during the personal interviews were compared to each individual's previously noted perceptions of the importance of the performance domains to their success as middle school principals.

Verification

Internal Validity

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) referred to internal validity as the degree to which findings correctly describe the phenomenon in question. It is the task of the researcher to accurately present the perspectives of the subjects involved in the phenomenon being studied. There are six basic strategies that can be used to ensure internal validity (Merriam, 1998). Three of the six strategies will be used in this study. They are as follows:

1. Triangulation of data - Multiple sources of data (i.e. surveys, personal interviews, and field notes) were collected.

2. Member checks - Personal interview data in the form of verbatim transcripts were returned to the middle school principals for their approval and necessary adjustments were made.

3. Clarification of researcher bias - The researcher's personal biases were delineated in the section titled, "The Role of the Researcher."

External Validity

External validity is referred to by Denzin and Lincoln (1994) as the degree to which findings can be generalized to other settings similar to the one in which the study occurred. Rich, thick, detailed descriptions were provided in this study to ensure external validity. It is difficult to apply the terms generalizability and reliability to natural inquiry. It is, however, important that

the qualitative study exhibit transferability, dependability, and consistency (Merriam, 1998). Merriam also provides three techniques that can be utilized by the qualitative researcher to ensure dependability of the findings of the study. These techniques were applied to this study:

1. The researcher's position regarding the assumptions, the procedures used to select participants, the role of the researcher, and the social context from which the data are to be collected were explained.

2. Triangulation of data collection (e.g. use of surveys, personal interviews, and field notes) and analysis enhanced the dependability and internal validity of the study.

3. An external auditor used the detailed description provided by the researcher to examine the process and verify the results of the study.

Reporting the Outcomes

For this mixed methods study a combination of reporting methods was used. A portion of the data collected for this study emerged from the participants' responses to the Principal Preparation Survey, using forty-two Likert-type items that were quantified. Both individual and group data for the forty-two items were presented in table form. A narrative for each of the personal interviews conducted with the participants was used in order to provide rich descriptions of the individuals and the work they do as middle school principals. Cross-case analysis was used in order to illustrate commonalities and differences in the administrative leadership of the subjects. The narrative text, describing the work of the participants and the cross-case analyses, served as the major mode of delivery for this study.

Chapter IV

REPORTING THE FINDINGS

The Omaha Public Schools in Omaha, Nebraska served as the setting for this study. The enrollment of the Omaha Public Schools was approximately 44,200 during the year the study was conducted. Made up of fifty-six elementary schools, nine middle schools, and seven high schools, the Omaha Public Schools district is the largest in the state of Nebraska. Nine middle school principals voluntarily participated in this study by completing the Principal Preparation Survey, a forty-two item survey instrument, and responding to a personal interview, conducted by the researcher at each of their respective schools on days when school was in session.

For the purpose of this study, pseudonyms were used for each school and principal. The following narrative describes the work of the nine middle school principals. The school setting each principal works in is described, followed by a description of that principal's "story." Following the narrative is a summary of additional data gathered from the personal interviews and from the Principal Preparation Survey.

The Study Participants

Carol - Principal of Modern Middle School

The Setting

Modern Middle School is located on a busy street near the edge of the city. The campus is clean and orderly in appearance with a well-maintained lawn and landscaped areas containing bushes and flowers. There are many classroom windows on the front of the building facing the street. The brick and glass facade are not easily seen from the street which is lined with large pine trees. A traffic loop is available in the front of the building for students to be

brought to school by automobiles and busses. The parking area for visitors and staff is located behind the building and it is a considerable walk to the nearest open entrance. Large areas of glass allow the morning sunlight to brighten the entry to the school. Student artwork is displayed on the walls of the lobby area and a multicultural theme is prevalent.

Modern Middle School is comprised of 700 students in grades seven and eight. Located in a suburban area the general socioeconomic status of the clientele is considered to be upper middle class. The majority of Modern's students attend a high school approximately two miles away for grades nine through twelve. The district recently changed the policy for desegregation busing and students are now encouraged to attend the schools in their own neighborhoods. Modern Middle School has had a decrease in the percentage of students of color due to this change. One year ago approximately fifty percent of the enrollment consisted of non-white students. During the current school year that figure has dropped to twenty percent.

The administrative office staff at Modern were very friendly and I was greeted immediately as I entered the office area. I was asked to sign the visitor log and was given a visitor identification badge to wear while I was in the building. I was approximately fifteen minutes early for the for 8:30 a.m. appointment we had scheduled earlier. The secretary offered me a cup of coffee and a place to sit while she attempted to locate Carol to let her know I had arrived. She located Carol by radio and found she was visiting a classroom. Carol returned to the office within five minutes. I was admiring the artwork in the lobby when Carol arrived. Having never met before, and our only contact having been by telephone, we introduced ourselves and entered her office

through a door that connects directly to the hallway.

Carol's office gives the appearance of a very well-organized person. The large desk is arranged neatly and is free of any unnecessary papers or other items that often clutter the desks of school principals. The office has been decorated with artwork and other accessories and there are exterior windows to bring in natural light. The windows face the back of the campus and the staff parking area is visible across the yard. The front office adjoins Carol's office with a door allowing direct access from the main office area. The front office is a very busy place and the sound of ringing telephones is constant.

Carol's Story

Carol has been in education for sixteen years, with seven of those spent teaching English at the high school level. She earned certification in Education Administration from the University of Nebraska at Omaha in 1989 and the last eight years of Carol's career have been spent as an Assistant Principal and Athletic Director at the same high school where she taught for the seven previous years. Carol is in her first year as a principal. Even though she had no prior experience working with middle level students, in the spring of 1999 Carol was asked by district level administration to assume the role of principal at Modern Middle School for the next school year. She accepted the position and has worked as principal at Modern since the summer of 1999.

Carol described her first year in the principalship as one in which she is "feeling things out, getting to know staff, getting to know personalities, getting to know styles, and also giving the staff an opportunity to know what I'm all about and what my vision of what this place should look like is." She is simply trying to get the message out to staff what her values are and not trying to come in and make a lot of changes. She is working hard to get to know the students. "This is

new to me. I didn't have any personal aspirations of being at the middle level, but it's been wonderful. It's been a wonderful experience. This age group is great to work with."

In the process of trying to get to know staff and students Carol tries to spend a great deal of her time in the classrooms, getting in touch with the teaching and learning that occur at Modern. "I always send the message to my staff that anything you want me to see please invite me in and I enjoy doing that. I try to get around the building and in and out of the classroom a lot because I think it's important that they know I want to know what's going on." She tries to attend interdisciplinary team meetings whenever possible to keep up on curricular and student services issues. Her first choice is to be out of the office with teachers and students, but "the flow of things to do from the district takes a lot of time, way too much."

Carol has found that the most difficult part of her job is "being that instructional leader first. I know it's the most important, and uh, balancing everything else that comes along with it." As the building leader she is encountering aspects of the principalship for the first time. Being a first year principal in a new school, Carol struggles at times with finding out how things have been done in the past and determining if changes in procedures are warranted. "I look forward to the summer where I can start a folder for each month and know what's coming up."

Although she is still wondering whether or not she is being successful, Carol attributes her success as a principal to "being a good listener, being sensitive to peoples' needs and then prioritizing what's most important." She enjoys working with a staff and parents that give her positive feedback. Carol works in a community where achievement is very important and the fact that she

gets positive feedback from the community gives her personal satisfaction in her work as principal at Modern. Carol stresses the fact that student learning is the most important thing, way above any of the extra curricular activities. "I think the fact that I'm in and out of the classroom sends a message that it's important to me."

Carol believes that staff members at Modern would characterize her as "a people person, diplomatic." She considers herself to have a "blue" personality from the True Colors personality profiles exercise. Even though her blue personality is seen as sensitive and feeling, she does not think that staff members would characterize her as one who can not make tough decisions or handle difficult situations. "I think they know that I'll support them when they're right and that we'll address issues when they're not right. I think they see me as a good mediator."

Interactions with other people go on "all day long" for Carol. Some days are more difficult than others for Carol in the area of interacting with others. She refers to some of the difficult interactions as "having to wear my big girl pants, being the principal and sticking up for what's right for the kids." Carol interacts with personnel from the district office daily as "they keep dumping all of these things." She feels that some of what comes her way from the district overlaps with other programs and "that causes a lot of problems." Staff members require a great deal of Carol's time during the day as she responds to their concerns and shares in their successes. She sees this as a necessary part of them getting to know one another. Parents bring their concerns to Carol. "When parents would come in I just let them blow their steam and listen and try to calm them down and guide them in a different direction. But I have to be a listener." "I like it when I get some kid issues sometimes. It gets me back into that."

Assistant Principals take care of student discipline at Modern, but Carol does become involved in the discipline process if necessary.

Carol's perception of what makes a good principal is based on how the principal makes decisions. "If you ask that question, in any decision that you make, what's in the best interest of the kids? That's the most important. Whether it's curriculum, or school culture, the environment, and dealing with teachers. That's the most important, that you are an advocate for kids."

Carol has a long range vision for Modern Middle School. "My vision is more interdisciplinary work going on. That this building is a place where learning is very relevant. To just bring your subject matter to life." She feels good about the current achievement scores for the building, but would like to see improvement in some areas.

Carol would like to see the cultural diversity at Modern Middle School maintained or even increased. "With us going back to the neighborhood plan, that is a concern of mine. Hopefully, with our new magnet decision coming up, that will assist us in our goal. We are going to be a magnet school where we have some area of specialization that is different from other middle schools that will draw attention to specific kids in the area. We are looking at visual and performing arts and maybe international studies as being our magnet theme."

A new district policy allowing open enrollment at the high school level has changed the path for some of Modern's departing eighth graders. District transportation will be provided for some high school students, depending on where they reside, but others will be on their own. "Most of our students will go to two high schools, but we will have a small number that will go to each of the other seven."

Carol is nearing the end of her first year as a middle school principal.

She has spent a great amount of time and energy getting to know the staff, students, parents, culture, and the surrounding community of Modern Middle School. Her analytical nature allows her to see what is in need of change and what is not. She is willing to make necessary adjustments at Modern in future years.

Diane - Principal of Best Middle School

The Setting

Best Middle School is nestled in a quiet suburban neighborhood. Best would be difficult to find without good directions, as it is not visible from any of the main arterial streets in the area. The streets leading to it are equipped to handle residential traffic and the beginning and ending of the school days cause considerable traffic congestion for the residents of the neighborhood. The two story brick structure looks quite new as it is well maintained and the campus grounds are neatly groomed. The parking area available to visitors is located below the building and an uphill walk is necessary to reach the front entrance. The main entrance area is relatively small and gives a "closed in" feeling. The walls are adorned with posters advertising student activities and announcements.

The enrollment at Best stands at 720 seventh and eighth graders. Of those students, sixteen percent are students of color and twenty to twenty-five percent qualify for the free or reduced price lunch program. The decision to end the desegregation busing program during the current school year raised the overall socioeconomic status of the Best clientele. After completing the eighth grade most of the Best students attend the high school nearby, but some will opt to attend other schools in the city since the open enrollment concept for high school students was introduced this year.

I arrived at 1:00 p.m. for a scheduled 1:15 appointment. I was greeted immediately by a secretary and asked to sign the visitor log. The secretary went to Diane's office and announced my arrival. The main office is a very busy place at this time of day. The lunch hour had not yet finished and numerous students were in and out of the office to use the telephone and pick up

messages, from parents, etc. Diane emerged from her office to greet me and welcome me to Best. Diane had not had an opportunity to eat lunch yet and I encouraged her to do so since I was early for our appointment. I waited in the front office until Diane returned from her lunch break and she brought me to her office to complete the interview.

Diane's office has been decorated to reflect that she has an interest in children. Student artwork adorns the walls and some display shelves with a child-centered theme prevalent. The large desk in the center of the room is neat, with several "to do" stacks of paperwork that can wait. Even with a busy office and hallways Diane's office is a quiet place when the doors close. She referred to it as being a great think tank when it needs to be.

Diane's Story

Diane has been in education for the last twenty-three years, seventeen years as a teacher and the last six as a school administrator. The first seventeen years of her career were spent as a music teacher at the elementary and middle level. During her first two years as a teacher, Diane was an itinerant music instructor for numerous elementary schools in Omaha. For nine years she taught music at a local middle school. Diane then moved to another middle school in Omaha and taught music for six years. Her experience as a teacher of music for seventeen years consisted of working in schools having from fifty to seventy percent of the students qualifying for the free or reduced price lunch program. Diane earned her administrative certification in 1981 at the University of Nebraska at Omaha and spent three years as an assistant principal in yet another middle school. She related that her years of experience as a teacher have been very helpful to her as an administrator. Now in her third year as a middle school principal, she has a variety of experiences on which she can call

to assist her in her day to day work.

Diane's years in the principalship have all been spent at Best Middle School. She describes herself as the instructional leader in the building and the one who sets the tone for how the school proceeds. "I'm the one who is the executor of what the district and the school board's goals are as they relate to middle level curriculum, and to the middle level program. I'm the overseer of that."

Diane describes her daily work as mostly spent doing observations of teachers and talking to them about teaching strategies, teaming, and the middle level philosophy of the building. She oversees and works with her administrative team of two assistant principals and one dean of students on discipline. "I only get involved in the big ticket discipline problems, not the every day little or typical problems, but when we get in the big areas of expulsion and some suspensions." Diane is the liaison between the building and the central administration office in the areas of curriculum and instruction. She delegates much of what pertains to the physical plant to one of her assistants. The assistant is in charge of the data relating to the plant and keeps her up to date with what she needs to know. "But the curriculum part, probably everything comes to me, and the instruction part comes to me."

The most difficult aspect of Diane's job lies in the area of doing all that falls under her job description, "especially the instructional leader aspect of it. To really do it. I always point to all of those notebooks I have over here on this shelf. If I could actually get everything out of that notebook and get it in my head, I'd be a principal like none other. You know, sometimes I feel like I'm just surviving." Diane wants very much to be the best principal she can be, but understands that the job is very complex in nature and demands more than any

human is able to really do. She is determined to do all she can to accomplish as much as an instructional leader as is possible.

Diane attributes her success as a principal to the fact that she is openly a team player. "I don't look at hierarchy." She feels that the higher a person's position, the more service-oriented she should be. "Everybody's got to do their job to make the whole thing work. So I'm not into status too much. I'm into everybody doing their job well. I think that's a big part of my success."

Diane says that her entire job is supposed to have a positive effect on student learning. "I ensure that this building is safe for learning. I take just about everything seriously. That doesn't mean that I won't laugh at things, but if a student tells me that their learning is being impeded by something that makes them not safe in this building, I take it really serious." She wants the learning climate to be right for all students. "My conversations with kids in terms of harassing or anything always have to do with the learning climate. We can't expect you to do the best you can unless we provide you with a good safe learning environment." Diane's entire focus is on creating the best possible learning environment for her students.

According to Diane, staff members would characterize her as being serious, but that they like to work for her. She expects a lot from her staff, but nothing they are not capable of doing. "I expect a lot. I want this to be the best building. If you've got someone at your building that impacts people and kids and curriculum more than what we've got here, then we want to be down there seeing what you've got going on, and being really friendly with you and you helping us out." Diane will not praise what is not excellent, but certainly will praise that which is. "I'm real up front, real candid, real about the business."

Diane always lives in the community in which she works as an

administrator so she has many interactions with parents. "I move into the community. It's my building, our building, our community. I'm not bothered if you see me at the supermarket looking like a parent versus the principal because I'm there as a parent." She is also a parent whose children attend Best. Diane wants her interactions with other parents to be as normal as possible and she wants to be considered approachable. "When I first came into this building three years ago parents didn't necessarily feel like they were particularly welcome. We have been slowly bringing it up to where parents are pretty comfortable to pop in here and I think they understand the importance of them to be here." The neighborhood concept for middle schools has brought new clientele in that have lived in the neighborhood for years, but attended other schools with the old desegregation busing policy. "Our top population used to siphon off of here and attend a magnet program, but there has been a lot of coming back home. People are now very pleased with their neighborhood school and that's what I want."

Most of Diane's interactions with teachers occur in their classrooms or in her office. "The one place I'm probably not too much is the teachers' lounge. I let that be the one place they can have and they can fuss about me or whatever." Diane attends social functions for staff and encourages staff to take part as well. She does not consider herself a "feel-goody" type of person although she is aware that some people need more attention than others. "I worry about them as people way before I worry about them as staff. About their illnesses, about their families, about their hard times and their good times, and they don't even know sometimes." Diane is a driven person and expects her staff to be the same. "I will continue to demand a lot of people as long as they are able to give it. If I know you can't give it then I have a hard time being hard

driving at that point." Diane is a frequent visitor at the central office. "I'm at TAC (Teacher/Administration Center) every week, not every day, but every week. I have a lot of interaction with them just by the nature of the beast."

"A good principal is definitely, in my mind, a people person who can let other people assist with the running of this building." Diane wants to be a really good principal. "It's important to me that those who are good principals, those who are knowledgeable about education, will one day say she was a great principal of good principle." She wants to be respected by her peers who really know her and the work she does. "If somebody wants to transfer out of here for displeasure, I pay attention to that because it means we didn't fix something in this building. Something wasn't good." Diane takes pride in the fact that she has not had a teacher request transfer from Best due to displeasure since her arrival as principal. She wants to be known as a strong disciplinarian and to be able to be the bottom line.

Diane's vision for Best Middle School is "for it to be able to service well, every student that walks through that door. For it to be able to provide a quality education to every student, whatever that means. To have every student be able to achieve to their fullest potential. That's a biggie for me."

Glen - Principal of Riverside Middle School

The Setting

Riverside Middle School is located near the heart of the city. It is located on a busy street near an interstate highway. The immediate neighborhood has relatively few houses and as a result most of the students at Riverside come to school by bus. The neighborhood is not well cared for and the exterior of Riverside shows considerable wear and tear that makes the two story brick building not stand out among its surroundings. Riverside serves an enrollment of 747 students in grades four through eight, fifty-one percent of whom qualify for the free or reduced price lunch program.

The campus of Riverside contains portable classrooms to house more students than the original building was designed to accommodate. In addition to portable classrooms a playground makes up part of the campus to provide a recreation area for the younger students at Riverside who participate in recess as their form of daily physical activity. The visitor parking area is located on the street side of the building and the front entrance is easily accessed from the parking lot. The building entry is filled with a feeling of energy and activity. Student projects are displayed in the entry and the noise of active classrooms can be heard coming from the hallways.

I arrived twenty minutes early for a 1:30 p.m. appointment and checked in at the main office. A very friendly office staff greeted me and welcomed me to Riverside. I was asked to sign the visitor log and was given a visitor badge to wear while in the building. Glen, the principal, was not in his office when I arrived and the secretary called for him on his radio. He said he would be back in a few minutes to meet with me. I asked for permission to explore the entry area and look at the students' projects while I waited for Glen to return. He

arrived at the office in approximately five minutes and we moved to his office to conduct the personal interview.

Glen's office, although not messy, gave the appearance that neatness was not at the top of his priority list. Stacks of papers were placed on the desk and other piles of books and notebooks were randomly visible. The desk looked as though several tasks were in progress at once and Glen was struggling to keep up with all that he had to accomplish.

Glen's Story

Glen is a twenty-five year veteran in the field of education. He spent eight years as a sixth grade teacher at the elementary level, teaching all subjects. The elementary building where he taught had a population in which twenty-five percent of the students qualified for the free or reduced price lunch program. Glen received administrative certification from the University of Nebraska at Omaha in 1983 and began working as an assistant principal, shared between two elementary schools. In 1986 Glen received his first principalship, at an Omaha elementary school. During Glen's first principalship he completed the doctoral program in education administration through a joint program from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln and the University of Nebraska at Omaha. After five years he moved to another elementary principalship for five additional years. Glen is in his fourteenth year of the principalship, and his fourth year at Riverside Middle School.

Glen describes the role of a principal as a facilitator for all that goes on in the school. He laughed as he described the principal's work by saying, "Basically, you're held responsible for everything and get the blame for everything and credit for nothing." He sees the major portion of his job being that of staff evaluation and working in the area of curriculum and instruction.

"Right behind that is getting the overall scheduling and making sure the organization is there. It doesn't function if it's not."

The most difficult part of Glen's job is finding the time to do everything he'd like to do. "You always have to prioritize things and you are always making choices." He attributes his success as a principal to being able to work well with small groups of people. "For example, we have weekly team meetings and I try to attend at least one of those with every team at least once a week."

Glen affects student learning through his work with interdisciplinary teams. Test scores are used as benchmarks for how instruction is planned for and delivered. "You are also helping to make sure that you're targeting appropriate groups of individuals or groups of students who need some extra assistance and making sure and laying out a plan that they are getting the type of assistance, instructionally, that they need." One of the major parts of Glen's work involves being a change agent. "We are constantly working on change and soliciting input to make things better."

Glen's interactions with other people are frequent. Most of his interaction with staff and central office personnel take place in small groups. He also meets often with small groups of parents, but welcomes them and staff members to make appointments to see him at any time. Glen's most frequent student contact is on an individual basis. "Seeing a youngster and talking to them in the hall and talking to them in the cafeteria, that type of thing. It would be typical that more interaction would be one on one."

According to Glen, a good principal must be able to do several things at one time or manage several things that are going on at the same time or in the course of a given day. "You do so many different things and you wear so many different hats. And being able to go from one to the other at the drop of a coin."

The interactions with others are endless. "If you're having a conversation with one person and you get finished with wearing one hat, you turn around and there's another person there, and all of a sudden you're now wearing a completely different one." Glen laughs as he thinks about the fact that, "The expectation is that you have all the answers."

Glen holds high expectations for himself as a principal and for Riverside Middle School. Glen tries to always lead by example. "I think if you do, and if you're here doing what you expect and model what you expect in interactions with people, then you are showing what kinds of things you want done in your building." Glen's vision for Riverside is that it be the finest magnet school in the country at the middle level. "The expectation is that you do whatever it takes to get the job done."

Peg - Principal of Melton Middle School

The Setting

Melton Middle School serves a population of 578 students from one of the lowest income areas in the city. Approximately ninety percent of the Melton students qualify for the free or reduced price lunch program. The single story brick structure is nestled in a residential neighborhood and is not visible from any of the neighborhood's busiest streets. With only one level, Melton takes up a great deal of space leaving limited room for outdoor student activity areas. Plenty of visitor parking is available just outside the main entrance making access to the building easy.

At the front door I was greeted by a security guard who asked me to sign the log for visitors. He gave me a visitor tag to wear, directed me to the office, and asked me to check out with him before leaving. Even though I was met by a security officer when I arrived, the building had a very friendly and inviting atmosphere. The lunch hour was in progress during my arrival and the energy level among the students was high. The main office staff greeted me and let Peg know I was there. Several different languages were being spoken on the telephone by secretaries taking incoming calls. Signs of a culturally diverse population were everywhere, from seeing the students themselves to the way the walls were decorated.

Peg emerged from her office in the company of two students carrying reading books. After introducing herself, Peg explained to me that they had earned the opportunity in their reading class to come to the main office and read to her. She told me that students get to do this by earning reading points for completing the most books. It was obvious that the students were proud to have made the trip to the principal's office to show off their reading skills.

Peg's office was somewhat disheveled and had numerous stacks of papers and books on the table and desk. Student artwork covered two walls and other student projects were visible around the room. She explained that some students frequently need to store things in her office and she allows them to use her personal space. It was easy to tell that many students frequent the inside of her office for a variety of reasons.

Peg's Story

Peg is a thirteen year veteran of education. She spent eight years as a vocal music teacher at the high school level before pursuing an administrative career. Peg completed the administrative certification program at the University of Nebraska at Omaha in 1992. She spent one year as an administrative intern at a local high school and three years as the assistant principal at Melton before assuming the Melton Melton principalship this year. Although Peg is a first year principal she is in the same school where she served as an assistant for the three previous years. She considers it an advantage afforded her when she did not have to move to a different school to assume her first principalship.

Peg considers herself to be a leader who empowers her staff by working through a team approach. "However, there are some decisions that need to be mine alone. My goal is to make my staff a community of continual learners. The more training they have, the better they can do their jobs."

Peg assumes the role of building manager, but makes it clear that managing the building does not take the majority of her time. She does not handle a lot of the student discipline, but delegates that to her assistant principal. "I meet with a lot of team leaders and I have an instructional facilitator that I meet with on a regular basis." Much of Peg's time is spent with the overall building plan for the year and preparing for staff development offerings that will

help staff in the process of raising student achievement scores, and assisting staff that may be having difficulties. "I also manage the school improvement plan."

Peg finds personnel issues to be the most difficult part of her job and tends to like that aspect the least. She attributes her success as a principal to her ability to get good people to work with her. "I have an ability to organize and delegate and I think I am an excellent time manager." To have an effect on student learning Peg makes herself accessible to students. "I get into the classrooms a lot. I read to my students a lot and they read to me. I model the behavior I hope to see in my students, but the biggest thing is accessibility."

Staff members would characterize Peg as a "straight shooter." "I tell it like it is. They know exactly where they stand with me." Being straightforward with staff is Peg's style. She spends time interacting with staff in individual conferences and at team meetings as well as in groups at staff development activities and faculty meetings. "I have social events a couple times a year at my house with staff so we do fun things also."

Peg's idea of what makes a good principal is accessibility. "A principal must also be able to make a decision and not be afraid of conflict." Peg's expectation for herself as a principal is to be the best she can be at all times. "I want to show kindness and empathy as I would want kindness and empathy shown to me. I want to set an example for others and assist anybody in any way I can."

Peg's vision for Melton Middle School has somewhat been made for her. "This will become a middle level magnet sometime in the near future. The focus is yet to be determined. I think I have some say in that, but it's usually a community decision. In this part of town I would really like to see the emphasis

on dual language." In addition, Peg would like to see Melton Middle School provide a strong program in service-oriented professions like plumbing, welding, and other types of trades as careers. "If we as educators don't promote that there is going to be a loss of those types of professions, a loss of quality people to do those professions because we don't promote it like we should. I think we need to have a place in the community to support that, and the school is the first place to do it." Peg also wants to continue promoting the use of technology, presently a big part of the school. "Any career is now dealing with technology, so it is really important."

Bob - Principal at Park Middle School

The Setting

Sitting on top of a hill, Park Middle School has an expansive campus. An athletic stadium separates it from the nearby high school. Located near the downtown area of Omaha, Park has an enrollment of 950 students in grades seven and eight. Sixty-five percent of the students at Park qualify for the free or reduced lunch program. The massive two story brick building looks attractive from a distance, but loses some of its visual appeal when getting a closer look. The exterior of the building shows signs of abuse and is in need of repair. Parking at Park Middle School is difficult as the nearest visitor lot is across the large yard and across the street.

The security officer at the front door paid little or no attention to me as I entered and asked the nearest student to direct me to the office. The entry area is somewhat messy with student papers strewn about here and there. On the walls are posters advertising upcoming student activities and one with a list of students who are to report for after school detention. I was greeted in the main office by a pleasant secretary who went to Bob's office to let him know I had arrived. She asked me to sign the register and have a seat. Bob came to the waiting area and introduced himself. He told me that he was missing both of his assistant principals and one guidance counselor that day so he would ask me to wait a few minutes until he finished working with a concerned parent. Park was my last stop on that particular day, so I gladly waited a few minutes for Bob to finish the parent conference. Bob returned and we proceeded to his office for the interview.

Bob's office was clearly that of a person who is buried in paperwork. The desk, table, and shelves were all filled with books and papers that appeared to

be in no particular order. A place had to be cleared on the desk in order to place the tape recorder. Bob showed no concern about the state of his office space and told me to make myself comfortable for the interview.

Bob's Story

Bob has worked in education for twenty-nine years. The first four of those years were spent as a physical education and health teacher at a local high school. Following the closing of the high school Bob went to work as a community counselor for the Omaha Public Schools and spent the next fourteen years in that capacity. Bob earned his administrative certificate from the University of Nebraska at Omaha in 1977. As a community counselor Bob spent a great deal of his time in a problem solving role when there were concerns from students or their parents that related to school issues. This job helped prepare Bob to become an assistant principal at a local middle school. After spending five years as an assistant principal, Bob moved to another Omaha middle school and spent four years as an assistant principal before being named to the principalship at Park three years ago.

Depending on the time of year Bob's duties as principal at Park vary greatly. His job is to coordinate all of the academic and extra-curricular programs. "One of our main responsibilities is to follow the Omaha Public Schools appraisal process. That takes up a large portion of our time." Bob spends a great deal of his time in classrooms and working with teachers on instruction. He oversees the standardized testing process and the school improvement plan. Due to his busy schedule he sees the most difficult part of his job being time management. "I just never have enough time." The lack of available time can be attributed in part to the excessive number of meetings Bob must attend. "We have constant meetings, sometimes too many meetings,

but always on-going feedback."

Bob credits his success as a principal to the experiences he has had in his past that he can call upon to help him. "As a community counselor I was a troubleshooter and go to do a lot of the odd tasks that other principals wouldn't have to do. I made a lot of notes of what I would do if I was a principal."

The major role Bob plays in affecting student learning is through doing a good job of staffing the school. "Making sure I have the correct teachers teaching the correct subject matter, and I think that has an outstanding effect on kids."

Bob's interactions with others go well because he wants them to go well. "I'm the type of person that takes a look at problems and really likes to solve the problem, and organization and development are my key things. I like to develop new programs and listen to people." Bob enjoys working with the leadership group, the PTSA, and the student council. "They love to come and talk with me because I listen, and if I can, I let things happen. When we have our administrative meeting I get a lot of input and take a lot of feedback." Two assistant principals and a dean of students handle student discipline so Bob's contact with students tends to be in the classrooms and in student activities. The central office is viewed as very supportive and interactions with people there are generally positive.

According to Bob a good principal is someone who is able to assess the entire building and staff. "Sometimes you can be in a building and be in left field and just never have the pulse of the building. You have to plan for the building and staff based on their needs." Bob laughingly expressed his expectations for himself as being able to outlive his job. "To be able to retire." Bob's vision for Park Middle School is related to the area of technology. "I want

to bring this school into the twenty-first century. Right now we are behind in technology and we are going to upgrade it. We'll have a smooth transition."

Jeff - Principal of Hill Middle School

The Setting

Hill Middle School is located in central Omaha high on a hill overlooking the school athletic fields and a city park. The two-story brick structure looks impressively large from the nearest busy street which is two blocks away. A narrow winding street is the only access up the steep grade leading to Hill Middle School from the main arterial. The grounds are well groomed and landscaped. Tall pines give the building a fortress-like appearance. The expansive staff and visitor parking lot is located on the side hill below the school. With the side doors locked during the school day for security purposes it forces one to walk a long distance up the hill on the sidewalk to reach the main entrance.

The entry area at Hill is relatively narrow, but bright and cheerful in appearance. The main office lies directly ahead on the right side of the hall, and a wide stairway immediately to the right leads down to the gym area. A door with a sign reading "Staff Lounge" is immediately to the left. The entry area walls consist of display cases for student work and awards, and announcement boards. At a table outside the office sits a mentor working with an individual student. A security officer carrying a radio walks by me but offers neither assistance nor inquiry as to my presence.

I enter the door leading to the main office and am greeted by a secretary. She called Jeff, the principal, in his office and she told me he was finishing an administrative team meeting and would be out soon. I was offered a seat while I waited. A student who was waiting to leave school due to suspension sat nearby. A second student who had been removed from class for inappropriate behavior waited to see an assistant principal. The secretaries continually

answered calls on the phone and the intercom system that connected them with teachers in classrooms. Two assistant principals exited Jeff's office and he came to introduce himself. We entered his office to begin the personal interview.

Jeff's office was orderly and had a business-like appearance. The secretary handed Jeff three phone messages while he followed me in and he placed them by the phone on the desk. An "in box" on Jeff's desk indicated that he had plenty of work to do. I apologized for taking time from his busy schedule, but he assured me he was happy to give me some of his time to assist in this project.

Jeff's Story

Jeff is a veteran of twenty-seven years in education. Twelve of those years were spent in the classroom at Hill, teaching social studies and language arts to eighth graders. After completing the administrative certification program at the University of Nebraska at Omaha in 1985, Jeff came out of the classroom and into the assistant principalship at Hill. After spending five years in that role Jeff moved to a local high school to spend six more years as an assistant principal. To assume his first principalship Jeff moved back where he began his career as a teacher and for the last five years Jeff has been the principal of Hill Middle School. Hill has an enrollment of 670 seventh and eighth graders. Even though located in a middle class neighborhood fifty-eight percent of Hill's students qualify for the free or reduced lunch program.

Jeff considers himself a collaborator with the outstanding staff at Hill Middle School. "A lot of the ideas that we adopt here are things that staff members have brought to me and we go from there. I don't see myself as a great innovator or a real original creative type thinker. I see myself more as a

person who can get the staff to work together to collaborate and reach consensus on things. I've never pretended to have all the answers. No way. I've been doing this too long to think that."

Jeff describes his duties as principal at Hill as mountainous. "I see my first role as the instructional leader in the building and setting the tone for academics, also setting the tone for building climate. The way staff behaves, the way students behave, and we talk about that a lot. I meet with the students probably twice each quarter. It is twice each quarter so probably seven times during the course of the year, eight times during the course of the year and every time I talk to them we focus on some aspect of the building climate. The one constant that I always focus on is respect. We really emphasize that with both staff and students. If you want me to list all of my job responsibilities, I don't think I could even begin to do that, but I really do try to focus on the instructional aspect. Evaluating staff, getting in the classrooms and doing observations is something that I put a heavy priority on and when I talk to staff after observations and when I do the final evaluations the thing I really focus on is the instruction that the students get in that classroom and try to really focus on basic things, particularly for the beginning teachers. You know, setting the objective for the day, just the standard things you want to see in a good lesson. Good planning."

Jeff finds working with adults, staff members and parents, to be the most difficult aspect of his job. "What I find in working with students is that if a student is misbehaving or not doing his or her work I can pretty much say to a student in a straightforward way, this is what you need to do to improve this situation. Either change this behavior or start doing this to get your work completed. Students respond pretty well to that. They don't always do exactly what you tell them, but they respond pretty well to that kind of directive. That doesn't work

with adults. It just takes a lot more time. You just have to be a lot more careful about how you approach things with adults."

Jeff credits the other people working at Hill Middle School for helping him be successful principal. "We have some outstanding people here. Teachers, and I have two great assistant principals on the administrative team, so when I delegate responsibilities to them I can pretty much forget about them because I know they are going to take care of it, and it's just a matter of checking back to see how things are going. It takes a tremendous burden off my shoulders. That's great. I have some outstanding leadership in the teaching ranks too."

A daily priority for Jeff is to spend time in the classrooms in order to have a positive effect on the teaching and learning at Hill. "I let students know that I keep learning as a top priority. When I talk to students we talk about academics. That is something that we address all the time, what our expectations are about. Doing work in the classroom, doing homework, and what kind of things they need to have when they get to class, being prepared for class, those kinds of things are important. They do hear me talk about that a lot. And when I speak with parents, that's something that I address all the time, as well."

Interactions with students come in a variety of forms for Jeff while going about his duties at Hill. He makes an effort to be in the hallways during passing time and works to learn students' names. "I do get involved in some disciplinary issues, but I also, because of my position, have opportunity to interact with kids, for example who are selected for Rotary Club Honor Roll or National Junior Honor Society. With the students I get a real variety. On the negative end, the discipline, which can be unpleasant, but also on the other end of the spectrum, and everything in between."

Jeff welcomes daily interactions with staff members, and an open door

policy in Jeff's office make people feel comfortable to approach him with comments, questions, and concerns. The openness of the principal's office door makes it difficult for Jeff to complete the paperwork that can, at times, seem insurmountable. "You know when you're in the middle of doing your budget or whatever and two or three people need to come in and talk to you its's hard to get things done. It's hard to complete a task that you started without interruptions. In fact I can't remember that it's ever happened. Maybe on Saturday morning." Many questions and other types of information come Jeff's way so he is able to remain aware of what is happening in the building.

Attending an excess number of committee meetings and getting directives from the central office create a point of frustration for Jeff. "I understand the necessity of doing all those things, but all of that takes you away from the building. The meetings are not here, but some place else, so it's just time away from what I do as the top priority. Some of the meetings relate to instruction and some do not. Some are for other issues which may or may not have any purpose for us."

Jeff's contact with parents are many, and generally positive. "A lot of times parents are calling because they have concerns or questions. Occasionally it's someone who is really upset about something, but that doesn't happen too often. I also have a lot of good parent contacts, particularly at parent teacher conference times and things like that. I get a lot of parents who stop by to talk to me as they are leaving just to let me know how well things are going for them and their child. So, again, a real variety of contacts."

Working long hours and continually looking for ways to improve what happens at Hill Middle School, Jeff has high expectations for himself as a principal. "I continue to look at things the building is doing, in general. I look at

test results, grades, and discipline referrals and all those different kinds of things and try to see what the areas are that we need to focus attention on for improvement. I try to be involved in lots of different activities at the school. I try to be visible at events. I want parents to know that I'm involved and active. I want students to know the same thing. It's a big job. It's a big commitment."

Jeff's idea of what makes a good principal is for the principal to be focused, to have an idea of what he wants to have happening in his school, and to focus on getting that accomplished. "Somebody who has good people skills can get people to do things that they might not always want to do and can persuade people to change some things that they are doing to improve and try new things. You have to be somewhat of a risk taker, I think. Again, be willing to try things that you haven't always done, or in fact have never done."

Jeff's vision for Hill Middle School is one of high student achievement. "I want Hill to be at the top level in terms of academic achievement for all of the kids. That's not just the kids who come in with everything together when they get here. I want all of our kids to be achieving at the top. We have a long ways to go to get there, but we're working on it and we're trying new things all the time. We're looking for new things all the time, sending people to conferences and to visit other schools. We are looking for ways that we can either adjust or change what we're doing to try to reach that goal."

Nora - Principal of Metro Middle School

The Setting

Metro Middle School, located on the outskirts of the city, houses 880 students in the seventh and eighth grades. Metro is a two-story brick structure with numerous portable classrooms, some of which have been added to accommodate the increased enrollment the school has experienced this year. Nearby sits a massive high school building with a huge parking area, filled to overflowing with the cars of students and staff. The neighborhood facing the other three sides of Metro is an older residential area. The building and grounds are not attractive to the eye as the building is somewhat in a state of disrepair and portable classrooms detract from the appearance of any school building. The need for paint in some areas of the campus is evident.

The staff parking area is located in the rear of the building, next to the portable classrooms. I parked there as a visitor parking area was not designated at any location closer to the front entrance. I found an entrance open and entered the building from the back. I nearly made it to the office area before I was noticed by a security officer and was asked if I could be helped. I was directed to the office where I was greeted by a very friendly secretary. The main office is very bright and welcoming in appearance and feeling. Nora was ready for our appointment and came to the front to greet me and take me to her office.

Nora's office is immaculately decorated and nothing is out of place. A large cherry wood desk fills a good portion of the modestly sized room. Shelves and walls are adorned with professionally done pottery and artwork. The furniture and fixtures are all color coordinated with the walls and window coverings. After a cup of coffee we began our conversation.

Nora's Story

Nora has spent the last twenty-five years as an educator. She began her career as a teacher of eighth grade English and history in an Omaha middle school. She spent eight years in that role before moving to another middle school in the city to teach English and history for four years. During those twelve years as a teacher she also had the opportunity to teach some classes in the areas of French and art. Nora completed the Education Administration program at the University of Nebraska at Omaha in 1988 and began her career as a school administrator the next year. She spent three years as an assistant principal at a middle school in Omaha before moving to the assistant principalship at one of the local high schools for the next nine years. Now in her first year as a principal, Nora feels "back at home" in the middle school. Year one as a principal has been filled with excitement and has been one of great change at Metro Middle School.

As a leader in the building, Nora describes herself as creative and innovative. "I love change. I like doing something different every day. I like challenge and I like to challenge my people." She sees herself as a people person and very child-centered. "I'm very open. My door is usually always open and I spend a lot of time with people. I love children. I didn't teach because I couldn't do something else. I taught because that's what I was born to do, and so I'm in my niche."

Nora's duties as principal at Metro are many. She is the overseer of everything that happens in the day to day operation of the school. "I sit on all the committees and try to make sure that we maintain a focus on academics and our focus on children. I see that our building continues to be child-centered and continues to be about kids leaving with a good educational background and a

good feeling about the experiences they have here." Nora also has a hand in working with student discipline. "If we are having some problems with some youngsters who aren't fitting in or we're having some discipline problems, then we approach those quickly and see that our classrooms are not full of disruptive behavior." Developing an appropriate physical environment for students learning became an early priority for Nora during her first year as principal. "When I first came here the building was literally a dump, so I had to spend time with repairs that had gone unattended for years. If anything, I did cosmetic changes." Nora also made professional changes. "I focused a lot on the teachers in terms of them acting like professionals, being treated like professionals. I've listened to their concerns about that from the past. There were evidently some problems here so I've spent a lot of time building team. I'm a great person for working as a team. I can't do it by myself. I need them. I try to make sure that the decisions I make are team decisions. The buck stops here, but I get a lot of input before I just go out and say we're going to do this. I research a lot of stuff. I've spent time looking at an IB (International Baccalaureate) program. I would see my job right now as someone that is putting together a finely knit team."

The most difficult aspect of Nora's job as a first year principal has been the overwhelming amount of what she has yet to learn and is still unable to anticipate. "When you're brand new there are just so many things that you really don't know. I think it was an eye opener to see exactly what the principal does as far as paperwork, files, reports that have to be in, the budget, appraisals of teachers, and to try and understand all of those pieces. The overall job encompasses so many things that it has been difficult. The paperwork alone, and the voice mail and getting back to people is overwhelming for the first year.

I don't know which ones to throw away, which ones to keep, and which ones to file."

Nora attributes her success in the principalship in part, to being lucky, and having the ability to work with others. "I think that for some people, God just smiles on them and allows them to kind of blunder . . . (laughs) No. I think a lot of it is my ability to work with people effectively. I'm willing to laugh at myself and I'm willing to learn. I think that as long as you understand that you don't know everything and that you need people surrounding you. Hopefully you surround yourself with people far more intelligent than yourself or as least as intelligent as yourself with many many different gifts and talents so that you will have advisors there that say 'no', or 'have you thought about this?' I think the success of anybody is who's in your cabinet, who you surround yourself with, and how open you are to people sharing ideas with you. They may not be ideas you have at all, but they are ideas that you can appreciate."

Nora's work as principal has an effect on student learning. Two specific job targets are focused on student achievement. "I'm looking an overall plan for how we make sure that students are learning, and I do two things. One, I think is try to hire absolutely the best qualified teachers, because what children learn comes from how well they are instructed and the environment in which they learn. The key component there has got to be the instructors in the classroom. You get top notch instructors and you'll have top notch learning. So I'm very much involved in that and the personnel that work with our children, I think that's important. And then the other is looking for ways to make our teachers feel that academics are important for youngsters, especially at the middle level. We are looking at the International Baccalaureate programs that are throughout the country. I'm looking at flying to various schools this summer and on weekends

to see what is happening. You know, why there's an achievement there, what's the key there? But I want to see it. I want to feel it. I want to taste it. I want to walk through the building and experience it. So I have a committee and we are looking at overall achievement. And that was new. I formed that committee this year, not just for CAT (California Achievement Test). The CAT is just a small piece of achievement. I'm looking at ways that across the board we emphasize that, and not just once a year."

Nora would rather have me ask staff members how they would characterize her than to ask her to predict their responses. "I think they would think very highly of me. I came in and cleaned up some stuff that needed to be cleaned. I'm not an old shoe or a warm fuzzy. I'm pretty demanding. I'm not sure they know me but they know that my expectations are high. They run things by me because I have pretty high standards. My belief is that if we do it, we do it right. We want to do it so that everyone else is talking about how well we did it. That's just me and they're learning that. I'm after my secretaries about making sure this office is professional looking and when somebody walks in, I want it clean. I want these counters de-junked. I want it to look like you walked into a good environment for youngsters. I'm after my custodians about keeping my halls picked up. I want those windows to shine. I call them in and say my halls are a mess. I need it done. I'm not dictatorial, but my standards are pretty high. I look at programs. I look at brochures. They know to bring them in because it may not meet the standard and they have to take it back. I'm just real fussy about all that goes out to the public. I have a teacher here that does my spell check for me. We have spell check, but I have someone here that is extremely good at editing so I make sure everything is edited before it leaves this building. I think they'd tell you I'm demanding. I think they'll tell you I'm

warm, I'm friendly, I'd laugh, I'll hug you. The bottom line is I want you to get the job done."

Nora has many opportunities to interact with students on a regular basis. Daily cafeteria duty and supervision before school in the morning are the times Nora uses to spend time talking with students informally and getting to know them. During the school year a first year teacher struggled with her classes until she applied for a leave of absence. A long-term substitute teacher was hired to replace the original teacher, but problems in one of the classes continued. Nora stepped in to assist the substitute teacher with the group of eighth grade science students. "I do not have a background in science, but I have a background in teaching. I believe a good teacher can just about teach anything. The sub is not meeting my standards so I've been there with them and we're team teaching them together." Nora has enjoyed having the opportunity to be in a classroom on a consistent basis working with a particular group of students and sees it as having been beneficial for her as well as the students. "It's been wonderful for me. I've gotten to know a new group of kids because I'm with them. Those ninety kids have gotten to know me. We get to teach and interact, so they see me in a whole different light. They see me not only as their principal, but also a teacher. My colleagues around also see me in a teaching mode because I'm there. Until now, a frustration for Nora in her job has been that she has very little opportunity to use her teaching skills. "If I could be in heaven I'd like one classroom that I got to teach. If I could free up my day so I have a group of kids. I'd like it because I want to keep my hand on the real pulse of what's going on."

Most of Nora's interactions with parents have been positive, but one set of parents have been extremely difficult to please. "Nothing I did could please

them, nothing the teachers did, nothing. We have ended up with several incidents where it was always our fault, so we've learned from that. You know you are going to have some people, I don't care what you do, where you're never going to rise to their level. You're just never going to please them. That was hard for me because I'm used to being able to resolve things and have people leave pretty comfortable. These two people just aren't able to do that. It's been interesting, seeing the difference in the protectiveness of parents at this level."

Frequent, positive interactions describe the contact Nora has with the central office. She attends monthly principals' meetings in which there is an opportunity to interact with the school district superintendent. The central office personnel also assist Nora in the hiring of staff members for Metro. "The other things we do with central office are really workshops and opportunities for professional growth. One of the best workshops I attended was on standards assessment and it was great. It's hard to hit the ball out of the park every time though. It depends on the speaker. I think as long as you follow the policies and the procedures central office will back you to the hilt. You get in trouble when you don't do what you're supposed to do."

Staff members at Metro take advantage of the open door on Nora's office. They bring to her a variety of topics for discussion. Some are personal while others are strictly professional. Individuals have come to Nora and discussed marital difficulties, and others simply come to dream and plan with her about how they can make improvements in the programs at Metro Middle School. The appraisal process plays a large part in Nora's interactions with her teaching staff. "Appraisals are time consuming, but they're fun to do. I have one with a teacher I'm going to visit with where I'm really disappointed. I went in the room

and having met him and talked to him, I really expected to see a dynamite room. I didn't see that, so this will be a good conference. The area he is teaching is an area I taught so we'll be talking about curriculum and I'll want to know why there's no energy there."

Nora's perception of what makes a good principal is very simple. "The best principals I've ever met are people that relate well to other people, who have high standards, and love children. Everything else, I think is learned." Nora does not necessarily picture herself in the role of middle school principal throughout the remainder of her career. "I would like to be here three to five years. I would like to move to either a new middle school and open it up and do a whole new program, or take a job at the central office level. I've always been interested in hiring and recruiting teachers and the whole area of instruction. Down the line I've toyed with the idea of a doctorate because I think the D-R in front of your name certainly allows you to be able to speak and have someone think you know something. I don't think that's true, but I think the perception of the public is that. So for only that reason would I need one. In our district it allows you to get a little more money, but happiness at the job is far more important to me. If I'm not happy I don't really care what the money is. I'd never take a job just because of the money."

Nora's vision for Metro is one of higher academic achievement and establishing a quality learning environment. "My challenge is for this community to see us as a good learning environment, fight-free as much as possible, a safe school, a good academic school, and a good place for their youngster to be for a couple years. I want a lot of parent involvement in that because I think that's the key to your school becoming better. Parents bring a lot of energies." Nora is determined to hire support personnel who can speak

the variety of languages now spoken by the students in the school. She is aware of the difficulty in finding and hiring those individuals. Another challenge is bringing back some of the families that Metro is losing to the neighboring school that has the reputation of being academically superior to Metro. Nora knows that changing public perception of a school takes time. "I was looking at what other schools are doing to turn that whole thing around. I'm going to have to get the word out that we're doing something different. That begins with materials you send out and what you put in your hallways as well as recruiting and getting the best teachers. All of that is part of the big challenge. The ultimate challenge for this school is that I want us to be absolutely, beyond the shadow a doubt, the best middle level school in the country. In the country!"

John - Principal at Franklin Middle School

The Setting

Franklin Middle School has an enrollment of 850 seventh and eighth graders. Located in a low income neighborhood in the north central part of the city, seventy-eight percent of Franklin's students qualify for the free or reduced lunch program. The two story brown brick building is the largest structure of the middle schools in the city. The campus is connected to that of a large high school, only separated by an athletic stadium. The staff and visitor parking area is located on the side of the building and is is enclosed by a tall chain link fence. The staff entrance remains locked during the school day and access for visitors must be gained by walking around the building to the front door.

The grounds are neat and clean in appearance, with newly landscaped areas next to the building. Although the building is relatively old, it has the appearance of a school in operation less than ten years. The front entrance doors are located at the top of an extremely wide set of cement steps that gives one the feeling of walking up the steps to a government building. The entry area inside is an expansive area that would easily hold several hundred people if necessary. Displays of student work are located around the lobby area and the wall colors are bright, giving the area an appearance of being even larger than it is. Upon my arrival inside Franklin John was coming down the hall directly in front of me and saw me immediately. He came to greet me and took me to his office.

John's office is the largest, most modern one of any middle school principal in the city. New furniture and fixtures in the office area are the result of an extensive renovation project recently completed at Franklin. Windows to the outside allow a great deal of natural light to enter the office, giving it a non-

threatening feeling tone. John's desk and work space are very neat with no excess paper apparent on the desk or table. The location of the office, secluded from the hallways, makes it an area that is quiet and noise from students in the halls is not heard. Immediately next to John's office is a conference room equipped with a large meeting table and chairs as well as a equipment that allows people in the room to view other parts of the building as well as broadcast pictures from the meeting room throughout the building via a closed circuit video network. John is able to address the entire staff and student body while they are in classrooms without leaving this room by using this system.

John's Story

John is a veteran of thirty-three years in the field of education. Of those years, five and one half were spent as a teacher of physical education and social studies in a local middle school. John moved from the classroom to the central office and worked for two and one half years as a community counselor. In the role of community counselor, John was a liaison between community members and the school district and served as a problem solver for educational situations requiring special programming for students. John received certification in Education Administration from the University of Nebraska at Omaha in 1972. From the community counselor position, John move to an assistant principalship for one semester in a local high school before being relocated to a ninth grade attendance center and serving as assistant principal for the next four years. In 1978, while working as assistant principal at the ninth grade center, he completed the doctoral program at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. John was named to the principalship at Franklin Middle School in 1980 and has served in that role for the last twenty years.

Having been a principal for twenty years, John has learned the value of

giving staff members the opportunity to have input in what goes on in the building. "I would describe myself as a person that is certainly not top down. I let staff have ownership in decisions and try to get them involved as much as possible so that they have a feel for the vision of the school. Certainly it's important to let the staff know what one's philosophy is too, but I try to have a participatory management style."

Duties for the principal at Franklin are diverse, but working with staff remains a priority for John in his daily work. "I certainly work with staff on a daily basis on appraisal. Instruction is probably the key. I try to get out in the classrooms as much as possible, especially setting up the appraisal process I try to do all the new people and I give my assistants a few of those to do also." Public relations make up a large part of what John does as principal. "I spend time working with our parents, working with agencies, community groups, and working with students. I do all of the State and Federal reporting also." John is responsible for the financial resources and their distribution. "Budget is another part of my job. I do the annual order, annual text book order also." With an administrative team consisting of John, two assistant principals, and one dean of students, job responsibilities are shared and the teamwork approach is necessary in order for all tasks to be completed daily. "I carry over whenever I have an assistant principal that is out of the building. We have kind of a team atmosphere here where I'll cover for them and do their work. I just don't leave that to the other assistants right now."

The two most difficult aspects of John's job as principal are those that also take the greatest portion of his time, staff and budget issues. " The most difficult thing I would say is working with people that don't want to buy in. I think the secret to that whole situation is not having that become contagious. You try

to localize that type of thing. You put the pressure on certain staff and they'll ride the fence for a while. Certainly the middle school philosophy has changed a lot of things at Franklin. We piloted this venture probably twelve years ago and as a result of this piloting, we in serviced the other middle schools and brought in things like teaming and advisor advisee and exploratory programs. Most of the people do a very positive job here, and like working with middle level kids. This is probably the toughest job in education, working with middle level kids. Secondly, I would say that probably the other most difficult part of my job is probably to keep working with the budget and trying to squeeze the dollars to make the program go. I do a lot of things with student recognition and incentives and part of that whole thing is you have a budget for that and budget is always a problem each year because staffing is probably 85% of your budget. That eats up so much money. So budget is probably the second most difficult."

Having been a middle school principal for twenty years, John attributes his success as a school leader to having a vision, using participatory decision making, and recognizing people for their efforts. "I think probably my vision of where I want to take the school and having an acute sense of what's possible. I think the characteristics of my day to day style of trying to involve staff and make them feel they are a part of the school. They have ownership and direction of the vision that we have together. We also try to acknowledge staff and recognize staff as much as possible. We have a number of things that we recognize staff and kids for. We have many incentive programs. We have the Renaissance Program, a program where we recognize academics, which has been highly successful for us. We don't have athletic pep rallies any more. Now we have academic pep rallies."

Having high expectations for everyone in the school is what John perceives to be the most important thing he does that affects student learning at Franklin. "I think it is the role of the principal to set the expectations as high as possible, raising the bar and making sure that kids and staff know that everybody can learn. Everybody can achieve, and that's across the board. Whether the kid's special education or not. So I think it all comes down to expectations."

According to John, most staff members would characterize him as a team player. "I'm a person that recognizes staff for the job that they do on a daily basis. We're a team. We pattern our team work mentality so that we are all in this together. Since I've been here I've always tried to have that team work atmosphere and most of the people have bought into that." John also perceives that his staff members look at him as a capable leader with a strong work ethic.

John tries to make interacting with students a daily priority. He enjoys the supervision time in the hallways and cafeteria as well as supervision of the entry and exit times before and after school. "We have grade level student advisory groups that meet monthly with the counselor and me. They can bring problems or concerns, but if they bring a problem they have to bring a solution. They have forms to write this out and organize it. We have done a lot of things through these student representatives, and their main charge is to take minutes of what we talk about and they take it back the very next day to their advisory groups." John established a principal's challenge, a program involving students who had numerous disciplinary referrals the previous year. By not getting disciplinary referrals, students could earn incentive coupons called principal dollars to purchase items at the student store. All students who do not receive any discipline referrals are eligible to have a popcorn and soda party

with him at the end of each quarter. At this party students names are placed in a drawing and winners receive prizes that have been donated by local merchants.

Staff recognition is a part of monthly faculty meetings at Franklin. "At every faculty meeting I try to have refreshments for them. Whether it's coffee or hot tea and cookies, or soda and popcorn and try to have incentive drawings for them. For example, I'll give them T-shirts or gift certificates and we'll draw for those. Staff members like that and they feel appreciated. We have a recognition program for staff where each staff member has a Franklin Middle School beverage mug. It started this off where certain people were given these and there were goodies put in here. I allowed each person who had one to select another person to receive one at the following faculty meeting. They would present these and then tell the staff why they were presenting this to them, relating the things that this person has done. I would give them like seven or eight dollars to fill this with what they wanted and we did probably four or five at each faculty meeting. This was for all staff. This is for paras, for everybody, security, etc. Incentives and recognition are a big thing, and patting people on the back to make them feel part of the situation in having that teamwork type of atmosphere."

John has a good relationship with the central office personnel. He volunteers for committees and various projects to do his part to assist the overall district with its purpose. As a result he gets favors from the central office he might otherwise not get. "I've done a lot of favors for Human Resources. For example, I needed to run a second in school suspension room because my in school suspension room was getting full and we were having a back log of kids. We had a sub come out for three or four days and had a second in school

suspension room. So you work with the assistant superintendent on that and one favor gets another favor. Part of that situation is that the principals need to be team players down there and basically support what they're trying to accomplish. So many things come from their offices that take involvement here."

At Franklin, John works with a booster club rather than a traditional Parent Teacher Association (PTA). "We don't have per se a PTA, but we meet once a month. We've had potlucks where people come in. It's difficult. For some reason at the middle school level it's difficult to keep parent involvement. Especially, since they're only here for two years and there's no graduation. This is kind of a no man's land as far as parent involvement. I've struggled here with parent involvement. I can have anywhere from maybe fifteen parents to forty or fifty parents. It depends on the activity. One of the things I like to do is tie student activities into booster club meetings where we have performances. I might have the debate team perform one night or the swing choir or the instrumental jazz band or something like that and parents come out for that. Newsletters can get kind of lengthy so I try to send one pagers out to parents, every month or so, giving them updates on any problems or concerns or things I need help with. Parents are more apt to read one pagers, than look through the entire newsletter."

According to John there are many qualities that make a strong principal. A good principal must be a people person and must be highly skilled in the areas of written and verbal communication and must have a sense of humor. He is a believer in organization and vision. "You've got to have people know where they're going. You've got to set the expectations high, but you have to have a shared vision or it's going to be very difficult to take anybody with you.

Teamwork and being able to be part of the team effort (are important). I think flexibility and being able to be flexible (are important). You can say you have to have good judgment, but judgment is a given. You have to have common sense. You have to sprinkle things with common sense as if you were in that person's shoes. If I was having to give someone a verbal reprimand or go through a situation I always place myself in their shoes. (I ask myself) How would I feel if I was in that seat? How would I want to be talked to? How would I want to be responded to?" John has developed the ability to discipline someone without making it a negative situation that defeats the person's confidence. "When the person leaves the office they still have saved face and their head is up. Dealing with staff that way comes with experience."

John's expectations for himself as a principal are very high. He expects to be a role model for his staff and students. "I need to show my work ethic and if I expect someone to be out in the halls I need to be out in the halls. When you are a principal you have to sacrifice a lot of things, your own kids activities etc. but the work ethic part of it is you've got to be willing to put in the hours. Ours are ten to twelve hour days. Very rarely am I out of here in less than ten. That's just a practicality in administration, that if you are a clock watcher or you've got any problems with putting in time then it's not going to work for you. You've got to make the sacrifices too, with your own personal family." John also wants to be a known as an ethical, trustworthy person who works hard for the benefit of children.

John's vision for Franklin Middle School is for it to be the best school around and to have everyone agree that all students can learn. He wants to have expectations remain high for everyone and to accept no apathy from students. "We have a tough school here with a lot of tough kids, but the bottom

line is that the teacher's in charge of that classroom and I expect kids to be in the classroom and do their very best. If a student disrupts the right of that teacher to teach, that student is not going to be in that classroom. Discipline here is a priority. Our assistant principals work their tails off, but discipline and management is the key to the success of instruction in the classroom."

Jack - Principal of Jones Middle School

The Setting

Located on a hillside in the center of an expansive campus on the edge of the city, Jones Middle School serves over 500 seventh and eighth graders who come from very diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Although over sixty percent of the students at Jones qualify for the free or reduced lunch program, a large number of students belong to some of the most affluent families in the city. The socioeconomic status of the Jones Middle School students can be described as having students ranging "from third generation welfare recipients to country club members." A single story structure of brown brick, Jones covers a considerable amount of square area. A large parking area located down the hill from the building stretches from the school to the nearest street, nearly a full block away. The entry area consists of a hallway that widens as it leads to the office area. The entry is relatively dark due to the single story design and a lack of glass surrounding the doorway itself. An overhanging porch area prohibits much natural light from entering the building, giving a first-time visitor a somewhat unfriendly feeling about the building.

A smiling male student walking down the hall directed me to the main office where I was greeted by a friendly secretary. She asked me to sign the visitor log and then contacted Jack on the phone to let him know I was there. Jack was meeting with two students at the time and I was asked to take a seat and wait for them to finish their meeting. The office waiting area is extremely small and dark. Having insufficient artificial light, the office does not have a welcoming atmosphere. The secretaries were busy answering telephones and calls from teachers in the classrooms on the intercom system. Ten minutes later the students emerged from Jack's office and he came to greet me and take me

to his office.

Jack's office is very small. A large desk top is filled with piles of paper, journals, notebooks, and other miscellaneous items. Two chairs for visitors are available across the desk from where Jack sits. A door connecting the office with the hallway makes the office a noisy place when students are in the hall during passing time. I placed my tape recorder on a stack of papers on the desk and we began the interview.

Jack's Story

Jack completed the doctoral program at Drake University in 1984 and has been an educator in the Omaha Public Schools for the last thirty-two years. Jack began his career in a local Title I elementary school and spent three years in a self-contained classroom teaching all subjects to sixth graders. After a short teaching career he moved to administration in an Omaha elementary building, where he spent three years as assistant principal. Jack's next administrative assignment evolved into ten years as an assistant principal at a local middle school. Jones Middle School was Jack's next stop as he was named assistant principal and held that position for one year. After one year as the assistant principal at Jones, Jack was moved into the principalship, where he has remained for the last fifteen years.

Providing the best possible learning climate is what Jack perceives to be as his main function as principal and educational leader at Jones. "I think my first priority, of course, is kids; providing a learning atmosphere for them, providing a model for them in terms of diversity. My population is probably sixty-five percent minority. I feel a very personal responsibility to be the kind of person I'd like them to grow up to be, but I do have the same burden for all of my kids. I try to be the kind of principal . . one of the things I say at all of my staff

meeting is . . to my teachers, treat these kids under your care just like you want your personal kids, at whatever school they might be, to be treated."

In addition to developing and maintaining the learning environment Jack has other related duties he must see to daily. "Number one, instructional leader. It gives me a chance to be in the classroom knowing what is being taught, how it's being taught, how it's being received, and how it's being learned. I'm the overall food services manager and custodial engineer. I'm the grounds keeper and the liaison to the community. Overall, the buck stops right here. I just want to be the kind of person that gives it my best."

Although Jack is very positive in nature and optimistic about his school and the learning that takes place, the job is not without its difficulties. "One is when there is a personnel problem that could lead to termination. That is very difficult and does not get any easier. Another is when we have to divorce a kid from their regular day school situation. That's very difficult because I worry about what is going to happen to them. I realize that the very best things that happen, that are planned for kids, happen during the school day. It does not happen in the shopping malls. It does not happen on the streets. The best place, the safest place they can be, is in school. So when you take a kid out of that situation you have to wonder what's going to happen, and what's going to be the breakdown."

Jack attributes his success as a middle school principal to his commitment to children and their education. "I'm a very kid-oriented person. Even my bosses would prefer me to be task-oriented, but I'm a people-oriented person, and as a result, I usually know all of my kids by name. I know something about them and so when we talk, we talk team-wise. When I talk to a parent we are on the same team. And we are here to help their child. I'm

usually successful in getting that thought across to the parent and so it goes easier."

Discipline, respect, and life lessons are an important part of the learning program that Jack oversees at Jones. "I think the most important thing I do is help children take ownership in what they are here for. When they come in they know that this is their school and I'm here to serve them and help them also to insure that they follow the rules. Life is full of rules. Rules don't stop when they get to the schoolhouse door. We don't have a lot of rules but we do have rules. That's a learning part of their lives also because it helps them in later life. In terms of lifelong learning, they know that there are certain standards. We teach values in this building. I know that's not necessarily the most popular thing, but in our handbook that's one of the first statements you will see. We do teach values in this building. My kids need to know that there is a way to respect people, that certain things don't belong to them, and that things are earned and not just appropriated."

Staff members at Jones would characterize Jack as a fair person who wants the best for them and for the students. A survey is completed by staff members regarding their perceptions of the principal as leader in the building. "Presently, a person from our office of accountability has access to the building where he can go in and check classrooms that are going, which reflects back on me. I met with my discipline committee just last night. They had some concerns. We addressed those concerns and I let them know that we will aggressively deal with problems, but we must understand that kids are our clientele. There are such things as due process, there are certain things we want to handle just as they'd like their kids to be handled. They don't want to lose the human touch because they are working with ten to fourteen year olds."

Jack tries to spend a great portion of his day interacting with students in an effort to get to know them better. Spending time in this manner is what Jack credits with building the personal relationships necessary for him to become the role model he wants to be for his students. "I work cafeteria every day so I interact with the whole student body. I take outside duty in the morning to spend it with kids. It's not all talking to them. A lot of it is just observation. After school I work dismissal, so I'm there, and throughout the day a kid can fill out a card and I will call them down so I can visit with them. I get probably half a dozen kids who ask to see me every day. They can talk to me about personal items, or they can talk to me about academics. We have a policy that if a child is having problems, as they see it, with a teacher, that comes to me automatically. It does not go to my assistants. Assistants deal with children who have been sent by teachers and if it comes into that meeting that the kid thinks they are having a problem with that teacher, it is shifted to me."

Jack's interactions with staff take place throughout the day. "I try to at least stop by the door of every classroom in this building every period I am here, just to make a round. I talk to teachers all day long. In fact, if there is a teacher who comes in in the morning and we perceive that there is a problem, one of my administrators will visit with that teacher before they leave that day. Unfortunately, sometimes teachers bring baggage in with them in the morning that can affect their teaching day, so we try to offer any help we can offer before that day ends. Plus, it means less work for us."

As a principal, Jack has always had a close relationship with the personnel at the central administrative offices. "I can call there. It's not a bad place to call. We know that support is there, so we are invited, if we are having a problem, to call central office. I probably call central office at least once a day,

to some different departments. We do have a situation that I've always enjoyed. That is I've always, as a principal, had very close contact with the superintendent."

Parent contact for Jack is a daily occurrence. Most of the parents who call or come to Jones are those with a concern. "Most parents who want to say something nice about you will say it, but they won't stop by the school to say it. If they stop by I usually try to take time out. I don't require appointments. I feel that if a parent takes off lunch to come to school with a concern, then I can meet with them. In fact, in our handbook, it says to anybody, kids especially, you don't need an appointment to see an administrator. If we are unavailable, you fill out a card and we'll call you in, but you don't need an appointment. That includes the principal's office."

"Several things," according to Jack, are included in what makes a good principal. "One, to be informed. You need to know your job. You need to know people, and how to perceive people. A good principal is one that keeps his ear to the ground, knows what's coming, and bases some decisions on what has happened in the past. This gives you perspective and stability, being able to put yourself in that parent's place, because besides being a principal, I'm also a father. Having the desire to work in the community, because a lot of times you don't live in the community where you work. I'm probably different, in that I live in this community, so my neighbors are also my students. You'd think that most people wouldn't want to be in that position, but I've enjoyed it."

Jack's expectations for himself as principal of Jones Middle School are not purely for himself, but for the students upon whom he has had an effect. "At this point in my career I have a lot of second generation kids, probably forty kids in this building. I had their parents in schools where I've been. I even walk in the

grocery store and people say, "Oh, how you doing Jack? You still around? We are glad to see you," that sort of thing. "I really enjoyed my time when I was there. I remember you." It has gotten to the point where one has said, "My grandmother remembers you." So, I've been around for a long time, and my expectation is for those kids to grow up to be contributing citizens in the community."

Jack's vision for Jones Middle School has changed over the years since he first became principal fifteen years ago. "When I wrote my vision years and years ago it was that Jones will become a place where kids, when they grow up, would have fond memories of this as a learning institution and as a place where decisions in terms of their life goals were reached. We know kids kind of decide what they want to be around seventh grade and we have those kids come back. I've had many teachers who now teach for OPS who went to school at Jones. My vision would now be that teachers would adopt the same vision as they work with kids, for our kids to grow up and be contributing citizens. I want Jones Middle School to be a warm learning environment, where kids want to learn, and where kids who come to school not-so-prepared to learn might learn to learn. So, that's all involved in our vision. I say our vision. It started out as my vision, yes, but the desire is that it took everybody to adopt that vision."

Quantitative Data Analysis

A portion of the total data gathered during this study were quantified by using the Principal Preparation Survey. Each principal participant responded to the forty-two item survey in order to rate their perceptions of the value of the skill and knowledge bases of each of the twenty-one performance domains in their present jobs. A seven point Likert scale was used to quantify responses to the forty-two items. The following is a summary of those data.

Table 1.1
Mean Scores for Knowledge and Skill Bases of the Twenty-one
Performance Domains

Performance Domain	Knowledge Base Mean	Skill Base Mean	Total Mean
1) Leadership	6.77	6.77	6.77
2) Information Collection	6.44	5.44	6.50
3) Problem Analysis	6.00	6.66	6.33
4) Judgment	6.88	6.88	6.88
5) Organizational Management	6.22	6.44	6.33
6) Implementation	6.11	5.55	5.83
7) Delegation	6.33	6.55	6.44
8) Instruction/Learning Environment	6.88	6.77	6.83
9) Curriculum Design	5.22	5.44	5.33
10) Student Guidance/Development	5.00	5.00	5.00
11) Staff Development	5.88	6.00	5.94
12) Measurement/Evaluation	5.88	5.88	5.88
13) Resource Allocation	6.77	6.22	6.50
14) Motivating Others	6.66	6.66	6.66
15) Sensitivity	6.22	6.77	6.50
16) Oral/Non-verbal Expression	6.11	6.33	6.22
17) Written Expression	6.33	6.66	6.50
18) Philosophical/Cultural Values	6.77	5.88	6.33
19) Legal and Regulatory Functions	5.77	6.33	6.05
20) Policy and Political Issues	5.55	5.55	5.55
21) Public and Media Relationships	5.88	6.55	6.22

Table 1.1 represents the principals' perceptions of the importance of the knowledge and skill bases for each of the twenty-one performance domains in their work as principals. Data were taken from scoring the Likert-type items on

the Principal Preparation Survey, using a 1 (low) to 7 (high) importance scale. A mean score for each base category was calculated. A total mean score for each performance domain was determined by averaging the knowledge and skill base mean scores.

The mean scores for both the knowledge and skill bases ranged from 5.00 to 6.88 across the domains. The total mean scores also ranged from 5.00 to 6.88. In each case the lowest mean score was in the Student Guidance and Development domain, and Judgment rated the highest mean score.

When considering total mean scores for each of the twenty-one performance domains, the five domains determined to be the most important are in the following rank order: 1) Judgment, 2) Instruction and the Learning Environment, 3) Motivating Others, 4) Leadership, and 5) Information Collection, Resource Allocation, Sensitivity, and Written Expression (tied).

At the end of the Principal Preparation Survey participants were asked to list in rank order the five performance domains they perceived to be the most vital for principals in today's schools. Sixteen of the twenty-one performance domains were noted by the principals in the listings. The five performance domains not mentioned were Curriculum Design, Student Guidance and Development, Staff Development, Written Expression, and Legal and Regulatory Functions.

The five performance domains perceived by the respondent group to be most vital were determined by applying the following scoring system. Each time the domain was listed by a principal it was assigned a point value (1-5) in inverse order of its ranked importance, i.e. #1 in importance = 5 points and #5 in importance = 1 point in score. Total points for each of the listed domains were established and a list of the five performance domains perceived to be the most

vital for the group of nine principals was determined. Using this scoring system the performance domains indicated by the nine participants to be the most vital to today's principals were, in rank order, as follows: 1) Instruction and the Learning Environment, 2) Leadership, 3) Judgment, 4) Motivating Others, 5)Organizational Management, and Problem Analysis. Organizational Management and Problem Analysis each received a total of eight points, expanding the list to six. Organizational Management was listed by four principals while Problem Analysis was listed by two.

Table 1.2 denotes each of the performance domains listed by the principals as being one of the five most vital for today's school leaders. Also indicated in the table is the number of principals who identified the performance domain as one of the most vital and the total number of points each performance domain received using the scoring system. Although rank order varied, Jeff was the only principal who individually identified the same five performance domains to be the most vital as the group of nine principals.

While the sixteen performance domains identified as being the most vital for today's principals in the participants' lists are representative of all four domain areas, the top six performance domains come from two of those areas. Instruction and the Learning Environment and Motivating Others are part of the area referred to as the Programmatic Domains. Leadership, Judgment, Organizational Management and Problem Analysis are Functional Domains. Interpersonal and Contextual domains were not represented in the domains perceived to be the most vital for today's principals.

Table 1.2

Scores given to Performance Domains Listed by
Principals as Most Vital

Performance Domain (in rank order)	Number of Principals	Total Score
1) Instruction/Learning Environment	9	35
2) Leadership	7	31
3) Judgment	4	12
4) Motivating Others	4	11
5) Organizational Management	4	08
6) Problem Analysis	2	08
7) Sensitivity	2	07
8) Philosophical and Cultural Values	2	05
9) Measurement and Evaluation	2	04
10) Delegation	1	04
11) Resource Allocation	2	03
12) Public and Media Relationships	2	02
13) Oral and Non-verbal Expression	1	02
14) Policy and Political Influences	1	01
15) Implementation	1	01
16) Information collection	1	01

Cross Participant Analysis

The following was one of the questions to be answered in this study: Do middle school principals refer to the performance domains when describing their work as principals? A coding process was used to determine the answer to this question. Interview transcripts were reviewed and coded according to performance domains referred to in the participants' responses to open-ended questions regarding their present jobs. Principals were credited with a reference to a performance domain when the text contained language that resembled that of the descriptions of the performance domains established by the National Commission for the Principalship. Principals were not instructed to frame responses to the interview questions in reference to the performance domains.

Table 1.3 illustrates the number of times individual principals referred to

each of the performance domains during the personal interview. Performance domains are listed in the order relating to the number of references made to them by the entire group of principals. Noted below each principal's name is the number of years each individual has served as a principal. Principals are arranged from left to right, in rank order from the individual making the greatest number of references to the domains, to the individual making the fewest number of references to the performance domains during the personal interview. Nora referred to the performance domains thirty-five times during the interview while Glen made fourteen references to the performance domains while describing his work as a middle school principal.

The performance domains referred to by all nine principals were Leadership and Student Guidance, while Organizational Management, Instruction and the Learning Environment, Sensitivity, and Public and Media Relationships were referred to by eight of the nine participants. Curriculum Design and Oral and Non-verbal Expression each received one reference, while the Policy and Political Issues domain was not mentioned in any of the nine interviews.

Table 1.3

References to Performance Domains by Principals During Personal Interviews

Principals Experience (yr.) Domains	Nora (1)	John (20)	Diane (3)	Jeff (5)	Peg (1)	Carol (1)	Jack (15)	Bob (3)	Glen (14)
8) Instruction/ Learning Environment	4	1	6	4	0	4	4	1	2
15) Sensitivity	4	1	4	2	5	3	6	0	0
1) Leadership	2	6	2	2	2	2	1	3	2
10) Student Guidance/ Development	3	4	3	3	2	2	3	1	1
14) Motivating Others	4	7	3	2	3	1	0	0	0
21) Public and Media Relationships	3	2	2	3	0	1	3	1	1
5) Organizational Management	1	2	2	0	1	0	1	3	3
2) Information Collection	2	1	1	3	0	2	0	2	1
13) Resource Allocation	2	3	0	1	1	0	0	2	1
4) Judgment	1	1	1	0	2	1	1	0	1
6) Implementation	2	2	0	1	0	1	0	1	1
7) Delegation	0	0	4	1	2	0	0	1	0
12) Measurement/ Evaluation	2	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1
11) Staff Development	1	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0
18) Philosophical/ Cultural Values	0	1	0	0	1	1	2	0	0
9) Curriculum Design	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0
17) Written Expression	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3) Problem Analysis	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
19) Legal and Regulatory Functions	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
16) Oral/Non-verbal Expression	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
20) Policy and Political Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total References to Domains	35	34	28	24	23	23	22	17	14

Chapter V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary of the Findings

The purpose for conducting this mixed methods study was to determine the perceptions of middle school principals regarding the importance of the twenty-one performance domains of the principalship in their present duties as middle school principals. The performance domains were established by the National Commission for the Principalship (NCP) in 1989 as a means of setting a standard for principal preparation programs. It was the opinion of the NCP that principal preparation programs were not adequately preparing school administrators to be leaders in modern schools. The NCP believed that principals need to possess a high level of both knowledge and skill in the twenty-one performance areas that became the basis for the working document Principals for Our Changing Schools: Preparation and Certification (1990). Specifically, the researcher attempted to:

1. Determine what levels of knowledge and skill in the twenty-one performance domains middle school principals perceive to be necessary in their present jobs.

2. Determine which five of the performance domains middle school principals perceive to be the most vital to being successful school leaders.

3. Determine if middle school principals refer to the performance domains when describing their work as principals.

By directing this investigation to discover middle school principals' perceptions of the importance of the twenty-one performance domains of the principalship in their present jobs it became evident that individual responses were not consistent. When asked to determine the importance of having the

skill and knowledge bases in each of the twenty-one domains, all of the domains were perceived to be important. The lowest total mean score for any of the twenty-one domains was 5.00. On a seven point Likert Scale, with 1 representing strongly unimportant and 7 representing strongly important, a mean score of 5.00 indicates a degree of importance that is well above the midpoint. This indicated that the principals considered all of the twenty-one areas to be of considerable importance. However, when asked to describe their present duties as principals, the nine interviewees failed to mention the Policy and Political Issues domain and mentioned the Curriculum Design and Oral/Non-verbal Expression domains once each.

Using two different methods of determining the domains perceived by principals to be the most important for school leaders, results varied. Table 1.4 illustrates the discrepancy in rank order of the domains perceived to be the most important using the Principal Preparation Survey (PPS) mean scores and asking the principals to list the domains they perceive to be the most vital for today's school leaders.

Although the rank order of the domains perceived to be the most vital showed a degree of discrepancy, the domains ranking in the first four positions were the same. Domains ranking in the fifth positions on each of the respective lists showed no commonality. It became evident through the use of the two methods of determining the principals' perceptions of the importance of the twenty-one performance domains that the top four domains from each list were dominant.

Table 1.4

Principals' Perceptions of Most Vital Domains

PPS Mean	Principals' Lists
1. Judgment	1. Instruction and the Learning Environment
2. Instruction and the Learning Environment	2. Leadership
3. Motivating Others	3. Judgment
4. Leadership	4. Motivating Others
5. Information Collection Resource Allocation Sensitivity Written Expression	5. Organizational Management Problem Analysis

Through the use of the personal interview principals made numerous references to the performance domains when describing their work as school leaders. Five domain areas were most often referred to in these descriptions. Using Table 1.3 (pg. 130), the number of references to each of the performance domains during the interviews were documented.

When describing their duties as principals the interviewees most often referred to the Instruction and the Learning Environment domain. Eight of the nine principals made it clear that being the instructional leader for the building is their primary duty. Sensitivity was the domain receiving the next greatest number of references during the interviews. Listening to others, being tactful, and obtaining feedback were the Sensitivity themes most commonly heard. Leadership and Student Guidance and Development were commonly heard as principals spoke freely of their visions for their respective schools and how they

make opportunities to work with students, both individually and in groups. The Public and Media Relationships domain was determined to be very important in principals' work as they spoke of spending a great deal of time working with parents and the community to promote the teaching and learning occurring in their respective schools.

The domains most frequently referred to by principals in the personal interviews were not all of the same domains listed and perceived to be the most important. Leadership and Instruction and the Learning Environment, domains from Table 1.4 perceived to be of high importance, were also frequently heard in the interviews. Student Guidance and Development, Public and Media Relationships, and Sensitivity did not appear in the top of Table 1.4, but were prevalent in the interviews. When comparing what principals perceive to be the most important performance domains of the principalship with what principals actually do in their jobs, the results were inconsistent.

Conclusions Drawn From the Study

The findings of this investigation are applicable specifically to the middle school principals in Omaha, Nebraska. However, they should be noticed by prospective school administrators, educators in principal preparation programs, and district level administrators responsible for hiring middle school principals.

Prospective School Administrators

It is important for prospective school administrators to be properly prepared to work in today's schools. The twenty-one performance domains of the principalship provide a good starting point for prospective administrators. It was made clear in this study that the twenty-one performance domains of the principalship identified by the National Commission for the Principalship represent the areas in which administrators in today's schools must be able to

function in order to be successful leaders. This list allows individuals to see the complex nature of school administration. It is of the utmost importance that it is known what is involved in the duties of today's school administrators. A report such as this should serve to assist prospective administrators with learning the realities of being a principal in today's schools.

A prospective administrator should have a means of self-assessment as well as be assessed by others to determine performance areas of strength and weakness. This can be accomplished, in part, by solid principal preparation programs.

Principal Preparation Programs

It is not feasible to expect one type of program to meet the preparation needs of principals in all educational settings. General knowledge of school administration can be applied to any setting, but the specific demands placed on school administrators can vary greatly, depending on the size and type of school. While this investigation identifies the performance domains perceived to be the most critical for middle school principals in a large school district in Nebraska, the same may not be true for administrators in smaller districts in other locations.

Educators must be aware of the preparation needs of prospective principals, based on their strengths, weaknesses, and the type of setting in which they wish to obtain an administrative position. Regardless of the settings in which principals are employed it is vital that they have knowledge and skill in each of the twenty-one performance domains used as the basis for this study. Principal preparation programs must be designed to develop the knowledge and skill bases in all of these performance areas in order to produce strong school leaders. In this study principals reported that sixteen of the twenty-one

domains rank in the five most important performance areas of what they do in their daily work. This is clear justification for using the twenty-one domains as a tool for preparing school administrators to be leaders in today's schools.

District Level Administration

The task of hiring principals to lead schools is often a function of district level administration. In large school districts with multiple buildings at each level, it is crucial that principals are selected based on the needs of a particular building. Those in charge of hiring principals should be aware of the principal preparation program from which a candidate graduates, and must have faith in the comprehensiveness and quality of the training an individual has received from that program. Educators in principal preparation programs develop a sense of the strengths and weaknesses in trainees and work with them based on the areas in which improvement is needed. School districts should seek the advice of the educators in principal preparation programs, and consider all factors regarding the performance ability of any candidate, while trying to match an individual with an administrative position.

It is also important to note that principals chosen to lead today's schools must be well rounded and versatile. The five domains most referred to by principals in the personal interviews come from each of the four domain areas. It is necessary to select a principal who can lead a school using knowledge and skills from the functional, programmatic, interpersonal, and contextual domains.

The National Commission for the Principalship was formed to investigate the performance areas deemed vital for today's school leaders. The extensive process (outlined in Chapter I) involved in the development of this comprehensive list of performance areas illustrates the magnitude of the importance of using the domains as a basis for training and developing leaders

for today's schools. The efforts of this organization should not be ignored by school districts and educators preparing others to be leaders in the field of education.

Did Methodology Affect Findings?

After examining the findings of a study, a researcher is called upon to question how methodology may have affected the outcomes of the investigation. As this mixed methods study was being designed, the intent was to discover what middle school principals perceive to be the performance areas that are most important in order to function successfully as a school principal. More specifically, the study was designed to determine if principals actually do in their jobs what they say is most important. Two factors have played significant roles in the final outcomes of the study: sampling and mode of data collection.

Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling is an important part of mixed-methods research and definitely played a significant role in this study. The nine middle school principals in Omaha, Nebraska were chosen because they represented a sample of administrators working in educational settings similar to that of the researcher. It was important to have all principals involved in the study employed in one district, so that differences in philosophies between school districts would not become a variable. After spending time with the nine principals in the personal interview sessions, it was clear that they were influenced by the philosophy of the Omaha Public School District.

The range in years of experience was very evident when interviewing the principals. Those with the fewest years of experience, although eager to assist me with the investigation, exhibited less self confidence about their work. The

confidence level of the more experienced principals was observable in their relaxed body posture and the ease with which they answered the questions. The less experienced principals related that they are still somewhat unsure of everything the job as principal entails.

Survey Completion Followed by Personal Interviews

Principals were given approximately one week to complete the Principal Preparation Survey before the personal interviews were conducted. Surveys were to be collected at the time of the interview. Two of the principals needed to finish completing the survey while I was in the office with them as they had not had time to complete it in advance of the interview. One principal mailed the survey back to me before I arrived for the interview and it had to be collected at my home. All surveys were completed and interviews were conducted, transcribed, and verified according to the protocol.

I traveled to Omaha and conducted the personal interviews on school days. It was the first time I had visited any of the middle schools in Omaha. I wanted to be in each of the buildings while students and staff were going about their daily routine. This helped me get a feel for the climate in each building and a sense of how each principal's personality played a part in the feeling tone for the building. I found all of the principals to be very busy and I felt like they fit me into their schedules as a professional courtesy. I am very grateful to all of them for the hospitality they showed me while I visited their buildings.

The principals were not given the interview questions in advance as I wanted them to respond spontaneously and not to think about the questions in relation to the survey items. Most of the interviewees laughed when I asked them what their duties are as principal and how they think staff members would characterize them as leaders in the building. I got the distinct impression that

they don't often think consciously about what their duties are, but that they just do them. There was a small amount of visible discomfort shown by all of the principals when asked what they see as being their key to success as leaders. They related to me afterward that it felt like they had to brag on themselves and felt uncomfortable doing that. Several principals told me after the interview concluded that they enjoyed the process because it made them think about what the job of being a middle school principal is and how they approach it.

Future Research

The need to have the best people serving as leaders in today's schools cannot be overstated. Principals must wear many hats in the process of being a school leader. The National Commission for the Principalship formulated the basis for establishing the twenty-one performance domains considered essential to being a school principal. Using this list as a benchmark, this study was designed to determine the perceptions of nine middle school principals as to how important it is to possess both knowledge and skill in the twenty-one domains. In addition, principals were asked to list the domains they consider to be the most vital in their present job settings and to describe their work as principals. Principals agreed that it is very important to have knowledge and skill in all of the twenty-one domains in order to be effective school leaders. Even though all of the domains were considered by the principals to be important performance areas, some of the domains were perceived to be more important than others.

School settings can vary greatly, as can the leadership characteristics exhibited by the principal in each building. It would be of benefit for school districts of any size to conduct similar studies in order to determine the professional development needs of current and prospective building

administrators. Large school districts can use this information to establish the best possible leadership matches for principals and buildings within the district, and to create programs to develop leaders from within the ranks of current employees.

Finally, principal preparation programs should use the information gained from this study to spawn further research. Principals' perceptions of the twenty-one performance domains should be studied further from the standpoint of experience level. It needs to be determined which performance domains should be mastered before becoming a school leader, and which ones can and should be developed while on the job. A cross-section of experienced and inexperienced principals should be studied in a similar fashion utilizing a wider range of community settings, school sizes, and grade levels in order to best develop a training program for prospective school leaders. Functioning in the middle school principalship is a very complex task. Using the twenty-one performance domains of the principalship gives educators an excellent place to start when developing leaders for today's schools.

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OMAH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

November 30, 1999

Chris Deibler
5808 Woodstock Avenue
Lincoln, NE 68512

Dear Chris:

The Research Review Committee has reviewed your research proposal that involves the collection of data from students, teachers, and administrators through processes such as the examination and/or collection of information from files or records, direct observation, focus groups, or individual interviews.

We believe your study has merit and permission is granted for you to proceed under the following conditions:

❑ Principals agree to your study.
❑ In the reporting of the results, neither the principal nor the school district will be identifiable.
❑ You will be willing to share results of your study with OPS and OPS reviews a copy of the results.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

Dr. Virginia Brown, Ph.D
Instructional Research Administrator

VB/jb

University of
Nebraska
Lincoln

January 28, 2000

Mr. Christopher Deibler
5808 Woodstock Avenue
Lincoln NE 68512

IRB # 99-03-238   EX

TITLE OF PROTOCOL: Middle School Principals' Perceptions of the National Commission
                          for the Principalship Performance Domains in Relation to Their
                          Present Job Responsibilities

Dear Mr. Deibler:

This letter is to officially notify you of the approval of your project's Continuing Review by the
Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the committee's opinion that
you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the subjects in this study. Your
proposal seems to be in compliance with DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45
CFR 46).

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator or project director is responsible for keeping this
Board informed of any changes involved with the procedures or methodology in this study. You
should report any unanticipated problems involving risks to the subjects or others to the Board.

It is the responsibility of the principal investigator to provide the Board with a review and update of
the research project each year the project is in effect. This approval is valid until March 17, 2001.

If I can provide you with additional information, please call me.

Sincerely,

Sharon A. Evans, Chair
for the IRB

cc: Faculty Advisor

Principal Preparation Survey

Directions: Please rate the importance of what middle school principals must know (knowledge base) and what they must be able to do (skill base) when functioning as a school administrator.

1. Using the *Knowledge Base Scale*, rate the importance of what a principal must **know** in order to be a successful administrator.

2. Using the *Skill Base Scale*, rate the importance of the **process or skill** in each domain in order to be a successful administrator.

Importance Scale

Uncertain	Strongly Unimportant						Extremely Important
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

In each domain on the Knowledge and Skill Base Scales, circle the number that best corresponds to your perception of its importance.

Example: Riding a Bicycle

KNOWLEDGE BASE SCALE	SKILL BASE SCALE
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I. <u>Functional domains</u>: These domains (1-7) address the organizational processes and techniques by which the mission of the school is achieved. They provide for the educational program to be realized and allow the institution to function.

1. **Leadership** - providing purpose and direction for staff and students: shaping school culture and values; facilitating the development of a shared strategic vision; formulating goals and planning change efforts collaboratively; setting priorities in context of school, district and community needs.

KNOWLEDGE BASE SCALE	SKILL BASE SCALE
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2. **Information Collection** - gathering pertinent data from various sources; seeking knowledge about policies/practices; classifying, organizing, and using information in decision making and monitoring.

KNOWLEDGE BASE SCALE	SKILL BASE SCALE
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

	Strongly							Extremely
Uncertain	Unimportant							Important
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

3. **Problem Analysis** - identifying and analyzing the important elements of a problem; exhibiting flexibility in conceptualizing and framing problems and possible solutions; assisting others to form reasoned opinions.

KNOWLEDGE BASE SCALE   SKILL BASE SCALE

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4. **Judgment** - reaching logical conclusions: making quality, timely decisions based upon the best available information: giving priority to significant issues.

KNOWLEDGE BASE SCALE   SKILL BASE SCALE

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

5. **Organizational Management** - using resources appropriately in planning and scheduling work to meet long- and short-term goals: establishing procedures to direct activities; empowering people appropriately.

KNOWLEDGE BASE SCALE   SKILL BASE SCALE

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

6. **Implementation** - putting efforts into action: facilitating the coordination and collaboration of tasks: establishing checkpoints, monitoring progress and providing corrections/adaptations: supporting those responsible for carrying out projects and plans.

KNOWLEDGE BASE SCALE   SKILL BASE SCALE

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

7. **Delegation** - assigning projects, tasks, and responsibilities with clear authority: using subordinates effectively; following up on delegated activities.

KNOWLEDGE BASE SCALE   SKILL BASE SCALE

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

II. Programmatic Domains: these domains (8-13) focus on the scope and framework of the educational program. They reflect the core technology of schools, instruction, ant the related supporting services, developmental activities, and resource bases.

8. **Instruction and the Learning Environment** - creating a school culture to nurture improvement of teaching and learning; recognizing the developmental stages of learning; ensuring appropriate instructional methods; establishing a positive learning environment.

KNOWLEDGE BASE SCALE   SKILL BASE SCALE

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

	Strongly						Extremely
Uncertain	Unimportant						Important
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

9. **Curriculum design** - understanding curriculum models: interpreting, planning, and implementing district curricula with staff to create a framework for instruction where outcomes are aligned with the curriculum; monitoring social/technical developments to revise content.

KNOWLEDGE BASE SCALE
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

SKILL BASE SCALE
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

10. **Student Guidance/Development** - understanding and accommodating student growth and development by providing for student guidance. counseling, auxiliary and community services and school activities: using and coordination community organizations: connect schooling with plans about adult life.

KNOWLEDGE BASE SCALE
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

SKILL BASE SCALE
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

11. **Staff Development** - working cooperatively to identify professional needs: planning, organizing and facilitation staff development programs that improve effectiveness and are consistent with institutional goals/needs: providing performance feedback and remedial assistance

KNOWLEDGE BASE SCALE
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

SKILL BASE SCALE
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

12. **Measurement and Evaluation** - determining need for diagnostic information about students, staff and school environment: examining outcomes in relation to defined standards: drawing inferences for program revisions: interpreting and designing accountability measurements: interpreting measurements and evaluations for others.

KNOWLEDGE BASE SCALE
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

SKILL BASE SCALE
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

13. **Resource Allocation** - managing, evaluating, and accounting for human. fiscal, material and time resources so outcomes reflect needs and goals of school site; planning and developing budget with appropriate staff.

KNOWLEDGE BASE SCALE
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

SKILL BASE SCALE
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

14. **Motivating Others** - creating conditions that enhance the staff's desire/willingness to achieve educational excellence; facilitating teamwork; providing intellectual stimulation and professional collegiality; supporting and rewarding effective performance and innovation.

KNOWLEDGE BASE SCALE
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

SKILL BASE SCALE
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

	Strongly						Extremely
Uncertain	Unimportant						Important
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

III. Interpersonal Domains: These domains (14-17) recognize the significance of interpersonal connections in schools. They acknowledge the critical value of human relationships to the satisfaction of personal and professional goals and to the achievement of organizational purpose.

15. **Sensitivity** - perceiving the needs and concerns of others; being tactful: managing conflict; obtaining feedback; recognizing and relating positively to people with multicultural differences and varying backgrounds.

KNOWLEDGE BASE SCALE   SKILL BASE SCALE
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

16. **Oral and Non-verbal Expression** - giving clear and easily understood oral presentations; ability to clarify, restate and summarize for varied groups; being aware of cultural and gender based norms; using appropriate communication aids

KNOWLEDGE BASE SCALE   SKILL BASE SCALE
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

17 **Written Expression** - expressing ideas clearly in writing for memoranda, letters reports, and other job-specific documents; writing appropriately for various audiences

KNOWLEDGE BASE SCALE   SKILL BASE SCALE
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

IV. Contextual Domains: These domains (18-21) reflect the world of ideas and forces within which the school operates. They explore the intellectual, ethical, cultural. economic, political, and governmental influences upon schools. including traditional and emerging perspectives.

18. **Philosophical and Cultural Values** - acting with understanding of the role of education in a democracy, in accordance with accepted ethical standards; recognizing philosophical influences in education; understanding current social and economic issues related to American education.

KNOWLEDGE BASE SCALE   SKILL BASE SCALE
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

19. **Legal and Regulatory Functions** - acting in accordance with federal, state , district laws/standards; recognizing standards of care involving civil and criminal liability for negligence and intentional torts; administering contracts and financial accounts.

KNOWLEDGE BASE SCALE   SKILL BASE SCALE
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

	Strongly						Extremely
Uncertain	Unimportant						Important
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

20. **Policy and Political Influences** - understanding schools as political systems: identifying relationships between public policy and education; recognizing, examining, and affecting policy issues; relating policy issues to student welfare; addressing ethical issues.

KNOWLEDGE BASE SCALE   SKILL BASE SCALE
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

21. **Public and Media Relationships** - Developing informed perceptions about school issues; understanding and responding skillfully to news media; coordinating school/community relations; enlisting public participation and support.

KNOWLEDGE BASE SCALE   SKILL BASE SCALE
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Ranking of Domains

Directions: Please list the five performance domains you believe are the most vital for a middle school principal to be a successful administrator in today's schools. Please list them in priority order with #1 being the most important of your selections

(Domain Number)   (Domain Name)

1 _____

2. _____

3. _____

4 _____

5. _____

You have completed the survey portion of this research project. Please keep this completed instrument until the personal interview is conducted. It will be collected by the researcher at that time. Thank you for your participation in this project. Your willingness to participate is greatly appreciated.

University of
Nebraska
Lincoln

Teachers College

IRB APP #99-03-238EX

Dear Middle School Principal,

Middle school principals' perceptions of the National Commission for the Principalship performance domains in relation to their present job responsibilities.

This is a research project that will describe the perceptions of middle school principals in the area of the twenty-one performance domains of the principalship and their relative importance to principals' present job responsibilities. Data to be used in this study will be gathered through a survey and a personal tape recorded interview. Research subjects will have the opportunity to review the transcribed interview to verify it's accuracy. Participation in this project will require approximately one hour.

There are no risks associated with this research and any information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential. The data will be locked in the office of the researcher for two years and will be seen only by the researcher during the study. The information obtained in this study may be published in professional journals or presented at professional conferences but the data will be reported as aggregated data.

There will be no compensation for participating in this research. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigators, the University of Nebraska, or the school district in which you are employed. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject that have not been answered by the investigator, you may contact the UNL Institutional Review Board, telephone 402-472-6965.

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

_____   _____
signature of research participant   date

Christopher B. Deibler, Principal Investigator   Office: (402) 436-1217
Alfred A. Arth, Ed.D., Secondary Investigator   Office: (402) 472-2013

Qualitative Interview Protocol

Participant: _____

School: _____

Location of Interview: _____

Date: _____

Time (begin): _____   Time (end): _____

Approach:

* Greeting
* Explanation of study
* Informed consent form
* Demographic form
* Qualitative questions
* Exit comments and Thank you

Qualitative Questions:

1. How would you describe yourself as a principal/leader in this building?

2. Describe your work (duties) as a principal.

3. What do you find to be the most difficult part of your job?

4. To what do you attribute your success as a principal?

5. What do you do in your job that has an effect on student learning?

6. How would staff members in this building characterize you and the work you do?

7. Describe the time you spend interacting with others (students, staff, central office, parents, etc.).

8. What makes a good principal?

9. What are your expectations for yourself as a principal?

10. What is your vision for this school?

Exit comments: Thank participant for time and interest in the project. Explain again how the data will be presented and used. Reassure interviewee that confidentiality of participants and schools will be maintained.

Researcher's Comments and Impressions:

Reflective notes:

Principal Demographic Information Form

Principal: _____

School Name: _____

School Address: _____

_____

School Phone: _____   Home Phone: _____

Enrollment: _____   SES of Clientele: _____

Years in Educ.: _____   Years in teaching: _____   Level(s): _____

Subject(s) taught: _____

Years as Principal: _____   Years in present position: _____

Ed. Ad. Program: _____ Cert.: _____ Grad. Year: _____

Career path: _____
(w/SES)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Birth order: _____ of _____ children in family.

University of
Nebraska
Lincoln

Teachers College

IRB APP #99-03-238EX

Interview Verification Form

Project title:

Middle school principals' perceptions of the National Commission for the Principalship performance domains in relation to their present job responsibilities.

Dear Research Participant,

Please review the enclosed transcript of our recent interview concerning the performance domains of the principalship. Feel free to note any errors that you find in order to make all information as accurate as possible. Also, please sign on the proper line below to indicate your level of approval for your part in this project. Thank you.

My signature below indicates my approval of the taped interview at one of the following levels:

_____ I approve of the interview transcript without reviewing it.

_____ I approve of the interview transcript without changes.

_____ I approve of the interview transcript with noted changes.

_____ I do not approve of the interview transcript.

_____   _____
Signature of participant   Date

_____
Chris Deibler - principal investigator

CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Department of Curriculum & Supervision

July 9, 1999

Mr. Chris Deibler
5806 Woodstock Avenue
Lincoln, Nebraska 68512

Dear Mr. Deibler,

I enjoyed our telephone conversation this morning. I am pleased that you are
pursuing your doctorate at the University of Nebraska. If the surveys in my doctoral
dissertation will be of help to you in your research, feel free to use them.

Please contact me if I can be of further help:

Telephone	(253) 845-2772
FAX	(253) 845-2575
e-mail	phillips@wolfenet.com

Sincerely,

Barbara Phillips

Barbara Phillips, Ph.D.
Field Supervisor

Interview	Name (pseudonym)	Date	Length	#Pgs.
Participant #1	Carol	3-9-00	21 min.	8
Participant #2	Jack	3-9-00	26 min.	8
Participant #3	Diane	3-9-00	37 min.	10
Participant #4	John	3-13-00	29 min.	12
Participant #5	Jeff	3-13-00	15 min.	8
Participant #6	Glen	3-13-00	19 min.	4
Participant #7	Nora	3-16-00	40 min.	13
Participant #8	Peg	3-16-00	24 min.	5
Participant #9	Bob	3-16-00	14 min.	5

Total Interviews = 9

Total # of minutes of interviews = 225 minutes / 3.75 hrs.

Total # of transcribed pages = 73 pages of transcripts

External Audit
Attestation
by Dana L. Miller. Ph.D.

Christopher B. Deibler requested that I complete an educational audit of his dissertation titled: Middle School Principals' Perceptions of the National Commission for the Principalship Performance Domains in Relation to Their Present Job Responsibilities. The audit was conducted between June 17-July 6, 2000. The purpose of the audit was to ascertain the extent to which the results of the study are trustworthy.

In their book Naturalistic Inquiry, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that the audit "may be the single most important trustworthiness technique available to the naturalist" (p. 283). The educational audit is "based metaphorically on the fiscal audit" (p. 317). The role of the auditor is to carefully examine both the process and product of the inquiry. In order to accomplish an audit, it is imperative that the researcher maintain careful, detailed records throughout the inquiry.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) delineate two tasks in the audit process:
1) examination of the PROCESS of the inquiry to ensure that informants are represented fairly in recorded accounts, and 2) examination of the final PRODUCT to ensure accuracy; in particular that the findings are supported by the data.

To meet the outlined purpose of this audit, numerous materials were reviewed. Materials were reviewed for both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the project, with particular attention paid to the qualitative phase.

The researcher delivered one cardboard box of materials for the audit. The following materials were reviewed:

1) An 8 1/2" x 11" tablet consisting of six pages of handwritten notes documenting key research activities (entries were one to two lines; documenting contacts made, interviews conducted, surveys mailed and received, transcription of interviews, verification forms mailed and received; the were dated February 28, March 1, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 27, 29, April 1, 10, 14, 28, May 22, 29).

2) An 8 1/2" x 11" tablet consisting of three pages of handwritten notes documenting

pseudonyms used for participants. dissertation appendices. and tallies of the 21 functional domains (mean scores and occurrence in interviews).

3) File folders for each participant. labeled with their first name (pseudonym) and the date of the interview. On the outside of each file folder, the researcher had listed the contents of the folder and checked each item off. Each folder contained the following items:

- An IRB consent form, signed and dated by the participant
- The Principal Preparation Survey, completed by the participant
- The interview protocol with handwritten notes on it. recorded by the researcher at the time of the interview
- A demographic sheet with information about the participant filled in
- A transcript, coded with domains when they appeared in the transcript
- A second copy of the transcript, clean or slightly edited
- A copy of the transcript verification form. signed and dated by the participant and researcher, documenting approval of the transcript
- An envelope, stapled inside the cover of the file folder, containing an audio tape of the interview. Each audio tape was labeled by pseudonym and interview date.

4) The dissertation proposal presented to the dissertation committee (53 pages in length plus appendices and references, dated Summer 1999).

5) A file folder labeled "Methods Re-Write" consisting of a 13 page document titled: Chapter III: The Approach to the Study (dated 1/17/2000, with handwritten feedback from a faculty member)

6) The dissertation (labeled "draft" on the front cover, 159 pages in length including references and appendices—except the audit report, dated August 2000)

7) A one page audit trail appendix documenting the nine interviews conducted, the date of each interview, length of the interview, and the number of pages of transcript from each interview.

8) A memo to the auditor, dated June 2000, documenting the process followed and rationale for making changes to the approach section (chapter three) from proposal stage to the dissertation.

The audit consisted of the following steps:

1) I read the dissertation proposal. I paid particular attention to sections addressing the

purpose of the study. research questions. case study design. proposed data collection and analysis methods, verification strategies. the researcher's role in the study, the interview protocol. and survey instrument.

2) I cataloged and reviewed all materials submitted for the audit. I developed a matrix and as I examined each participant's file, I noted the contents of the folder on the matrix. I reviewed the materials in each file. examined the coding on the transcript. and noted that each participant had approved the transcript.

3) I read the dissertation abstract. chapter one, the methods/approach sections of the dissertation, and all of chapters four and five.

4) I compared the proposed study methods to the discussion of the methods used in the dissertation draft.

5) I recorded 9 pages of handwritten notes. and telephoned the researcher once during the completion of the review.

6) From my notes. I wrote and submitted a preliminary audit attestation. I provided specific feedback to the researcher on areas that needed clarification in his dissertation. He addressed those areas and submitted a revised copy of the dissertation. I reviewed the revised dissertation. noted that the researcher had clarified all areas I had previously identified. and revised the audit attestation.

Following completion of the preceding steps. this auditor submits the following conclusions:

1) It is this auditor's opinion that the focus of the study remained consistent with the proposed focus. The title of the study, research questions and methods were consistent in both the proposal and dissertation draft. Chapter three, the approach section, was much more detailed and solid following the re-write.

2) The data collection procedures documented in the dissertation followed those proposed in the methods section of the proposal. The researcher administered the Principal Preparation Survey to nine participants, and conducted interviews with them, to examine their perceptions of the principalship performance domains in relation to their job. For the purpose of the audit, the researcher provided written documentation of all phases of data collection and analysis. He also provided documentation of participant approval of the interview transcripts.

3) Specifically in relation to research methods used to collect data, the researcher was

organized and systematic. The administration of the survey and interviews was clearly documented, and all data were accounted for and easily retrievable in file folders labeled by participant. It appears that the trustworthiness of the study can be established in that the findings seem to be clearly grounded in the data. In addition, the researcher left a clear audit trail that other researchers could follow.

Attested to by Dana Miller this 6th day of July, 2000.

Dana S. Miller

Dana L. Miller, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
900k Qualitative Approaches to Research in Education
Department of Educational Psychology
University of Nebraska-Lincoln.