

THE EFFECTS OF PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP ON TEACHER MORALE AND  
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

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

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education  
in Professional Leadership

by

Lawrence A. Hindt

May, 2012

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## **ABSTRACT**

Teachers comprise the greatest professional population of a school; they have the most contact with students; and they have perhaps the greatest influence on school climate. For this reason, teacher morale is a topic of great concern to public school administrators. Moreover, research suggests that poor teacher morale negatively affects student performance just as high teacher morale positively affects student performance. Research also indicates that teacher morale is influenced more by the leadership style of the principal than any other single factor.

This study was designed to determine whether certain relationships exist between teacher morale and the following independent variables: (1) principal trust and (2) leadership satisfaction. Additionally, investigations were conducted to determine whether the aforementioned independent variables lead to increased student achievement.

Information regarding teacher morale was collected from 65 teachers using the 2009 MDed – Multi Dimensional Education Incorporated (MDed) Survey at three 7-8 Initiative schools in a large suburban district in southeast Texas. It was the intent of this study to determine whether principal leadership and teacher morale are significantly correlated. The study also demonstrated whether or not teachers' and principals' perceptions of leadership behaviors contribute to student achievement.

After analyzing the data, it was found that principal leadership behaviors do significantly impact teacher morale, and student achievement. Additionally, it was found that positive teacher morale and student achievement in the Initiative Schools influenced positive student behaviors, ultimately reducing student discipline referrals. Multiple interventions were put into place that led to the positive outcomes. The interventions, new principal leadership, ongoing intensive staff development, establishment of small learning communities, reduction of student population and low student to teacher class ratios, were the catalysts that lead to the Initiative Schools' transformational success, a transformation of high teacher morale, increased student achievement, and positive student behaviors.

## **DEDICATION**

I take pride in dedicating this dissertation to my beautiful, loving and supportive wife, Kathryn. Without her my life would not be full and this paper would not be complete. She means the world to me!

I would also like to acknowledge my two wonderful kids. To my son Zach and my daughter Alex, your laughter, music, drums, guitar, humor, weightlifting and running up and down the stairs while I studied and wrote this paper made me realize daily what is most important in my life – My Beautiful Family!

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Introduction**

Schools are quite unique and remarkable social institutions. Each school, for instance, represents a microcosm of the larger society in which it resides. In reflection of the larger society, a school upholds a set of norms, roles, expectations, and needs which serve as the driving force that forward the accomplishment of its overall goals. More specifically, the building principal holds the formal position of leadership and authority in each school. Improving principal effectiveness has become the common denominator and the crucial component with relation to educational reform efforts throughout the nation. Current research suggests that the principal's influence has an indirect but noteworthy effect on learning and is dependent on the principal's interactions with school and community members, situational events, as well as the organizational and cultural factors of the school (Hallinger & Heck 1998, Hoy et al., 2006, Leithwood et al., 2004). Leithwood (1992) refers to principals as "change agents" and suggests that their greatest impact on the school comes about through the transformation of the school culture. Whether positive or negative, a school culture can have a subsequent impact on the larger society. Thus, it behooves educational leaders and researchers more the reason to lend credence to the importance of a principal's role.

When leadership is defined as "getting organizational goals accomplished through the efforts of other people" (Fairman, 2008), it places the concept of leadership in perspective. Hence, leaders are only as effective as those that follow them. Leaders, by definition, have followers who also strive to accomplish overall organizational goals.

Effective leaders are sensitive and responsive to the needs, values, and aspirations of their subordinates, and possess the ability to work effectively with individuals with diverse backgrounds, values, and needs. Maslowki (2001) stated that a close association exists between leadership values and behaviors and school culture. Similarly, the seminal work of Witziers (2003), which explored the indirect effect of principal leadership on student outcomes, also suggested that educational leadership is related to the organization and culture of the school, and, in turn, related to student achievement.

Educational theories and practices are constantly changing and evolving to keep up with society's shifting needs. Namely, curricular changes and adaptations as well as improved teaching methodologies are amongst topics currently prevalent in educational discussions. The ongoing challenge is to discover better methods that can subsequently improve learning and student achievement. And, with this particular goal in mind, millions of dollars are spent annually in an effort to meet this need. However, one of the most critical and underlying factors of improving the effectiveness of a school or school system is teacher motivation and morale (Rowland, 2008). Morale is defined as "that state in which a person, group, or organization has a sense of security, satisfaction, pleasure and well-being" (Fairman, 2008, p. 96). Teacher morale and motivation are largely affected by the feelings that teachers share with regard to the individual school and the leadership that exists therein (Evans, 1997; Hunter-Boykin & Evans, 1995). Furthermore, research has shown that teacher morale and motivation can significantly affect the motivation and achievement of students.

Not only do teachers comprise the greatest professional population within a school, they also have the most personal contact with students on any given day. More importantly, teachers possess perhaps the greatest influence on the emotional environment of the school. When teacher morale is high, that is when teachers feel positively about their roles and their ability and support in accomplishing organizational goals, they have tremendous power to positively influence the students and the school environment in general. Conversely, the opposite is also true – that is, when teachers feel their attempts are futile or feel they lack the necessary support to be successful, they may negatively influence the overall climate, which can ultimately have a negative effect on student achievement. Teachers – both collectively and individually – have the ability and power to set the tone for a building. Therefore, it is critical that educational leaders be aware of factors that contribute to teacher morale if for no other reason than teacher morale's effect on student achievement, which represents the bottom line for any school or school system.

In the extremely dynamic and ever-changing field of education, the role of the teacher continues to evolve. In addition, expectations for teachers have shifted: Moving the focus from the teachers' behaviors and actions to what the students are doing and learning. It is no longer expected that the teacher follow a structured set of criteria for presenting a lesson as outlined in a textbook or teacher's manual. Rather, the teacher is expected to be a facilitator of learning in the classroom so that the students have opportunities to discover and, in so doing, internalize information and skills in order to be successful on standardized tests and, ultimately, in life. Given the shift toward increased

teacher accountability, classroom teachers have also experienced a significant increase in pressures and daily demands. As these pressures and demands increase, they can cause an equivalent decline in teacher morale. The added pressures and workload can prove to be burdensome and have been noted to be agents of not only decreased morale and teacher efficacy but even an impetus for some teachers to even exit the profession altogether (Hardy, 1999; Tye & O'Brien, 2002). Additionally, teachers often feel they are not treated or even regarded as true professionals, are not appreciated, and are overworked. Others feel they are not provided with the necessary support, encouragement, or supplies to be successful. These feelings can also lead to a decline in teacher morale. Luckily, however, a building principal has the power to positively impact the diminishing morale issues through his/her daily practices (Hunter-Boykin & Evans, 1995; Lester, 1990; Rhodes, Nevill, & Allan, 2004). For instance, some teachers with high morale often explain that they are able to do their job of teaching students because they are not required to perform an abundance of clerical tasks assigned by administration. They often add that their principals are especially supportive; that they trust them to do the job for which they were hired; and that they provide encouragement, assistance, or even funding for initiatives in which the teachers believe. When teachers feel that the principal can be depended upon to provide those things which they feel are critical and necessary to their success – and to do it in a timely fashion – trust in that principal as an effective leader is established (Kratzer, 1997; Sebring & Bryk, 2000).

Another significant cause of low teacher morale is student discipline. Teachers who find the challenge of disciplinary issues to be overwhelming or who feel they receive

inadequate support from their administration while handling disciplinary issues may have low morale, and may also decide to leave the profession as a direct result (Tye & O'Brien, 2002).

Just as teachers' roles have continued to shift and change, and perhaps *because* teachers' roles have continued to shift and change, so have the roles of the school administrator. With the renewed focus on and increase in school accountability, principals can no longer serve simply as managers of schools and their employees (Leithwood et al.). As today's educational leaders seek to meet the ever-increasing demands placed upon the educational system of the twenty-first century, the need for effective leadership is vital. One of the most critical roles of school administrators that is gaining attention is that of establishing a positive school climate. Gonder and Hymes (1994) asserted that school climate refers to the emotional atmosphere of the school and can be one of the most significant influential factors and indicators of student achievement. Climate can be measured in the attitudes of students, faculty, staff, and parents. Gonder and Hymes also cite that "[c]limate can affect everything from the morale, satisfaction, and productivity of everyone involved in the organization" (p. 11), including students, faculty, staff, and community members. One vehicle for initiating a positive school climate is a leader's vision. In fact, Bolman and Deal (1997), Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (2000), Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), Willower and Licata (1997), and Yukl (2006) acknowledged that one important hallmark of effective leaders is the ability to establish a strong vision for their organizations. In addition to the establishment of a strong vision, these researchers also found that it is equally important for a leader to

promote a shared vision in order to provide a clear focus on an organization's goals and directions so that all are moving forward to those ends. Furthermore, according to Kouzes and Posner (2009), education can take the following lesson from the corporate world:

The best way to lead people into the future is to connect with them deeply in the present. The only visions that take hold are shared visions—and you will create them only when you listen very, very closely to others, appreciate their hopes, and attend to their needs. The best leaders are able to bring their people into the future because they engage in the oldest form of research: They observe the human condition. (p.1)

By creating buy-in and supporting teachers' efforts toward the organization's shared vision, a principal empowers teachers, affecting a positive influence on teacher morale and, therefore, school climate.

Of the many roles a school leader must fill, perhaps the most important one principals must acknowledge is the tremendous impact they have on teacher morale and school climate. This particular function within the school represents an essential role for which they must accept responsibility and actually institute concrete plans for the establishment and continued improvement of building morale.

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between principal leadership, teacher morale and student achievement in three grade 7-8 suburban middle schools in southeast Texas. This study examined archival data collected from a survey administered during the 2009 school year, after the first year of the inception of the 7-8 pilot program. The survey consisted of questions provided to middle school teachers at

the three Initiative 7-8 Middle Schools that measured their perspectives on school climate as well as their opinions of their principals' leadership practices. The survey administered was the MDed Survey - Multi-Dimensional Educational Incorporated Survey. The first chapter of this dissertation describes the background of the study, details the statement of the problem, discusses the professional significance of the study, and briefly overviews the methodology.

### **Background of the Study**

In January of 2007, as part of the rezoning efforts of a large suburban school district in southeast Texas, the district's Board of Trustees charged district leadership with developing a plan for academic enhancements at three eastside middle schools who had primarily minority student populations from low socio-economic backgrounds. The students attending these schools historically attained low standardized test scores, had high numbers of student discipline referrals, and the teacher population had high teacher-turnover. As a result of this directive, central leadership developed a plan to reduce the three identified middle school campuses' student population by removing the sixth-grade; and, thus, rezone those students to ten bordering elementary schools. Such actions demonstrated that the district felt a critical need to commit to creating a smaller student environment. The three campuses were designated "Initiative Middle Schools" due to the reconfiguration of the student population. District administration also determined that the morale of the teachers was an area that needed to be addressed. Consequently, new principals were carefully selected to lead the students, teachers, and community stakeholders during this unique transitional period at the selected campuses.

Additionally, the teaching staff was provided with extensive staff development in professional learning communities and data teaming, providing some necessary support for effective instruction and a chance to understand and become part of the school's mission. The student-to-teacher ratio for the three campuses was capped at 21:1 in order to support smaller, more engaging learning settings. The combined teaching staff for the three initiative schools consisted of 89 teachers, and the combined student population totaled approximately 1,600 students.

As part of this transition, the Board of Trustees requested that the administration report back to them at the conclusion of the first year of the initiative to examine the results of the implementation. District administration also utilized the services of Multi-Dimensional Education Incorporated (MDed) in order to survey teachers, students and community stakeholders. The subsequent data from these surveys was used to evaluate the effectiveness of the transition.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the importance of principal leadership as it relates to teacher morale and student achievement in the three identified grade 7-8 initiative middle schools.

Teacher morale is a recurrent topic of concern for public school administrators. Morale, or lack thereof, is discussed on radio and television talk shows, read about in the newspapers, emphasized at superintendent/administrator meetings, blogged about on multiple teacher websites and discussion boards, and evidenced in conversations in teacher lounges across the nation.

Work attitudes have proven to be important indicators of school performance. Because poor morale can indeed inhibit the achievement of a school's vision, it is imperative that administrators understand the very nature of the teacher-principal relationship and its instrumental role in regulating the level of teacher morale. Therefore, the problem identified within this study is to ascertain the effects of principal leadership on teacher morale and student achievement.

A variety of research studies, such as those conducted by Anderson (1953) and Koura (1963), have established a strong connection between high teacher morale and high student achievement. Andrews and Soder (1987) also found that teachers' perceptions of the principal as an instructional leader are also critical to the reading and mathematics achievement of students. Their findings suggest that many principals were simply not cognizant of the fact that their actions (or inactions) could have direct effects upon the teachers in the building in terms of morale and job satisfaction, or that low teacher morale and job satisfaction can have direct effects on student achievement. Their findings also concluded that when a principal or administrative team took action directly toward improving teacher morale, student achievement simultaneously increased.

For more than 40 years, educational researchers have debated the issue of whether or not schools make a difference and have a positive impact on student achievement when so many other critical factors, such as a student's family background, socio-economic level, language, culture, and ethnicity, were also at play. In 1966, the Coleman Report (Coleman et al., 1966) reported that student background and socio-economic status are important indicators in determining educational outcome. A closer reading of

the study also showed that other influences, especially the quality of teachers, also have a significant effect on student outcomes. Since that time, there has been substantial research which has supported the idea that all students can learn at high levels and that schools do, in fact, make a difference.

After the Coleman Report was published, researchers dismissed the argument that schools did not make a difference in the achievement of students. Instead, they pushed forward to study how schools can make the most difference. Educational researchers used correlational studies to identify five school-wide correlates that differentiated effective schools from their ineffective counterparts. The five correlates were: (1) strong educational leadership (i.e., principal); (2) high expectations; (3) an emphasis on basic skills; (4) safe and orderly climate; and (5) frequent evaluation of student progress on achievement (Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer, & Weisenbaker, 1979; Brookover and Lezotte, 1979; Edmonds, 1979a, 1979b; Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, & Ouston, 1979).

Correlate number one (i.e., strong educational leadership from the principal) was one of the factors reported to produce a marked difference in schools. In fact, Sergiovanni (2006) testified, "The quality of schooling is greatly influenced by the principal" (p.190). Moreover, Barth (1990) supported Sergiovanni's argument and further asserted that strong leadership from the principal helped to sustain and push forward the effectiveness of schools. Leithwood et al. (2004) also suggested that leadership does make a difference. In fact, Leithwood's findings suggest that successful leadership is critical to school reform and is second only to school-related factors in its impact on

student learning. Leithwood (2004) indicated that troubled schools would not likely be improved without an effective leader and that leadership was actually a vehicle necessary for change. The studies of Gonder and Hymes (1994) also purported that leadership is indeed a critical factor in shaping and maintaining a positive school culture and climate.

Therefore, the goal of this study was to ascertain the effects of principal leadership on teacher morale and student achievement in three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools in suburban southeast Texas. Does the level of trust that teachers have in the building principal influence their level of satisfaction or morale? Does the level of confidence that teachers have in the actions and decisions of their principal influence teacher morale? It is this level of trust in the building principal and the overall teacher satisfaction and morale that was targeted in the questions administered in the 2009 MDed Survey. The results of this survey were used to examine the influence of this trust on teacher morale and ultimately student achievement.

### **Research Questions**

1. As measured by the MDed Survey, what was the level of teacher morale in the three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools?
2. How did teacher morale change as a result of the 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools interventions?
3. Did increased teacher morale impact student achievement in the three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools?

## Significance of the Study

① First of all, the present study is significant to the field of education in general because it builds upon the available body of knowledge related to teacher morale and principal leadership. ② Several studies have examined the relationship between teacher morale and principal leadership; however, ③ this particular study focuses on three geographically distinct schools located on the east side of a large suburban school district in southeast Texas. These schools are innately ④ unique in their characteristics and challenges. Another significance of this study is that it focuses on three Initiative Middle Schools ⑤ as a means of providing an in-depth look into this challenging level of education. ⑥ Much of the present research focuses on elementary education, high school education, or a combination of levels of education. ⑦ In addition to its overall significance and relevance for the field, this research is important to the school system in which the study was performed. In particular, this study can ⑧ lead to potential improvements in the principal preparation program in order to raise teacher morale and, thus, student achievement. ⑨ With the demands on this growing school system to hire and retain teachers, this sort of principal preparation program improvement could prove very beneficial.

## Overview of Methodology

To address the problem of the study and attempt to answer the research questions, the variables studied were investigated with a survey instrument distributed to 89 middle school teachers at three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools. The 7-8 Initiative teachers were chosen to determine a representation of the teachers' morale as compared to principal trust and leadership satisfaction. The MDed Survey asked teachers to respond with their

impressions or observations of the aforementioned principal's leadership characteristics. The survey was distributed to the teachers at their respective schools with instructions and an explanation of the rationale behind the research. The researcher collected all surveys from the schools and analyzed the data. Next, once the research data had been tallied, reports were developed and provided to the administration of the district. Results were then distributed back to campus administration who shared the results with staff. District administration shared the results with the school board in an open board meeting. Furthermore, the general public of the district was privy to the results through the board meeting session.

### **Organization of Doctoral Thesis**

Following this introductory chapter, this doctoral thesis will be organized into four additional chapters. Chapter Two deals with a review of the literature on the topic of principal leadership and its relation to teacher morale. Then, Chapter Three turns to a detailed discussion of the methodology used in the study. Chapter Four presents the results of the research as they relate to the research questions. Finally, Chapter Five summarizes and discusses in detail the findings and implications of the study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH AND LITERATURE

B

① Since its inception, the role of the principalship in American schools has been in a constant state of change. The changes have mostly centered on the issue of whether the principal is a building manager or a leader of the school. Furthermore, there have been wide variances in the roles of the principal with respect to curricular and instructional expectations.

④ According to Rousmaniere (2007), the position of the school principal emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century. ⑤ With the creation of graded education programs – particularly in urban areas – many systems created the position of a head teacher in order to provide leadership, guidance, and support to other teachers in the school. ⑥ The lead teacher, later called the principal teacher, came to serve as the authority figure and the disciplinarian. In addition, his/her responsibilities included the organization of curriculum and supervision of various school operations. ⑧ Rousmaniere pointed out that as the urbanization in America continued, so did the evolution of the position of school principal. Moreover, by the end of the nineteenth century, most urban schools had a principal at the helm, and the roles of that position were as diverse as the schools in which they were carried out. ⑨ In some systems the principal was primarily a lead teacher with minor duties pertaining to school operations, while the principal's role in other systems included a clerical or record keeping capacity.

⑩ By the turn of the century, however, the principal's role had been transformed into one of school administrator, with prerequisites of the job being professional

experience and necessary licensing required for employment. According to Usdan,<sup>11</sup> McCloud, and Podmostko (2000), for much of the next century, “The role of the principal was that of manager who was expected to uphold district mandates, manage personnel, manage the budget, and handle other operational issues.”<sup>12</sup> With the movement toward increased accountability in the later part of the twentieth century, the role of the school principal necessitated a transition from manager to leader.<sup>13</sup> Cawelti’s (1984) findings support this transition: “Continuing research on effective schools has verified the common-sense observation that schools are rarely effective, in any sense of the word, unless the principal is a ‘good leader’” (p. 3).<sup>14</sup> Usdan, McCloud, & Podmostko further illustrated findings in support of this change in roles by emphasizing that “principals today must serve as leaders for student learning” (p. 2).<sup>15</sup> The following is a list of characteristics of principals that they suggest for successful fulfillment of this role:

- Has a knowledge of academic content as well as pedagogical knowledge;
- Deliberately plans for helping teachers strengthen instructional skills;
- Analyzes and uses pertinent data;
- Recruits all stakeholders to aid in the increase of student achievement; and
- Possess strong leadership skills (Usdan, McCloud, & Podmostko).

### **Leadership**

Leadership is a quality that is difficult to define much less evaluate. Leaders in all walks of life possess a wide array of leadership traits or skills; thus, there are many behaviors and traits that exemplify and define an effective leader. In *The School Principal as Leader: Guiding Schools to Better Teaching and Learning*, The Wallace

Foundation (2012) describes the principal traditionally as resembling the middle manager in William Whyte's 1950's bestseller, *The Organization Man*. Here the principal is depicted as simply a manager, a supervisor of books, boilers, and buses. However, in today's era of high stakes testing and rising accountability, a new type of school leader is necessary – specifically, one who more closely resembles the model in Jim Collins' (2001) *Good to Great*. In Collin's seminal work, lessons are drawn from contemporary corporate operations suggesting that leadership must have a laser-like focus on the organization's vision and what is truly essential for its realization. Furthermore, the leader in this model must move away from simply managing to empowering, encouraging, and impelling all involved in a forward motion toward organizational goals.

The call for this type of leadership requires dramatic changes. No longer can principals function as building managers whose tasks consist merely of ensuring the adherence to district rules and policies and overseeing processes to make certain that regulations are executed and mistakes are avoided. They must be leaders who turn a sensitive ear to their employees, tend to their needs, and provide them with necessary support. They must be lead learners in a community of learners who are skilled in developing a team that can deliver effective instruction. The Wallace Foundation suggests that the following five responsibilities are essential roles of today's principals:

- Shaping a vision of academic success for all students, one based on high standards;
- Creating a climate hospitable to education in order that safety, a cooperative spirit and other foundations of fruitful interaction prevail;

- Cultivating leadership in others so that teachers and other adults assume their part in realizing the school vision;
- Improving instruction to enable teachers to teach at their best and students to learn at their utmost; and
- Managing people, data and process to foster school improvement.

Each of these key responsibilities must coincide and work in tandem with the others in order to achieve success. The end result of student success cannot be achieved if the school climate is one of student disengagement or teachers who do not have complete buy-in. Students will never reach their full potentials if teachers are not aware of the instructional methods that work best with their pupils or if test data is poorly organized or misinterpreted. When all five are functioning in concert, the most effective form of leadership is in force.

To examine leadership qualities in greater detail, the following leadership theories will be examined: The Great Man Theory, Trait Theory, Situational Leadership, and Transformational Leadership. A brief description of each is provided below.

### **The Great Man Theory**

Although now obsolete, The Great Man Theory of Leadership affirmed that great leaders were born predisposed with qualities that compel others to naturally want to follow their lead. This theory, based upon the assumption that great leaders are innately equipped with leadership skills, proposed that these leaders would simply arise as they were needed. In other words, if a situation surfaced that required a leader's direction, the leader would arise and take charge, and others would trust and follow (Lippitt, 1969).

Researchers finally concluded, however, that there were no such universal attributes of great leaders.

## C The Trait Theory

① The Trait Theory's main emphasis is on traits such as physical appearance, personality, intelligence, social background, and natural ability (Taylor, 1994). Like The Great Man Theory, this theory proposed that leaders were born with certain qualities that make them naturally effective leaders. ② Hackman and Johnson (2000) reported evidence from many earlier studies that were conducted in order to evaluate the specific traits of highly effective leaders. ③ Although initial research had mainly inconclusive results, upon a closer look with more advanced statistical analyses, recent research has shown that there are certain traits or attributes that appear to be present in many highly effective leaders.

④ Administrative factors, interpersonal factors, and cognitive factors are the three features most evident in effective leaders according to Hackman and Johnson.

\* ⑤ Administrative factors of leadership involve the ability to plan and organize in addition to a willingness to perform even the most menial tasks that are regularly required of the followers. ⑥ Interpersonal factors include attributes such as integrity, emotional stability, self-confidence, sensitivity, consistency, as well as conflict management skills, and communication skills. ⑦ Cognitive factors are those related to natural intelligence. Leaders with these traits are more creative and tend to be better problem solvers, decision makers, and critical thinkers. All of these factors would cultivate trust in the leadership.

## Situational Leadership

① Lippitt (1969) asserted, "Leadership must be flexible in style to meet the need of a particular situation" (p. 2). ② Situational leadership involves changing or adapting the methods of leading an organization depending upon the situation or organization's needs. ③ There are four situational approaches to leadership briefly described below: Fiedler's Contingency Model, Path-Goal Theory, Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership, and Leader-Member Exchange Theory.

④ **Fiedler's Contingency Model.** This particular model contends that there are three factors which determine the amount of influence a leader will have over his followers. ⑤ The first factor, titled *position power*, refers to the leader's power to administer reward or punishment to his/her constituents. ⑥ The higher position a leader has, the greater the influence he holds over the followers. ⑦ The second factor, titled *task-structure*, refers to a leader's flexibility, or lack thereof, in delineating the steps that must be carried out in order to complete a task. ⑧ The third factor, *leader-member relations*, refers to the sense of loyalty, trust, affection, and respect, in other words, the relationship, between the leader and the follower (Hackman & Johnson).

⑨ **The Path-Goal Theory.** This is a leadership theory based upon the needs, abilities, values, and personalities of followers; yet, it also takes into account the structure and clarity of assigned tasks and duties. ⑩ In each situation that arises, the leader determines the proper approach to communication depending on the task involved and the followers' level of skill, confidence, experience, and commitment. ⑪ For instance, when an unsure or inexperienced follower must complete an unstructured task, this theory

asserts that a directive communication approach is most beneficial for the leader to take.

(12) If the follower possesses the necessary skills yet lacks the confidence or the commitment to the structured task, the leader must take the approach of using a supportive communication style. If both the (13) followers are unsure and the task unstructured, the most beneficial style for a leader to enlist is a participative communication style, which is (14) designed to elicit ideas and suggestions from followers. Finally, if a follower is experienced and must perform an unstructured task, the leader's best bet is to use an achievement-oriented communication style, which is designed to demonstrate the leader's confidence in the follower to complete the task successfully (Hackman & Johnson).

(16) Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory takes into consideration the readiness levels of followers. Within this particular theory, (17) a follower's readiness level refers to his/her combination of skill level and motivation. (15) Similar to the Path-Goal Theory, unskilled or unmotivated followers with low readiness require the leader to use a telling approach, which involves providing specific instructions followed by close supervision. Therefore, these followers must be given structure and guidance. They trust (18) in and thrive on the security of leaders who determine the priorities in given situations. If a follower is a willing participant but does not possess the necessary skills, the leader must use a selling approach, which involves an explanation followed by an opportunity for clarification. This approach requires less supervision; yet, these followers still need to (19) be convinced that goals are appropriate. If a follower is skilled and capable but has little or no motivation, the leader should use a participating approach, which includes the follower in the decision-making, creating more buy-in and, thus, increased motivation.

These followers have proven themselves *ready* to be involved in the goal-setting necessary for the cause. Finally, if the follower possesses both high skill and motivation, the leader's approach should be that of *delegating*. During the delegating process, a leader simply turns over responsibility to the follower to make and implement decisions. These followers have the capability of accepting and independently executing organizational duties. (Hackman & Johnson).

The Leader-Member Exchange Theory is one that focuses primarily on the relationship developed between the leader and follower. When followers first become part of an organization, they fall in rank with either the leader's in-group or his/her out-group. The leader's in-group consists of trusted followers who are assigned to make some of the decisions of the group and have input into the direction and future of the organization. Members of the out-group are simply required to satisfactorily perform their duties but are not allowed any autonomy or participation to which the members of the in-group are privy (Hackman & Johnson).

## **Transformational Leadership**

The leadership theory that has the greatest prevalence in research literature is that of Transformational Leadership. Transformational Leadership centers around getting all stakeholders involved in decision-making. The overriding element of successful leadership is to involve people in the process of leading" (Horan, 1999, p. 21). Most descriptions of Transformational Leadership commence by first distinguishing it from Transactional Leadership. The latter involves a leader who is primarily concerned with rewarding followers by taking care of their basic needs in exchange for favorable group

or organizational outcomes. While Transformational Leadership also strives to meet the needs of followers, its aim is more far-reaching in that more than merely basic needs are targeted. <sup>5</sup> Transformational Leadership holds that organizational goals are achieved sooner because higher-level needs are targeted through trust, empowerment, and inspiration. <sup>6</sup> Additionally, Transformational Leaders exhibit five common characteristics. According to Hackman & Johnson, they are visionary, creative, interactive, passionate, and empowering.

<sup>7</sup> Kouzes and Posner (2002) list and describe the five practices common to all exemplary leaders, which are the following: <sup>8</sup> Model the Way (interactive), Inspire a Shared Vision (visionary), Challenge the Process (creative), Enable Others to Act (empowering), and Encourage the Heart (passionate). The practice of Modeling the Way refers to the way some leaders lead by example; hence, exemplary leaders tend to motivate followers when they set an example by directly involving themselves in the organization's mission. When leaders Inspire a Shared Vision, the leader formulates, articulates, and creates enthusiasm for the organization's vision. Others are inspired and motivated to work toward organizational success. To create <sup>10</sup> buy-in for working toward the organization's goals, the leader must initially motivate his/her followers by relating organizational goals to the personal goals and ambitions of the followers. A leader <sup>11</sup> Challenges the Process when he/she uses his/her leadership ability to seek and select innovative ways for improving the organization. In order to do so, the leader must become an expert on the organization and its people so that he/she may determine the best course of action to lead the organization toward improvement. The category of

Enabling Others to Act involves of the leader's ability to engage the group as a team, build trust in the group, and empower followers to continue to work toward the organization's aims. <sup>(12)</sup> Finally, when leaders Encourage the Heart, they use their resilience and positive outlook to motivate and encourage others especially through the frustrating and exhausting periods that often occur with change.

Although the verbiage may be quite different, researchers who have studied educational leadership all agree that the most effective principals are successful in establishing a school-wide vision that focuses on a commitment to high standards and the success of all students. However, in order for others to follow toward realization of the vision, a leader must first gain the trust of his/her followers as implied in all of the leadership theories discussed thus far.

### **Leadership Trust**

Trust is the underlying force of relational power; the most powerful form of influence (Hower, 2005). In short, trust perpetuates a positive cycle. It is first inspiring and empowering, and then leads to increased productivity and greater efficiency. It increases competitive advantage as it improves communication and mutual understanding. As it reduces stress, it builds even more trust (Bibb & Kourdi, 2004).

Perhaps most importantly, once trust is established, it permeates an organization. In education, it becomes a norm that sets the standard for how teachers, for example, should behave toward each other, toward their students, and toward the school and community itself. Once ingrained in the culture of the school, trust works to empower people to perform to the best of their abilities; to give their very best to others; and to

have the courage to take risks. All of these behaviors improve school performance in all areas thus making them better places for students (Sergiovanni, 2005, p. 90).

Trust has other benefits as well. For instance, when trust is evident, it can reduce operational costs, improve investment opportunities, increase stability in relations, stimulate learning and the exchange of knowledge, and stimulate creativity (Koppenjan & Klijn, 2004, p. 84-85).

According to Fairholm (1994; 1997), trust is a necessary ingredient in developing organizational cultures of respect. Moreover, trust increases productivity through cooperation and collaboration, rather than through a sense of competitiveness. When trust is evident, concentration and energy can center on production instead of defensiveness or self-preservation. Trust is a necessary component for team development. It facilitates creative problem solving by enabling people to share knowledge, perspectives, and perceptions. Trust allows individuals and groups to commit to ideas, people, and organizations.

Because trust in a school environment enhances collective decision-making, it increases the likelihood that members of the overall school body will participate in reform efforts – thus, creating a sort of “moral imperative” to accomplish school reform, especially with respect to increasing the efforts of all involved. While reform efforts alone increase teacher vulnerability, relational trust decreases that vulnerability and encourages advancement toward reform (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Trust is also helpful during the hiring process and in labor negotiations (R. E. Smith, 2005). Internal trust is a necessary component in conflict resolution, as all parties

involved in the conflict must be completely honest in order to move toward the best solution (Farnsworth, 2007). We can learn from the business world that relationships founded upon trust between individual negotiators that have developed a common language and culture have served as gateways for international agreements that would not have otherwise occurred (Iklé, 1998). If trust can lead to relationships that bring about significant international agreements, it can certainly help teachers and administrators find common ground in determining how to best help students grow while nurturing simultaneous professional growth in the teachers and administrators of the system.

Trust has been found to improve nearly all aspects of a system's or organization's operations. Within the context of a school, all operations are focused on student achievement. If a school is to succeed toward this end, trust must be the foundation on which all work and relations are built (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). That factor alone should be cause enough for educational leaders to focus on the building of trust in their organizations.

F

### **Teacher Morale**

Teacher morale is particularly difficult to measure and perhaps even more difficult to define. For years, attempts have been made to bring clarity to the definition of morale. Child (1941) stated that "morale pertains to factors in the individuals' life that bring about a hopeful and energetic participation on his part so that his efforts enhance the effectiveness of the group in accomplishing the task at hand" (p. 393). Lonsdale's (1964) definition of morale is "a measure of the effectiveness in role enactment, of congruence between role perceptions and role expectations and of congruence between

role expectations and needs dispositions” (p. 156-166). Bentley and Rempel (1980), the authors of the Purdue Teacher Opinionnaire, offer the following definition: “Morale refers to the professional interest and enthusiasm that a person displays toward the achievement of individual and group goals in a given job situation” (p. 2). And, as previously stated in Chapter One of this Thesis, “Teacher morale and motivation are largely affected by the feelings that teachers share regarding the school and the emotional environment which exists at the school” (Evans, 1997; Hunter-Boykin & Evans, 1995). More recently, in the document titled *Enhancing Leadership Effectiveness*, Marvin Fairman and Leon McLean offer the following definition for morale: “That state in which a person, group, or organization has feelings of well-being, satisfaction, and pleasure” (2008). In Gatzels and Guba’s Social Systems Model of the late 1950s, morale was defined as “an interaction of feelings of identification, belongingness and rationality” (1957).

Three decades later in a report in the Phi Delta Kappan, Andrew et. al. (1985) reported that “belongingness, togetherness, achievement, and self or group esteem are generally related to high morale” (p.11). Morale is the interaction between an individual’s needs and an organization’s goals. Hence, a high morale would result only when in the process of achieving the organization’s goals; subsequently, only then can an individual’s needs also be adequately met. Morale is an internal state a person feels and is free from the perceived reality of others. Since it is an internal feeling or set of thoughts, it is not an observable trait, although it can produce outward effects that are observable. For instance, Wentworth (1990) stated, “Low staff morale results from professional lives that have little meaning; from frustration and the inability to change what is happening”

(p. 1). All of these definitions emphasize that teacher morale is an internal state with an external presentation.

Several different methods of measuring teacher morale have been employed as evidenced from the vast amount of research regarding the topic. Some of the most noteworthy research efforts are the Purdue Teacher Opinionaire, the School Survey, the Likert School Profile Questionnaire, the Sergiovanni-Trusty Job Satisfaction Questionnaire, and most recently, the Multi-Dimensional Education Incorporated or MDed Survey, to name just a few. Furthermore, as studies of teacher morale document, there are several factors which can affect and shape teacher morale. Some of those factors include: salaries, school size, working conditions, student/teacher ratio, job security, available resources, leader/member relations, and opportunities to participate in decision making. While all of these factors have been acknowledged as contributors to teacher morale, the review of the literature clearly shows that the building principal is the key contributor to the level of morale that teachers on a campus possess (Macneil, Prater, & Busch, 2007).

### **Factors that Affect Teacher Morale**

⑦ Not only have many researchers attempted to define morale, but many have also studied the effects of certain factors on teacher morale. ⑧ Cook (1979) identified five key areas of school operation that influence teacher morale: Administrative Leadership, Administrative Concern, Personal Interaction, Opportunity for Input, and Professional Growth. ⑨ The first area of Administrative Leadership posits that a positive morale is achieved when teachers have confidence in the competence of their administrator. The

second area (i.e., <sup>(10)</sup>Administrative Concern) is an area that deals with the teachers' need to feel appreciated and an administrator's concurrent awareness of that need. <sup>(11)</sup>Personal Interaction is an area that encompasses the need for individuals to communicate and have support from colleagues as well as administrators. When channels for effective communication are open, the chance for high morale is more likely. Opportunity for Input is an area of school operation that recognizes the teachers' needs to be a part of decisions that directly affect them. Finally, Professional Growth is the area that deals with the teachers' needs to continue their education or professional development. When all these areas are in operation, high teacher morale is present.

Tye and O'Brien (2002) surveyed several teachers who had exited the profession. Respondents gave the following range of reasons for dissatisfaction with teaching and for changing professions: increased accountability, student attitudes, increased paperwork, lack of parental support, unresponsive administration, low professional status, and low salary. Hardy (1999) offered the following list as reasons that teachers choose to leave the profession: low pay, poor professional status, negative interactions with students, and poor relationships with administrators. Liu and Meyer (2005) list student discipline as the number one factor leading to a low teacher morale and salary as the second factor. Wentworth (1990) listed the following as the most influential factors affecting teacher morale:

- Input into decision-making that directly affects curriculum, instruction, and school climate;

- Recognition and appreciation of teacher and student achievement;
- A school climate that reflects a feeling of unity, pride, cooperation, acceptance of differences, and security;
- Good communication;
- Opportunities for meaningful professional growth;
- Clear, shared goals;
- Strong, supportive leadership;
- Quality time for collegial interaction: planning, educational dialog, decision making, problem solving;
- Well-maintained physical environment;
- Good human relations, both within school and between school and community;
- Encouragement and reward for risk taking, innovation, and good teaching;
- Attention to professional needs such as salary, benefits, etc.; and
- Attention to personal needs such as stress management, good health, and social interaction.

G

### Achievement

① In addition to the research on teacher morale and the factors that influence it, there is a body of research reports on the relationship of teacher morale to student

achievement. <sup>2</sup> Hunter-Boykin and Evans (1995) stated that higher teacher morale results in a more effective academic environment. <sup>3</sup> Conversely, Wentworth (1990) stated that a low morale has a negative effect on student achievement. <sup>4</sup> In Araki's (1982) three year study, he examined leadership in both public and private schools in the state of Hawaii. <sup>5</sup> He found a direct correlation between the leadership style and practices of the principal, teacher morale level, and student SAT scores. <sup>6</sup> In addition, Houchard (2005) analyzed the effect of teacher morale on student achievement as measured by the North Carolina End-of-Course Test scores. <sup>7</sup> He also found teacher morale to be positively and significantly correlated to these test scores.

### **Culture and Climate**

School culture and climate, which are both shown to be linked to teacher morale, have also been a focus of research in determining their effects on student achievement. With these two organizational school concepts in mind, MacNeil, Prater and Busch (2007) stated, "Organizational theorists have long reported that paying attention to culture is the most important action that a leader can perform" (p. 1). Educational theorists have similarly purported that the principal's impact on learning and achievement is mediated through the school climate and culture (Hallinger & Heck 1998). Furthermore, Watson (2001) warned that if the culture in a school is not hospitable or conducive to learning, then student achievement can indeed suffer. Fink and Resnick (2001) reiterated that it is the responsibility of the school principal to establish a pervasive culture in the school that fosters an enthusiastic, two-way exchange of

knowledge between all active members of the school from administrators to teachers to students.

Culture and climate are also concepts that theorists have struggled to define. One point on which researchers agree is that the two overlap (Miner, 1995). To offer a distinction between climate and culture, Hoy et. al. (1991) describes school or organizational climate from a psychological perspective and school culture from an anthropological perspective. That is, climate is seen to have more to do with behaviors and thoughts and the emotions that drive them while culture has more to do with inherent similarities and differences in the physical and traditional make up of the school's population. Differences between school climate and culture are also highlighted in organizational studies. Climate is often viewed as behavioral evidences, while culture is thought to comprise the values and norms of the school or organization (Hoy 1990; Heck & Marcoulides, 1996).

Deal and Peterson (1999) explained that "[c]ulture and ethos have been used to capture the essence of a school's heart and soul, but culture provides a more accurate and correct way to help school leaders understand the school's unwritten rules and tradition, norms, and expectations that seem to permeate everything: the way people act, how they dress, what they talk about or avoid talking about, whether they seek out colleagues for help or don't and how teachers feel about their work and students" (pgs. 2-3). Colley (2002) suggested that it is difficult to provide a simple, succinct definition of culture because culture deals largely with unwritten and informal nuances and subtleties.

No definition of culture is universally accepted because researchers agree that no one single definition of culture encompasses all of its facets. Some have simply defined culture as “the way we do things around here.” Others have defined it as a set of shared beliefs and values that closely bind a community together (Deal & Kennedy, 1999; Bower, 1966). A widely recognized definition utilized in Schein’s (1985) work is that culture is “a pattern of basic assumptions - invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with problems...that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (p. 9).

Given that culture permeates nearly every aspect of human existence, attention to culture in a variety of human endeavors is not new. Deal and Peterson (1999) posited that culture is studied as a means of explaining human behavior. In fact, in anthropological studies, the term culture was first used in explaining the differences between various tribes, societies, and ethnic groups. Then social scientists later used the term to explain behavior patterns within organizations. The term “organizational culture” found its way into the corporate world as it was used to describe how corporations and other business groups differed from like organizations in their day-to-day business dealings and decision-making (Gonder & Hymes, 1994). Williams (2010) succinctly stated, “Understanding the culture of an organization, can allow one to dig beneath the surface to discover the patterns and unwritten rules for how people relate to one another, how decisions are made, and how values are determined.”

Gonder and Hymes (1994) suggested that the biggest reason culture is difficult to define is that it is comprehensive of three striated layers: artifacts and symbols, values, and basic assumptions. Artifacts and symbols are those objects which describe the physical and social setting of a group or organization. Values consist of those shared understandings held by a group but originally proposed by one or a select few individuals. Basic assumptions are those ingrained beliefs about human nature, human relationships, and the realities of time and space. Gonder and Hymes also purported that culture is best understood when these three elements are considered in isolation.

Beckhard (2006) compared the culture of an organization to an individual's personality. Beckhard also stated, "Just as individuals have personalities, which are a function of both heredity and environment, so organizations have personalities with the same causes" (p. 950). This comparison leads to the understanding that over time, an organization develops deeply ingrained habits, characteristics, attitudes, and values that shape and define their culture.

Sergiovanni (1999) stated that culture "includes values, symbols, beliefs, and shared meanings of parents, students, teachers, and others conceived as a group or community. Culture governs what is of worth for this group and how members should think, feel, or behave" (p.11). Sergiovanni also asserted "that all organizations have either a "strong or weak, functional or dysfunctional culture" (p.12). Those schools that have strong, functional cultures are those in which the school's leadership and membership have purposefully addressed the area of school culture. In this type of school, the culture serves as a compass which keeps schools pointed in and moving in a

common direction. It also establishes norms and goals, as well as provides all stakeholders with a sense of significance and community. Furthermore, a cycle is created that involves goal-setting to accomplishment in order to further goal-setting and higher accomplishment. By contrast, weak, dysfunctional cultures are characterized by a lack of enthusiasm and accomplishment. There appears to be an inherent cycle as well. The lack of community goals leads to very little if any accomplishment and, therefore, little enthusiasm. The lack of enthusiasm results in a lack of confidence in the group and, therefore, no plans for goal setting.

The study of school climate was first initiated when Perry (1908) approached the topic of climate as synonymous with school pride. School pride, as Perry described, was an element of school spirit evidenced in the celebration of ceremonial events, symbolic traditions, school athletic events, and the overall enthusiasm of various alumni groups. Halpin and Croft (1963) extended the discussion of school climate and furthered the research in this area of study. Their focus on climate revealed several dimensions to school climate ranging from socioeconomic status, parental attitudes, district policies, and the geographic location of the school. Halpin and Croft also examined feedback and comments from elementary teachers and delineated eight dimensions of study. Four dimensions related directly to teachers, while the remaining four were more closely related to administration.

Similar to aspects of school culture, Wynn et al. (2007) noted that climate can be difficult to define in an accurate and succinct manner. Climate has been described as “the enduring characteristics that describe the psychological character of a particular school,

distinguish it from other schools, and influence the behavior of teachers, and students, and is the psychological 'feel' that teachers and students have for school" (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1993, p. 82). According to Gonder and Hymes (1994), climate referred to the overall atmosphere of the school and can be measured by the attitudes of students, faculty, staff, and parents. They explained that climate can have an overall negative or positive feel, even if some minor aspects are considered to be to the contrary. Gonder and Hymes also stated, "Climate can affect everything from the morale, satisfaction, and productivity of everyone involved in the organization" (p. 11). The Center for Social and Emotional Education, the National School Climate Center, and the National Center for Learning and Citizenship and Education Commission of the States (2008) referred to school climate as "the character of school life. It is based on patterns of school life experiences and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning and leadership practices, and organizational structures" (p.5). Tableman (2004) described climate as "the physical and psychological aspects of the school that provide the preconditions necessary for teaching and learning to take place" (p.2).

Moos (1979) added that school climate is a social atmosphere that he divided into three components: relationship (refers to the level of involvement of members), personal growth/goal orientation (refers to individuals' motivation for personal development and self-improvement), and systems maintenance (refers to the orderliness of environment and the clarity of rules). Freiberg and Stein (1999) described school climate as the unique personality of the school and its distinctive qualities that encourage students and staff to come on board.

Just as culture has been considered to be multi-faceted, Gonder and Hymes suggested that climate consists of the four following facets or dimensions: academic, social, physical, and affective. Firstly, the academic dimension is inclusive of all the instructional norms, beliefs, and practices in existence in a school, especially with regard to high expectations, the monitoring of student progress, and efforts toward a safe and orderly climate. Next, the social dimension is one influenced by the many modes of interaction between stakeholders in a school, especially interactions between teachers and students, student-to-student communication, and the allowance for students to have a voice in decision making. Thirdly, the physical dimension includes all the physical aspects of a school including the materials necessary for day to day operations. And, lastly, the affective dimension of school culture refers to the feelings and attitudes shared by students, faculty, staff, and parents.

No matter what definition or even combination of definitions one subscribes to in regard to school culture and climate, one cannot refute or deny the research with regard to its impact on student achievement. In an attempt to examine the relationship between school culture and student achievement, MacNeil et al. (2009) conducted a study to investigate whether schools with the same Texas school accountability ratings (Exemplary, Recognized, and Acceptable) would be considered to be similar in climate. The results indicated that Exemplary schools had productive, more positive cultures and climates than those with Acceptable ratings. In other words, students achieved higher scores on standardized tests in schools with positive cultures. Gonder and Hymes (1994) also found a direct link between positive school climate, high staff productivity, and

student achievement. In a review of the related research literature, they found that climate and culture can greatly impact a student's success or failure. Of the 134 secondary schools included in the 2004 Hay Group Study, Fullan (2005) found that "successful schools had a much more demanding culture - hunger for improvement, promoting excellence, holding hope for every child - while the less successful schools had less of a press for improvement and were much more forgiving if results were not forthcoming" (p. 58).

Whether one prefers the term school climate or culture, research indicates that it can have an impact on a variety of aspects within a school. It can affect every facet of a school community from teacher morale and job satisfaction to teacher retention, student discipline and student achievement.

The key to ensuring long-lasting success may lie in a school leader's ability to examine, nurture, and purposefully plan for a positive school culture by creating and sharing a vision, common values, norms, beliefs, and traditions. School principals who purposely attend to the various dimensions of school climate can affect positive change in student achievement (Pellicer 2003). Fairman and Clark (1982) stated in more descriptive terms that "healthy schools are schools that exhibit the following types of cultures, also known as dimensions of organizational health: goal focus, communication, optimal power equalization, resource utilization, cohesiveness, morale, innovativeness, autonomy, adaptation and problem-solving adequacy."

MacNeil et al. (2007) also added the following statement:

Strong school cultures have better motivated teachers. Highly motivated teachers have greater success in terms of student performance, student behaviors and student outcomes. And research suggests that schools that have motivated teachers and high student success with trusted leadership have high levels of teacher morale. (pg. 5)

H

### Leadership's Effect on Morale

① Lester (1990) proclaimed that "[c]learly, the Principal is the key figure in raising teacher morale and commitment" (p. 274). Other educational researchers have concurred that a school's administrative leadership plays a vital role in the establishment of school climate and teacher morale (Kelley, Thornton, & Daugherty, 2005; Butt, Lance, Fielding, Gunter, Rayner, & Thomas, 2005; Rhodes, Nevill, & Allan, 2004; Evans, 1997). This research includes a review of several studies that address a principal's role in influencing teacher morale and teacher job satisfaction, and, thus, student achievement.

② To examine their effects on teacher morale, researchers have targeted specific components of educational leadership for study both from a practical as well as a theoretical standpoint. Egley and Jones (2005) focused on the relationships of elementary teachers and their principals and studied the nuances therein. ③ They found that when principals treated their staff members more like equals and invited them into leadership roles, teacher morale overall improved. A principal who invites leadership in this way tends to focus on "compassion and respect for the individual through collaboration and mutual respect" (Egley & Jones). ④ In a much earlier study, Bidwell (1957) investigated the

roles that teachers expected their principals to fill. Subsequently, he discovered that when teachers felt their principals fulfilled such expected roles, there was job satisfaction and high morale. He also found that when teachers did not believe their leaders fulfilled their expectations, they possessed lower morale and increased job dissatisfaction. <sup>5</sup> Implied in these findings, therefore, is the notion that principals who fulfill the teachers' expectations of their role can positively affect the morale of those teachers and increase satisfaction in their jobs. <sup>6</sup> Similarly, Schulz and Teddlie (1989) determined that the principal's use of *Referent Power* is directly related to teacher morale. Referent Power refers to the power a leader holds when his/her followers identify with and wish to emulate him/her. <sup>7</sup> Additionally, Blase, Dedrick, and Strathe (1986) further reported that teachers who identified with their principals and felt they had traits worthy of emulation sustained higher levels of job satisfaction.

<sup>8</sup> Hipp (1997) initiated a qualitative study examining the relationship of school leadership to teacher efficacy. In her study, the very definition of "efficacy" encompasses teacher morale. The specific scripted interview questions of which the study consisted were designed to delve into issues regarding teacher efficacy and principal behaviors according to the thirty-four teachers surveyed. The results concluded that the following principal actions were found to significantly influence teacher efficacy: "modeling behavior, inspiring group purpose, recognizing teacher efforts and accomplishments, providing personal and professional support, managing student behavior, and promoting a sense of community" (Hipp).

⑨ Thomas (1997) presented a meta-analysis focusing on leadership, leadership theory and style, and the effect of principal leadership on teacher morale. The results supported that the leadership style of the building principal had a significant effect on teacher morale. ⑩ To be precise, a collaborative leadership style had the most positive impact on teacher morale. In other words, schools with shared visions and decision-making responsibilities were discovered to have higher teacher morale than schools which allowed less teacher input into decision-making.

⑪ In order to determine which leadership style had the greatest impact on teacher morale, Nguni, Slegers, and Denessen (2006) examined two leadership styles, *transactional* and *transformational leadership*. Transformational leadership traits, they found, have a positive correlation to teacher morale. On the other hand, they found transactional leadership traits to have the opposite correlation to teacher morale. As mentioned before, transactional leadership offers motivation simply through rewards, for instance, rewarding work with financial compensation. In contrast, transformational leadership tends to provide the follower with more motivation as it enhances the individual's performance "beyond the exchange level to the level of self-actualization" (Nguni, Slegers, and Denessen, 2006).

⑫ In contrast to some of the other findings, Evans and Johnson (1990) surveyed middle and high school teachers and found inconsistent results. From their study, they concluded that principal leadership had an overall effect on the stress level of teachers, but they found the correlation between principal behaviors and teacher job satisfaction to be insignificant. They also determined that a principal's leadership has very little to do

with teacher job satisfaction. However, it is important to understand that the only sample surveyed in this study consisted of a group of Physical Education teachers.

⑬ In order to determine the factors which affect teacher morale, Andrew, Parks, and Nelson (1985) performed a study that would also produce an instrument that could be used to measure morale and a handbook that would aid schools in raising morale. In schools where a high morale already existed, principals were found to embody the following list of traits or behaviors: a good listener, enthusiastic, outgoing, friendly, available, energetic, fair, and organized. In schools where morale was low, the principals' roles, traits, or behaviors displayed consisted of the following list: disciplinarian, inconsistent, unsupportive, formal, and impatient. Throughout their study, they developed the following list of administrative behaviors, roles, and practices that ensure and sustain high teacher morale:

- Be open and have good morale yourself;
- Communicate at many levels;
- Involve others in setting objectives, planning, and decision-making;
- Set planning priorities;
- Your job is to get things done, not to do them yourself;
- Know the values and needs of your community, your students, and your staff;
- Hold high expectations for staff, but recognize your responsibility in helping them meet your expectations;

- Give recognition to those who are helping to advance the objectives of the school;
- Have written policy developed for procedures and regulations;
- Exercise your authority;
- Provide resources needed to achieve the school's objectives; and
- Do your best to obtain competitive salary levels so you can obtain the very best staff. (pg. 12)

(14) Bhella (1982) conducted a study that correlated the Perdue Teacher Opinionaire and The Principal Leadership Style Questionnaire. The results concluded that a significant relationship exists between teacher/principal rapport and the principal's level of concern for people and production. The results indicated that an administrator who exhibits a high level of concern for people also has a better rapport with the staff.

(15) The final two studies submitted in this review enlist the use of two instruments commonly present in research regarding principal leadership practices. In addition, the instrumentation, method of data collection, and statistical methods of analysis of these studies are quite similar as well. Each of these studies utilized the Perdue Teacher Opinionaire, which is a questionnaire to evaluate leadership. The second study also included the use of the Leadership Practices Inventory. (16) In their study, Hunter-Boykin and Evans (1995) focused on the relationship between high school principals' leadership practices and styles with teacher morale using the Perdue Teacher Opinionaire. (17) To collect

the data, the Leadership Ability Evaluation instrument was used. The sample for the study consisted of 40 high school principals and 411 high school teachers. The results of the study demonstrated a low-positive correlation between the principal's leadership style and the teacher morale. It is important to note that the design of the study was such that the principal's leadership was self-reported rather than teacher-reported.

The last study investigated the relationship between principal leadership, teacher morale, and student achievement (Houchard, 2005). The instruments utilized were the Perdue Teacher Opinionnaire, the Leadership Practices Inventory, and the North Carolina End-of-Course exams. The cross-section of this study consisted of teachers who voluntarily submitted their responses. One hundred thirteen of the 124 teachers polled responded to the Perdue Teacher Opinionnaire and 115 responded to the Leadership Practices Inventory. The sample population included eleven administrators who responded to the Perdue Teacher Opinionnaire, but no information on the number of administrators who responded to the Leadership Practices Inventory is known. Several significant relationships were evinced by the study. In the morale category, Rapport with the Principal had a significant correlation to the leadership category of Enabling Others to Act and Encouraging the Heart. Secondly, a significant correlation was found to exist between the morale aspect of Satisfaction with Teaching with the leadership aspect of Inspiring a Shared Vision and Enabling Others to Act. Another significant correlation evidenced was that between the morale factor of Rapport with Teachers and the leadership aspect of Enabling Others to Act and Encouraging the Heart. In addition, there was also a significant correlation found between the morale factor of Teacher Load and

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the leadership factor of Inspiring a Shared Vision and Enabling Others to Act. In the fifth and final point, a positive correlation was found between the morale aspect of Faculties and the leadership aspect of Inspiring a Shared Vision and Enabling Others to Act.

This review of the literature includes several works and studies that overwhelmingly establish a link between the leadership styles and behaviors of the principal and the morale of the teachers. A myriad of studies have been presented which repeatedly demonstrated that teacher morale was significantly affected by the leadership of the principal. Some of the research included also demonstrated a positive correlation between teacher morale and academic achievement. It can be concluded, therefore, that a principal's leadership plays a vital role in establishing the climate and culture of the school, regulating teacher morale, and, ultimately, determining student achievement. In virtually every study, the literature shows a positive correlation between certain leadership traits or behaviors and positive teacher morale. Regardless of whether in the realm of elementary or secondary principal leadership, this review of teacher morale research seems to offer a clear message to principals: The principal has a critical hand in determining the outcomes of his or her school. In effecting positive changes or maintaining success, one of the most important areas of focus for a principal is that of teacher morale. It is incumbent upon those who hold this position to identify and develop methods to achieve and maintain positive teacher morale, because teacher morale has far-reaching and significant effects, especially with relation to the ultimate goal of education – namely, student achievement.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

I

① The design of this study and the procedures used to collect and analyze the data are fully explained in this chapter. ② Detail is used in the explanation and description of the context of the study, the participants, the instruments, and the methods used in gathering the data. ③ The chapter concludes with an explanation of the data analysis. The purpose of the proposed study was to examine the effects of principal leadership and its relationship between teacher morale and student achievement in three grade 7-8 middle schools. The following research questions were analyzed:

1. As measured by the MDed Survey, what was the level of teacher morale in the three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools?
2. How did teacher morale change as a result of the 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools interventions?
3. Did increased teacher morale impact student achievement in the three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools?

#### Research Perspective

This study utilized archival data using the results of the 2009 MDed Survey to attempt to answer the research questions. In addition, the MDed Survey measured multiple variables. For the purpose of this study two independent variables were selected from the survey results. The study was designed to determine whether a relationship exists between teacher morale and the independent variables of principal trust and leadership satisfaction. In addition, student achievement and discipline were evaluated to determine whether there was any relationship to teacher morale.

## Population and Sample

④ The study took place in a large school system located in a suburban region of  
⑤ southeast Texas. At the time of the survey, the school system served on the order of  
69,000 students during the 2009-2010 school year, and employed over 4,500 teachers.

For the purpose of this study, three middle schools were selected from the east side of the district to become a pilot program. These three campuses were selected as Initiative Middle Schools by the district because of previously identified poor teacher morale, poor student achievement, and high student discipline. Traditional middle schools in this school system contained grades six, seven, and eight, and each school consisted of student populations ranging between 1000-1500 students. The district administration reconfigured the student population of these three schools to decrease the student-teacher ratio and overall size of the student body. Prior to the pilot school year, the district removed the sixth grade from the three Initiative campuses, committing to a smaller student environment. Additionally, new principals were carefully selected to lead the students, teachers and community during this transitional period at the selected campuses. The teaching staff was provided extensive, on-going staff development in professional learning communities and data teaming, and the student-to-teacher ratio for the three campuses was capped at 21:1. The combined teaching staff for the three initiative schools equaled 89 teachers, and the combined student population was 1600 students. The three campuses contained majority minority student populations consisting predominately of African American and Hispanic students, and all three campuses were designated as Title I schools due to their high economically disadvantaged student

populations. On average, as outlined by the Texas Education Agency 2009 Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), the three campuses combined contained a 64% low income student population demographic.

⑥ Overall, the school district consisted of 69 schools during the 2008-2009 school year – more specifically, 42 elementary, 14 middle, 10 high and 3 alternative campuses. Archival data was collected at only the three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools in this district.

### Subjects

⑦ The population of the proposed study included all middle school teachers at the three identified middle school campuses in this school system. ⑧ The faculties of these three schools contained a combined 89 teachers. ⑨ The sample proposed for this study consisted of all respondents from these 89 teachers.

⑩ The middle school teachers in this study had an average of 11.4 years' experience in education. ⑪ In particular, twenty six percent of the middle school teachers were male, while seventy four percent were female. ⑫ Seventy-six percent of the middle school teachers had a bachelor's degree as their highest degree; nineteen percent had obtained a master's degree; and five percent had a specialist or doctoral degree.

### Instrumentation

For this study, the instrument used was the MDed Survey (see Appendix A) provided by the Multi-Dimensional Education Incorporated (i.e., the MDed). The subsequent findings of the survey are summarized in The 2009 Middle School District Report (see Appendix B). The MDed Survey captures data from students, parents and educators through the following seven dimensions: Community Engagement, Curriculum

Expectations, Developmental Perspectives, Educational Attitudes, Faculty Fidelity, Leadership Potential, and School Climate. Furthermore, each of these dimensions encompass four dimensional index scales. For the purpose of this study, only one dimension is utilized – specifically, the Leadership Potential. Within this dimension only the following two dimensional index scales were researched: (a) The independent variables of principal trust and (b) leadership satisfaction.

The dimension “Leadership Potential” was designed to relate teachers’ perceptions of their principals in two of the four dimensional index scales - principal trust and leadership satisfaction. The validity of the instrument was based upon the design purposes and specificity. Moreover, the MDed Survey was designed solely as a comprehensive assessment tool to evaluate students, parents, and staff responses in order to provide school districts with data to help every child reach his or her potential; to assess leadership potential; and to assist school leaders by providing more accurate information to help teachers reach their potential. The Multi-Dimensional Assessment provides valuable data essential for identifying what changes are needed to improve educational achievement and educator effectiveness. This is accomplished by focusing on the seven dimensions and comprehensive index scales within each dimension. Principal trust and leadership satisfaction are specific index scales that measure teacher morale as related to the teachers’ perceptions of their principals’ leadership ability.

Permission to use the instrument was granted by the participating school district. It is also important to point out that this instrument was carefully analyzed to ensure that its age would not hinder its validity. Thus, the language used within this survey was made

consistent with current educational language so that responses were not hindered by the age of the instrument. The version of the survey used for this study was the 2009 survey data completed by the teachers regarding their principal's trust and leadership satisfaction. The MDed Survey had content validity in that the questions were closely aligned with the leadership characteristics they were designed to measure.

All teachers were assigned to receive the MDed Survey during the fall of the 2009 school year. The total return rate for the MDed survey for all three schools was 62%. A total of 55 of the 89 teacher surveys were returned.

Permission to use this survey was obtained in writing from the authors (see Appendix C). Also, permission was granted through the University of Houston, Department of Research, to conduct this study under Category 4 of the research application as exempt status (see Appendix D). In addition, permission was received from the participating school district to research the archival MDed data for the purpose of this study (see Appendix E).

### **Data Collection Procedures**

At the direction of the superintendent, permission to perform the study was first obtained from the three middle school principals. The Assistant Superintendent for Middle Schools was then supplied with information in order to support the cost of the survey at the district level. Once the superintendent's signature was obtained, the principals were contacted for faculty lists and to discuss the process for distributing the surveys. A copy of the permission to perform research form is found in Appendix E.

After obtaining a list of each schools' faculties, the assistant superintendent provided the teacher lists to MDed. MDed provided each principal with enough surveys for their teaching staffs and their student populations. Surveys were also sent to the students' guardian addresses as listed in the district's student information system.

① Teachers received an email from the principal describing the purpose of the research prior to receiving the surveys. ② The email requested their participation and offered an incentive for participation. ③ The principals explained that their faculty would receive a breakfast from the principal if their school's return rate was at or above 60%. ④ It was also stated that the surveys would be collected in approximately two weeks.

⑤ Each teacher received a survey with a cover letter explaining the purpose of the survey and a stated request for his or her participation. ⑥ The cover letter also contained a confidentiality statement which guaranteed that individuals would be kept anonymous and that all research records would be kept secure. ⑦ Additionally, the cover letter contained an explanation stressing that their participation was voluntary and would in no way affect their relationship to the local school system.

⑧ The surveys were addressed to each individual teacher in a sealed envelope. ⑨ A return envelope was also supplied to protect the anonymity of the respondents. ⑩ Each school was coded using letters A-C. ⑪ This coding was used to identify the specific school during the data collection only. ⑫ This coding had no relation to the numbering of the schools used when reporting results.

⑬ The surveys were distributed early in May of 2009. Multi-Dimensional Education Incorporated delivered the surveys to individual schools along with a box for the return of

the surveys. The surveys were then placed in the teachers' boxes in each school's mailroom.

(14) Next, the principals sent two additional emails. (15) The first email was sent to remind the teachers of the surveys and the incentive, stating again the procedure for returning the surveys and to offer to send an additional survey to any individual who may have misplaced the original one. (16) Approximately 17 additional surveys were sent to teachers who requested one. (17) The second additional email was sent stating that the collection of all surveys would occur within the last week of May, 2009. (18) The email also thanked teachers for their responses and informed them that they would be notified if their faculty had earned a breakfast. And, upon the completion of the process, two of the three initiative schools received the breakfast. (19) The surveys were gathered by the assistant superintendent and sent to Multi-Dimensional Education Incorporated during the first week of June, 2009.

In August of 2009, the district received the results of the MDed survey. Survey results were shared with the campus principals and staff. Additionally, the Assistant Superintendent for Middle Schools summarized for the school systems Board of Trustees during a regularly scheduled August Board meeting the comprehensive results for the three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools.

### **Data Analysis**

*Data organization.* In an effort to compile the data, the participating school district Assistant Superintendent for Middle Schools created a one-page summary sheet to track the campus surveys. (21) Each survey was then given a unique identification code to

pair it with the tracking sheet and home campus to allow easy matching in the event of a discrepancy. <sup>22</sup> The raw data will be discussed and presented in Chapter Four.

*Statistical procedures.* <sup>23</sup> To evaluate the research questions, this study used the responses to the MDed Survey to determine if teachers' perceptions of their principals as they apply to principal trust and leadership satisfaction lead to high teacher morale at the select campuses. Additionally, anecdotal perceptions were included in the survey and were used in determining the level of teacher morale at the three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools. As a means of comparing student achievement to teacher morale at each 7-8 Initiative Middle School, the campus State of Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) report containing standardized archival testing data was reviewed in the subjects 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading and math, comparing three years of AEIS data (i.e., 2008, 2009, and 2010) (see Appendix F). It is important to note that this comparison utilizes data contained during the 2008 school year prior to the establishment of the 7-8 Initiative to 2009 and 2010 data after the establishment of the 7-8 Initiative. Additionally, campus student discipline was reviewed comparing 2008 discipline to 2009 discipline at all three of the 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools. Again, it is important to note that this discipline comparison utilized data obtained during the 2008 year prior to the establishment of the 7-8 Initiative to 2009 data after the establishment of the 7-8 Initiative.

### Summary of Methodology

<sup>23</sup> This chapter described and explained the methods used in this study. It stated the type of research and described the context for the research. <sup>24</sup> A description of the

participants of the study was given along with a description of the survey. The procedures were fully discussed then the data analysis explained. Next, Chapter Four will present the findings of the study. Then, Chapter Five will provide as summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations for future research.

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## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESULTS OF THE STUDY**

The results of the MDed Survey and associated data are presented in this chapter. MDed Survey data specific to the dimensional scales, principal trust and principal satisfaction as they apply to the three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools will be provided. Student achievement scores as measured by the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) in Math and Reading at the 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools are presented and student discipline comparisons for each of the 7-8 Initiative Middle School are reviewed. In addition, all the results are examined as they relate to the research questions:

1. As measured by the MDed Survey, what was the level of teacher morale in the three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools?
2. How did teacher morale change as a result of the 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools interventions?
3. Did increased teacher morale impact student achievement in the three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools?

The results of this study found that as measured by the MDed Survey in the areas of principal trust and leadership satisfaction, teacher morale increased positively in the three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools. Although it was determined teacher morale varied slightly at the three campuses, the overall results showed that teacher morale was high at all three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools as a result of the 7-8 Initiative.

The results of the study also found that standardized student testing scores increased at the three campuses – specifically, in the area of math after the

implementation of the 7-8 Initiative. It was also determined that student discipline decreased as a result of the implementation of the three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools.

### **Description of the Sample**

The sample for this study was obtained from the population of all middle school teachers at the three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools in the district under investigation. The MDed Survey was administered in May of 2009 after one year of implementation of the 7-8 Initiative at each of the three identified campuses. Campus standardized testing data was compared in the areas of reading and math the year prior to the 7-8 Middle School Initiative and two years following implementation. Student discipline data was reviewed comparing data obtained the year prior to the 7-8 Middle School Initiative to data obtained the year after implementation.

### **Principal Trust as Measured by MDed**

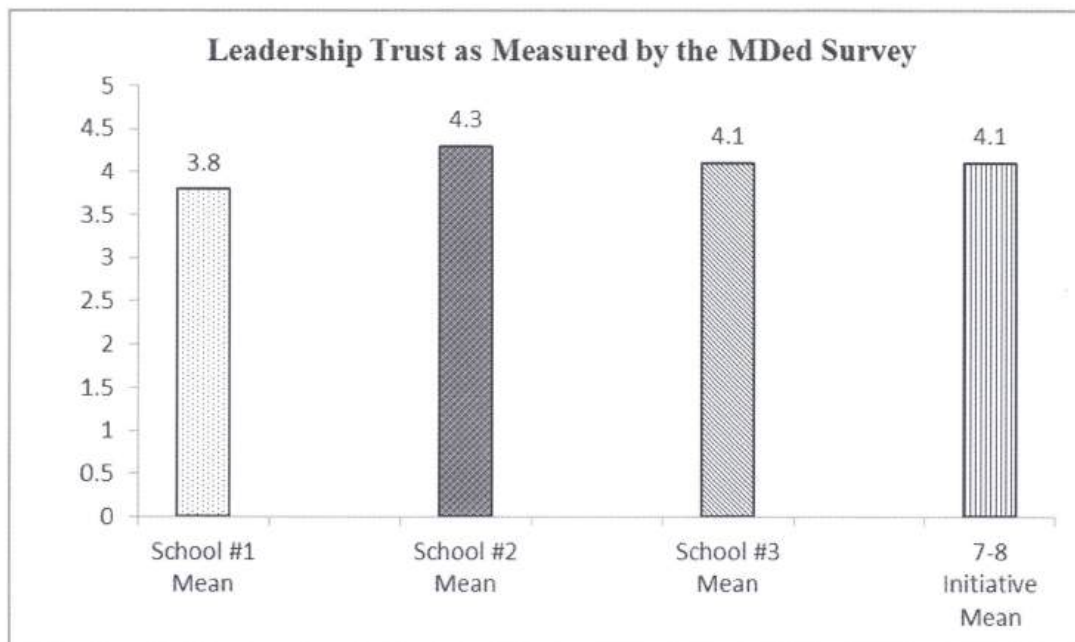
Table 4.1 below provides the teacher results in the Dimensional scale area “Principal Trust” as measured by the MDed Survey.

Table 4.1

*Dimensional Scale “Principal Trust” as Measured by MDed*

| School | School Mean | 7-8 Initiative Mean |
|--------|-------------|---------------------|
| #1     | 3.8         | 4.1                 |
| #2     | 4.3         | 4.1                 |
| #3     | 4.1         | 4.1                 |

*Note:* Scales range from 1 to 5 with 1 being the lowest score and 5 being the highest.



*Figure 1.* “Leadership trust” as measured by the MDed Survey. This figure illustrates the mean average results regarding the Dimensional scale area “Principal Trust” as measured by the MDed Survey.

The data in Table 4.1 implies that teachers at the three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools have a high level of trust in their principals. School #1 shows that on a scale of one to five, teachers had a mean of 3.8, slightly higher than average. School #2 shows that teachers have a principal trust level of 4.3, which was the highest trust level among the three Initiative Middle Schools. School #3 shows principal trust as measured by the MDed Survey at 4.1.

Once again, the data as measured by the MDed Survey in the dimensional scale “Principal Trust” shows that teachers have a high level of trust in the leadership of their school. The average of the three Initiative Middle Schools, as measured by the MDed

survey, at the three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools, equals 4.1 on a scale range of 1 to 5 with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest.

### Leadership Satisfaction as Measured by MDed

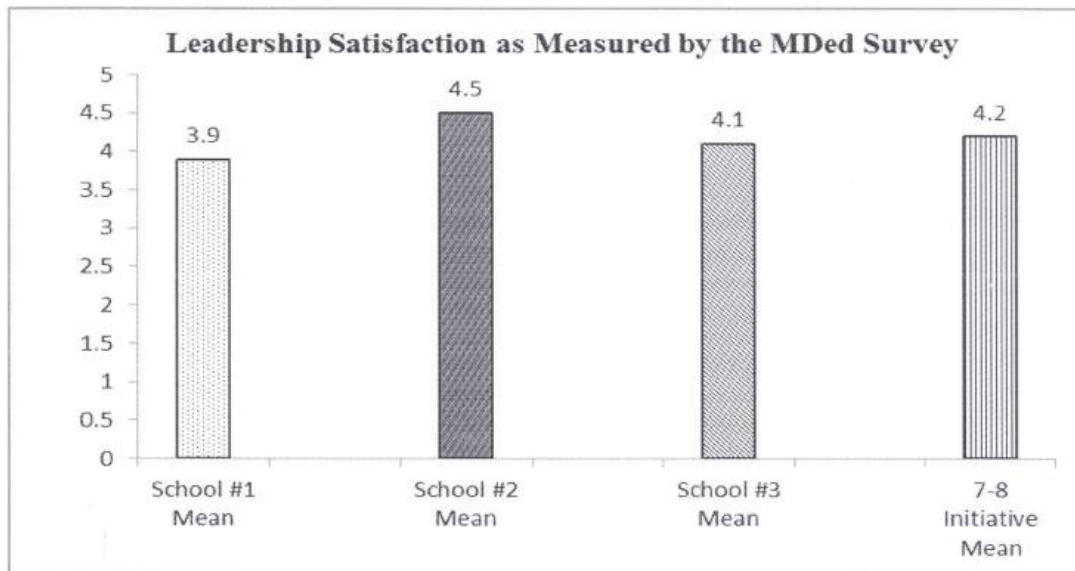
Table 4.2 provides the teacher results in the Dimensional scale area “Leadership Satisfaction” as measured by the MDed Survey.

Table 4.2

*Dimensional Scale “Leadership Satisfaction” as Measured by MDed*

| School | School Mean | 7-8 Initiative Mean |
|--------|-------------|---------------------|
| #1     | 3.9         | 4.2                 |
| #2     | 4.5         | 4.2                 |
| #3     | 4.1         | 4.2                 |

*Note:* Scales range from 1 to 5 with 1 being the lowest score and 5 being the highest.



*Figure 2.* Leadership satisfaction as measured by the MDed survey. This figure illustrates the mean average results regarding the Dimensional scale area “Leadership Satisfaction” as measured by the MDed Survey.

The data in Table 4.2 implies that teachers at the three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools possess a high level of satisfaction in the leadership at their school. School #1 shows that – on a scale of one to five – teachers had a mean of 3.9, which was slightly higher than average. The School #2 data illustrates that teachers have a principal trust level of 4.5, which is the highest trust level among the three Initiative Middle Schools. School #3 shows principal trust as measured by the MDed Survey at 4.1. Again, the data as measured by the MDed Survey in the dimensional scale “Leadership Satisfaction” shows that teachers have a high level of satisfaction in the leadership of their school. The average of the three Initiative Middle Schools, as measured by the MDed Survey, equals 4.2 on a scale range of 1 to 5 – with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest.

#### **7<sup>th</sup> Grade Math TAKS Scores**

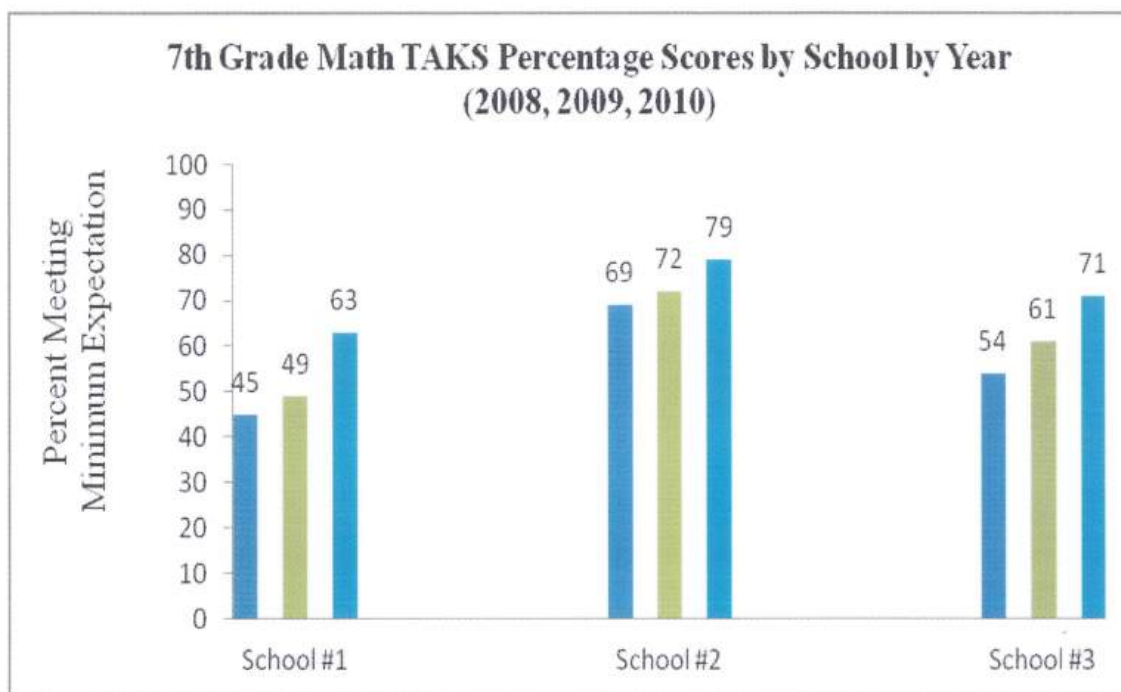
Table 4.3 provides testing data specific to 7<sup>th</sup> grade student standardized testing scores in math at the three separate 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools. The data was derived from the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), as reported in the annual State of Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), and reported per individual campus. In addition, three years of data are presented – specifically, the years of 2008, 2009 and 2010. It is important to note that scores for the 2008 year data were obtained prior to the establishment of the 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools. Furthermore, as reported in the AEIS report, the numerical score attributed to each campus, per year, accounts for the percentage of all students that met minimum expectations as determined by the State of Texas on the 7<sup>th</sup> grade Math TAKS test.

Table 4.3

*7th Grade Math TAKS Percentage Scores by School by Year*

| School | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|--------|------|------|------|
| #1     | 45   | 49   | 63   |
| #2     | 69   | 72   | 79   |
| #3     | 54   | 61   | 71   |

*Note:* Scores indicate the percentage of all students who met minimum expectations on the 7<sup>th</sup> grade Math TAKS test.



*Figure 3.* 7th grade math TAKS percentage scores by school by year. This figure illustrates the percentage of campus meeting minimum expectations for years 2008, 2009, and 2010.

The data in Table 4.3 implies that 7<sup>th</sup> grade students at School #1, School #2, and School #3 showed significant gains over the three year period. For instance, in 2008,

prior to the establishment of the 7-8 Initiative, only 45 percent of 7<sup>th</sup> grade students met minimum expectations on the 7<sup>th</sup> grade Math TAKS test at School #1; 69 percent of these students met the minimum expectations at School #2; and, lastly, only 54 percent of these students met minimum expectations at School #3. Then, in 2009, which was the first year of implementation of the 7-8 Initiative, students at School #1 showed a 4 percent increase by scoring 49 percent meeting minimum expectation. In addition, students at School #2 showed a 3 percent increase by scoring 72 percent, and students at School #3 showed an increase of 7 percent scoring 61 percent meeting minimum expectations. Subsequently, in the second year of full implementation of the 7-8 Initiative, students at School #1 scored 63 percent meeting minimum expectation on the 7<sup>th</sup> grade TAKS test; thus, representing an 18-point percentage gain from 2008 and a 14-point gain from 2009. Students at School #2 showed a 10-point percentage gain from 2008, and an additional 7-point gain from 2009. Students at School #3 showed a 17-point percentage gain from 2008 and another 10-point percentage gain from 2009.

The data as presented in Table 4.3 suggests that student achievement increased at all three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools in the area of 7<sup>th</sup> grade math as assessed by the TAKS test data comparing 2008, 2009 and 2010.

### **8th Grade Math TAKS Scores**

Table 4.4 provides testing data specific to 8<sup>th</sup> grade student standardized testing scores in math at the three 7-8 initiative middle schools. The data is derived from the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) assessment as reported in the annual State of Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), reported per individual

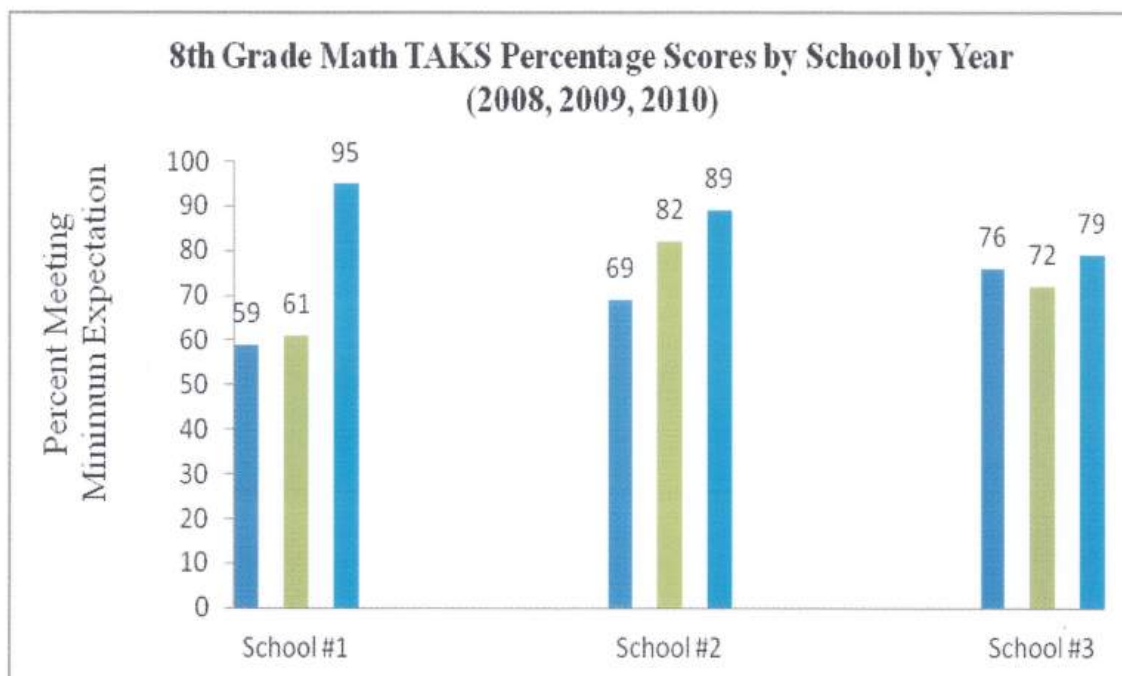
campus. Once again, three years of data are presented - specifically, 2008, 2009 and 2010. It is important to note that scores for the year 2008 reflect data established prior to the establishment of the 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools. Additionally, as reported in the AEIS report, the numerical score attributed to each campus, per year, accounts for the percentage of all students that met minimum expectations as determined by the State of Texas on the 8<sup>th</sup> grade math TAKS test.

Table 4.4

*8<sup>th</sup> Grade Math TAKS Percentage Scores by School by Year*

| School | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|--------|------|------|------|
| #1     | 59   | 61   | 95   |
| #2     | 69   | 82   | 89   |
| #3     | 76   | 72   | 79   |

Scores indicate the percentage of all students who met minimum expectations on the 8<sup>th</sup> grade Math TAKS test.



*Figure 4.* 8th grade math TAKS percentage scores by school by year. This figure illustrates the 8<sup>th</sup> grade math TAKS results for three schools for years 2008, 2009, and 2010.

The data in Table 4.4 implies that 8<sup>th</sup> grade students at School #1, School #2, and School #3 showed significant gains over the three-year period. For instance, in 2008, prior to the establishment of the 7-8 initiative, only 59 percent of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students met minimum expectation on the 8<sup>th</sup> grade math TAKS test at School #1, 69 percent at School #2, and 76 percent at School #3. Moreover, in the first year of implementation of the 7-8 initiative, in the year 2009, students at School #1 showed a 2 point percentage increase by scoring 61 percent meeting minimum expectations. Students at School #2 showed a 13 percent increase by scoring 82 percent, and students at School #3 showed a slight decrease of 4 percent by scoring 72 percent. In the second year of full implementation of the 7-8 Initiative, in 2010, students at School #1 scored 95 percent meeting minimum

expectation on the 8<sup>th</sup> grade TAKS test – a 36-point percentage gain from 2008, and a 34-point gain from 2009. Students at School #2 showed a 20-point percentage gain from 2008, and a 7-point gain from 2009. And, students at School #3 showed a 3-point percentage gain from 2008, and a 7-point percentage gain from 2009.

The data as presented in Table 4.4 suggests that student achievement increased at all three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools in 8<sup>th</sup> grade math as assessed by the TAKS test data comparing 2008, 2009 and 2010.

### **7<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading TAKS Scores**

Table 4.5 provides testing data specific to 7<sup>th</sup> grade student scores in reading at the three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools. The data is derived from the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) assessment as reported in the annual State of Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) as reported per individual campus. Again, three years of data are presented (i.e., 2008, 2009 and 2010). It is important to note that scores for the year 2008 reflect data collected prior to the establishment of the 7-8 Initiative. Additionally, as reported in the AEIS report, the numerical score attributed to each campus, per year, accounts for the percentage of all students that met minimum expectation as determined by the State of Texas on the 7<sup>th</sup> grade Math TAKS test.

Table 4.5

*7th Grade Reading TAKS Percentage Scores by School by Year*

| School | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|--------|------|------|------|
| #1     | 73   | 71   | 74   |
| #2     | 88   | 88   | 92   |
| #3     | 82   | 83   | 80   |

Scores indicate the percentage of all students who met minimum expectations on the 7<sup>th</sup> grade Reading TAKS test.

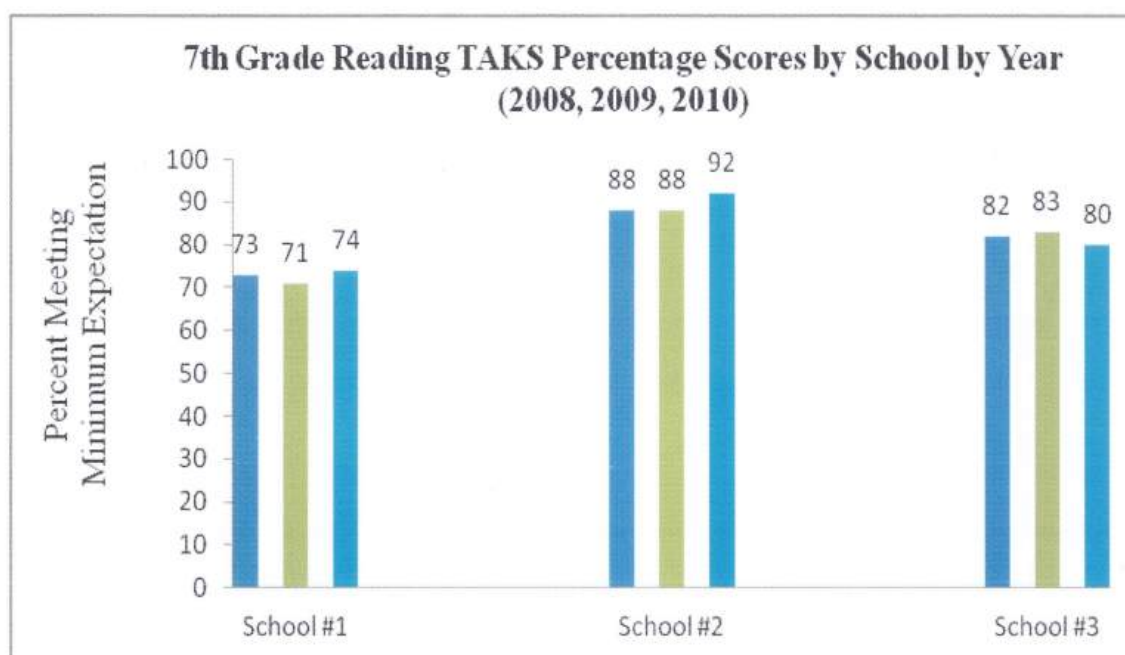


Figure 5. 7<sup>th</sup> grade reading TAKS percentage scores by school by year. This figure illustrates the 7<sup>th</sup> grade reading TAKS results for three schools for years 2008, 2009, and 2010.

The data in Table 4.5 implies that 7<sup>th</sup> grade students at School #1, School #2, and School #3 showed moderate gains in reading over a three-year period. In the year 2008,

prior to the establishment of the 7-8 Initiative, only 73 percent of 7<sup>th</sup> grade students met minimum expectations on the 7<sup>th</sup> grade reading TAKS test at School #1, 88 percent at School #2, and 82 percent at School #3. In the first year of implementation of the 7-8 Initiative, in the year 2009, students at School #1 showed a 2-point percentage decrease by scoring 71 percent meeting minimum expectation. In addition, students at School #2 showed no percent increase by scoring 88 percent, and students at Campus #3 showed a slight increase of 1 percent by scoring 83 percent meeting minimum expectations. In the second year of full implementation of the 7-8 Initiative, in 2010, students at School #1 scored 74 percent meeting minimum expectation on the 8<sup>th</sup> grade TAKS test, a 1-point percentage gain from 2008, and a 4-point gain from 2009. Students at School #2 showed a 4-point percentage gain from 2008, and a 4-point gain from 2009. Students at School #3 showed a 2-point percentage decrease from 2008, and a 3-point percentage decrease from 2009.

The data as presented in Table 4.5 suggests that student achievement increased slightly at School #1 and School #2 and decreased slightly at School #3 in the area of 7<sup>th</sup> grade reading as assessed by the TAKS Reading test comparing scores from 2008, 2009 and 2010.

### **8<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading TAKS Scores**

Table 4.6 provides testing data specific to 8<sup>th</sup> grade student scores in reading at the three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools. The data is derived from the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) assessment as reported in the annual State of Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) as reported per individual campus.

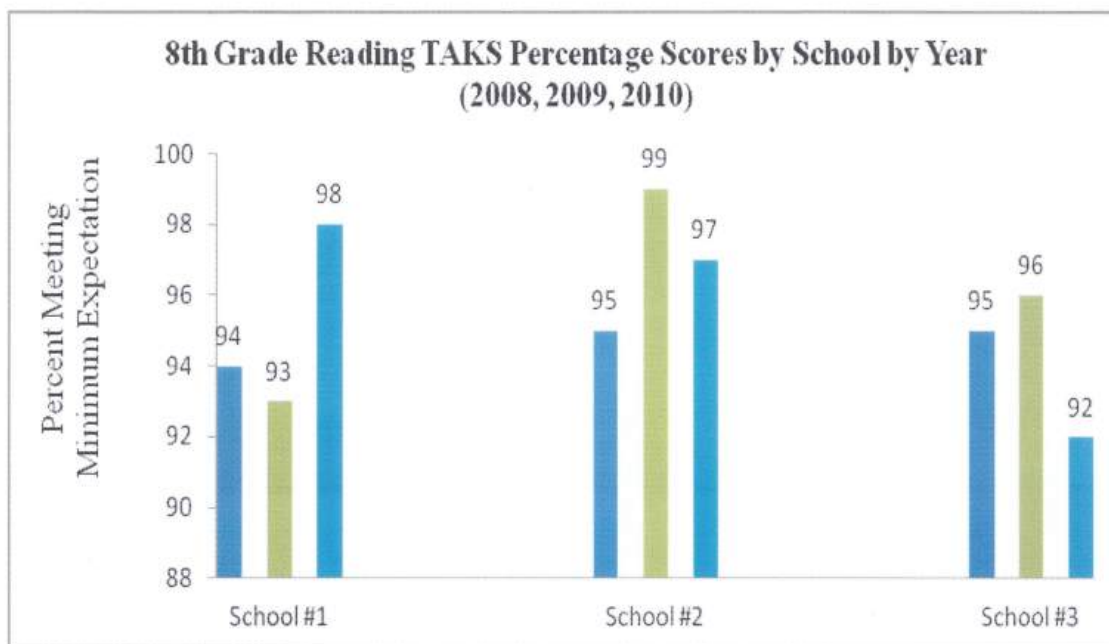
Again, three years of data are presented – namely, 2008, 2009 and 2010. It is important to note that scores for the year 2008 reflect data collected prior to the establishment of the 7-8 Initiative. Additionally, as reported in the AEIS report, the numerical score attributed to each campus, per year, accounts for the percentage of all students that met minimum expectations as determined by the State of Texas on the 8<sup>th</sup> grade math TAKS test.

Table 4.6

*8th Grade Reading TAKS Percentage Scores by School by Year*

| School | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|--------|------|------|------|
| #1     | 94   | 93   | 98   |
| #2     | 95   | 99   | 97   |
| #3     | 95   | 96   | 92   |

Scores indicate the percentage of all students who met minimum expectations on the 8<sup>th</sup> grade Reading TAKS test.



*Figure 6.* 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading TAKS percentage scores by school by year. This figure illustrates the 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading TAKS results for three schools for years 2008, 2009, and 2010.

The data in Table 4.6 indicates that 8<sup>th</sup> grade students at School #1 and School #2 showed moderate gains in reading over a three-year period. And, in 2008, prior to the establishment of the 7-8 Initiative, 94 percent of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students met minimum expectations on the 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading TAKS test at Campus #1, 95 percent at School #2, and 95 percent at School #3, respectively. In the first year of implementation of the 7-8 initiative, in the year 2009, students at School #1 showed a 1-point percentage decrease scoring 93 percent meeting minimum expectations. Students at School #2 showed a 4 percent increase by scoring 99 percent meeting minimum expectations, and students at School #3 showed a slight increase of 1 percent by scoring 96 percent. In the second year of full implementation of the 7-8 Initiative, in 2010, students at School #1 scored 98

percent meeting minimum expectation on the 8<sup>th</sup> grade TAKS test, a 4-point percentage gain from 2008, and a 5-point gain from 2009. In addition, students at Campus #2 showed a 2-point percentage gain from 2008, and a 2-point decrease from 2009. Lastly, students at Campus #3 showed a 3-point percentage decrease from 2008, and a 4-point percentage decrease from 2009.

The data as presented in Table 4.6 suggests that student achievement increased slightly at School #1 and School #2, and decreased slightly at School #3 in the area of 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading as assessed by the TAKS test comparing scores from the years 2008, 2009 and 2010. It is important to note that reading scores at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level at the three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools were in the mid to high 90<sup>th</sup> percentile over the three years measured. Although reading was not an area of academic concern, standardized testing scores increased at two of the 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools.

### **State Accountability**

Table 4.7 provides campus accountability ratings as reported by the State of Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System for the years 2008, 2009, and 2010. It is important to note that ratings for the year 2008 were established prior to the implementation of the 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools. AEIS campus ratings fall within four areas, from the lowest academic rating to the highest academic rating – specifically, Academically Unacceptable, Academically Acceptable, Recognized, and Exemplary.

Table 4.7

*AEIS Campus Accountability Rating by School by Year*

| School | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|--------|------|------|------|
| #1     | AA   | AA   | AA   |
| #2     | AA   | AA   | R    |
| #3     | AA   | AA   | R    |

*Note:* AU=Academically Unacceptable; AA=Academically Acceptable; R=Recognized.

The ratings in Table 4.7 indicate that, during the 2008 academic year, School #1, School #2, and School #3 were all rated Academically Acceptable. It is important to note that 2008 ratings were assessed to campuses prior to implementation of the 7-8 Initiative. Next, during the 2009 academic year, after the establishment of the 7-8 Initiative, all three initiative campuses again received an Academically Acceptable AEIS rating. Finally, during the 2010 academic year, two years after the implementation of the 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools, School #1 maintained an Academically Acceptable rating and School #2 and School #3 received a Recognized rating (i.e., the second highest rating a campus can receive by the AEIS).

The data as presented in Table 4.7 indicates that the three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools showed rating increases after the implementation of the 7-8 Initiative as gauged by the State of Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS).

## Federal Accountability

Table 4.8 provides campus accountability ratings as reported by the No Child Left Behind Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Federal Accountability System for the years 2008, 2009, and 2010. It is important to note that ratings for the year 2008 were established prior to the implementation of the 7-8 Initiative. AYP ratings are gauged by the percentage of students meeting federal accountability expectations in reading and math. In this particular case, AYP campus ratings fall within the two following designations: “Met Adequate Yearly Progress” or “Did Not Meet Adequate Yearly Progress”.

Table 4.8

### *NCLB - AYP Campus Accountability Rating by School by Year*

| School | 2008             | 2009    | 2010    |
|--------|------------------|---------|---------|
| #1     | Did Not Meet AYP | Met AYP | Met AYP |
| #2     | Did Not Meet AYP | Met AYP | Met AYP |
| #3     | Did Not Meet AYP | Met AYP | Met AYP |

The ratings in Table 4.8 indicate that, during the 2008 academic year, School #1, School #2, and School #3 did not meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). It is important to note that 2008 ratings were assessed to campuses prior to implementation of the 7-8 Initiative. Next, during the 2009 academic year, after the establishment of the 7-8 Initiative, all three initiative campuses received a federal accountability rating of Met AYP. During the 2010 academic year, two years after the implementation of the 7-8

middle school initiative, all three initiative campuses maintained the federal accountability rating of Met AYP.

The data as presented in Table 4.8 shows that the three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools showed rating increases after the establishment of the 7-8 Initiative during the 2009 and 2010 school year as gauged by the No Child Left Behind Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Federal Accountability System.

### **7<sup>th</sup> Grade Discipline Referrals**

Table 4.9 provides campus discipline referral totals for 7<sup>th</sup> grade students during the 2008 and 2009 school years. It is important to note that discipline totals for the 2008 school year were reported prior to the implementation of the 7-8 Initiative. Discipline referral totals for the year 2009 were reported after one year of implementation of the 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools.

Table 4.9

#### *7th Grade Discipline Referrals by School by Year*

| School | 2008 | 2009 |
|--------|------|------|
| #1     | 621  | 652  |
| #2     | 580  | 338  |
| #3     | 537  | 443  |

The data in Table 4.9 shows that student discipline referrals for School #1 totaled 621 for the 2008 school year. Later, during the 2009 school year, School #1 showed a slight increase in student discipline referrals totaling 652. School #2 showed a total

number of 580 discipline referral for the 2008 year, and 338 for the year 2009 (i.e., a significant decrease from the previous school year). School #3 showed a total number of 537 discipline referrals for the 2008 school year, and 443 for the year 2009 (i.e., a significant decrease from the previous school year).

The data presented in Table 4.9 shows that School #1 had a slight increase in 7<sup>th</sup> grade student discipline referrals from the 2009 to 2008 school year, which was established prior to the 7-8 Initiative. Alternatively, however, when compared to discipline referral data in 2008 school year (i.e., prior to the implementation of the 7-8 Initiative), data presented for School #2 and School #3 shows that 7<sup>th</sup> grade student discipline decreased during the 2009 school year after the implementation of the 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools.

### **8<sup>th</sup> Grade Discipline Referrals**

Table 4.10 provides campus discipline referral totals for 8<sup>th</sup> grade students during the 2008 and 2009 school years. It is important to note that discipline referral totals for the 2008 school year were collected prior to the implementation of the 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools. Discipline totals for the year 2009 were reported after one year of implementation of the 7-8 Initiative.

Table 4.10

*8th Grade Yearly Total of Discipline Referrals by School by Year*

| School | 2008 | 2009 |
|--------|------|------|
| #1     | 598  | 420  |
| #2     | 750  | 447  |
| #3     | 746  | 481  |

The data in Table 4.10 shows that student discipline referrals for School #1 totaled 598 for the 2008 school year. During the 2009 school year, School #1 showed a decrease with 420 referrals. School #2 showed a total number of 750 disciplines for the 2008 year, and a total of 447 for the 2009 (i.e., a significant decrease from the previous school year). Next, School #3 showed a total number of 746 discipline referrals for the 2008 school year, and 481 for the year 2009 (i.e., a significant decrease from the previous school year).

The data presented in Table 4.10 shows that School #1, School #2 and School #3 had significant decreases in 8<sup>th</sup> grade student discipline referrals comparing school year 2008 prior to the 7-8 Initiative to 2009 after the establishment of the 7-8 Initiative Middle schools.

### **Final Summary of Research Findings**

Research question number one asked “As measured by the MDed Survey, what was the teacher morale in the three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools?” Based on a review of the literature, the findings of my research, and my professional opinion as a practitioner

in the field of education, it is safe to conclude that the morale of teachers at the three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools increased significantly due to the initiative implemented. An intended focus on increased teacher morale was in place and plans were carefully made to effect the changes necessary. Prior to the pilot school year, the district removed the sixth-grade from the three Initiative schools; thus, committing to a smaller student environment. Additionally, new principals were carefully selected to lead the students, teachers and community during this transitional period at the selected campuses. In addition, the teaching staff was provided extensive, on-going, staff development in professional learning communities and data teaming, and the student to teacher-student ratio for the three campuses was capped at 21:1. After the initial year of the implementation, the staff was surveyed utilizing the MDed survey asking teachers their opinions as it applied to the trust and satisfaction in their principal. On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest), the overall mean for all three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools in the area of Principal Trust was 4.1. The overall mean for Leadership Satisfaction was 4.2. Based on the research that links principal trust and leadership satisfaction to teacher morale, the results of the MDed survey and my professional opinion, teacher morale had significantly increased at all three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools after the first year of implementation and at the time of the survey.

Research question two asked "How did teacher morale change as a result of the 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools interventions?" Due to the many interventions implemented within the 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools, teacher morale increased as evidenced by the survey results, but also as demonstrated by community and student input. Not identified

in this study is my experience working with all three schools as the direct supervisor to the principals. Parents and community were more involved in the schools; teachers acted as true professionals; students behaved and were provided consistent structure; teachers were provided on-going staff development opportunities; and principals were given flexibility at their campuses to make instructional, staff and personnel changes to best meet the needs of students. Classroom student counts were low and a more direct approach to instruction was administered. It was, in fact, confirmed that the overall morale at the campus was one that provided for a positive school climate. Thus, the 7-8 Middle School Implementation instituted a positive change in the culture of the schools – namely, a culture where the only option was success!

Research question three asked “Did increased teacher morale impact student achievement in the three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools?” As a direct result of the 7-8 Initiative, this study found that student achievement did increase significantly in math and moderately in reading. As teacher morale increased so did student achievement as measured by the TAKS test. Furthermore, all three campuses increased their campus accountability ratings within one year of implementation of the 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools both at the state and federal levels.

Simply stated, through the review of the data presented in this study, through my opinion as an expert in this field, and through my over-site of the 7-8 Initiative as the Assistant Superintendent of Middle Schools, it is my belief that teacher morale increased. The data speaks for itself in that it confirms that achievement increased within schools,

while student discipline referrals concurrently decreased after the implementation of the 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter contains the four following sections: (a) summary of the study; (b) discussion of the findings and conclusions pertaining to relationships between principal leadership, teacher morale and student achievement; (c) a presentation of the implications for future practice; and finally, (d) recommendations for future study.

#### **Summary of the Study**

The purpose of the proposed study was to examine the effects of principal leadership and its relationship between teacher morale and student achievement in three grade 7-8 middle schools.

This study was designed to examine the relationship between teacher morale and principal leadership. Specifically, principal trust and leadership satisfaction was investigated. As stated in Chapter One, the purpose of this study was to ascertain the effects of principal leadership on teacher morale and student achievement in three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools in a suburban southeast Texas school district. In addition, this study asks two general questions: Does the level of trust that teachers have in the building principal influence their level of satisfaction or morale? And, does the level of confidence that teachers have in the actions and decisions of their principal influence teacher morale? Trust has been found to improve nearly all aspects of a system's or organization's operations. Within the context of a school environment, all operations are focused on student achievement. And, if a school is to succeed toward this end, trust must be the foundation on which all work and relations are built (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Trust is the underlying force of relational power, the most powerful form of influence (Hower, 2005). It is this level of trust in the building principal, as well as the overall teacher satisfaction and morale, that was targeted in the questions administered in the 2009 MDed Survey. The results of the survey were used to examine the influence of this trust on teacher morale and, ultimately, student achievement. To evaluate the problem, the researcher analyzed the results in terms of the three research questions:

1. As measured by the MDed Survey, what was the level of teacher morale in the three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools?
2. How did teacher morale change as a result of the 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools interventions?
3. Did increased teacher morale impact student achievement in the three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools?

To address the problem of the study and answer the research questions, the variables studied were obtained with a survey instrument distributed to 89 middle school teachers at three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools. The 7-8 Initiative teachers were chosen to determine a representation of the teachers' morale as related to principal trust and leadership satisfaction. The MDed Survey asked teachers to respond with their impressions or observations of their principals' leadership characteristics. The survey was distributed to the teachers at their respective schools with instructions and an explanation of the rationale behind the research. The researcher collected all surveys from the schools and analyzed the data. Once the research data had been tallied, reports were developed and provided to the administration of the district. Results were then

distributed back to campus administration who subsequently shared the results with their staff. District administration also shared the results with the school board in an open board meeting. Lastly, the general public within the district was privy to the results through the board meeting session.

### **Findings and Conclusions**

The analysis of the data was reported in Chapter Four. The results revealed that significant correlations were found to exist between teacher morale and principal trust and leadership satisfaction. The available anecdotal evidence also suggests the same trend. Additionally, correlations were found between teacher morale and student achievement. Further, it was found the implemented interventions which lead to high teacher morale also attributed to lower student discipline; thus, they provide an environment conducive to high teacher morale – that is, a positive school climate and culture. The results of this study corroborate the findings of MacNeil, Prater and Busch (2007) who stated that “[o]rganizational theorists have long reported that paying attention to culture is the most important action that a leader can perform” (p. 1). The results of this study also support Gonder and Hymes (1994) who found that a school’s climate and culture can “affect everything from the morale, satisfaction, and productivity of everyone involved in the organization” (p. 11). In accordance with these previous research findings, the answers to the research questions of this study indicate that the morale of teachers at the three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools increased significantly due to the initiative implemented. As measured by the MDed Survey, and based on my professional opinion as the Assistant Superintendent for Middle Schools responsible for the 7-8

Initiative, teacher morale increased at all three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools after the first year of implementation and at the time of the survey. Due to the many interventions put in place at the 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools teacher morale increased as evidenced by the survey results, but also as demonstrated through both community and student input. Already identified in this study is my experience working with all three schools as the Assistant Superintendent of Middle Schools, the direct supervisor to the principals. During this transformative process, I directly witnessed and experienced the following instances: Parents and community members were becoming more and more involved in the schools; teachers were acting with consistently higher levels of professionalism; students were behaving appropriately in a consistent, structured environment; teachers were collaborating during on-going staff development opportunities; and principals were exemplifying empowerment in making instructional, staff and personnel changes to best meet the needs of students. Classroom student-to-teacher ratios were also lower, and a focus on quality instruction and best practices was noted. Although this account is merely anecdotal data, the overall morale at the campus was such that it provided for a positive overall school climate. This anecdotal evidence was corroborated through the results of the MDed Survey.

As outlined in Chapter Four, the results of this study also indicate that student achievement did increase significantly in math and moderately in reading as a result of the 7-8 Initiative. Subsequently, as teacher morale increased, student achievement simultaneously increased as measured by the TAKS tests. All three campuses increased

their campus accountability ratings within one year of implementation of the 7-8 Initiative.

### **Implications for Future Practice**

The chief implication of this study for the practice of educational administration is the verification that principal leadership does affect teacher morale, and that there are distinct correlations between high teacher morale and increased student achievement. Additionally, it was noted that student behavior influences teacher morale.

This study confirmed that should a school system choose to increase teacher morale, increase student achievement and decrease student discipline, the measures used when establishing the 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools could serve as a “blueprint” for this transition. As outlined in Chapter One, in order to transform a campus, one from low teacher morale and low student achievement, to one of high teacher morale and increased student achievement, a school system must have the courage to truly transform the culture and climate. As determined by this study, the following interventions are necessary to truly impact teacher morale and student achievement:



*Figure 7.* Interventions necessary to impact teacher morale and student achievement. This figure illustrates the five specific interventions that must be implemented in order to affect authentic change in a school's culture, climate and overall morale.

***New principal leadership.*** As already mentioned at several points in this paper, new principals were carefully selected to lead the students, teachers, and community during the transitional period at the selected campuses. To attract the finest applicants principal salaries were adjusted. The principals hired demonstrated high intellect and what might be best described as “people skills.” As indicated by multiple researchers throughout this dissertation, principal leadership is the number one influence on positive teacher morale.

***On-going intensive staff development.*** Another factor that leads to positive teacher morale is teacher training. Throughout the year, at the 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools, the teaching staff was given intensive staff development in the areas of

professional learning communities and data teaming, which was intended to provide some necessary support for effective instruction. Teaching practices were also monitored on a daily basis and coaching and mentoring was provided for teachers. This particular instructional training became part of the culture of the schools.

***Establishment of small learning communities.*** The 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade student populations were placed in learning communities specific to their grade levels. Grade level subject area teachers were housed within the same locations in the hallways and their planning periods were coordinated allowing for a common planning period for all subject area teachers.

***Reduction of student population.*** Prior to the establishment of the 7-8 Initiative, students entering into their 6<sup>th</sup> grade, and zoned to attend one of the three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools, remained at their feeder pattern elementary school allowing for a smaller learning environment at the three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools.

***Low student-to-teacher class ratios.*** The student-to-teacher ratio for the three 7-8 Initiative Middle Schools was capped at twenty one students to one teacher. This particular format allowed teachers more opportunity for small group instruction, one-on-one teaching, and differentiated methods of instructional delivery.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study has added to the body of knowledge of teacher morale as it relates to principal leadership. The following recommendations are intended to provide a deeper look into principal/teacher relationships, as well as how these relationships can contribute

to increased student achievement and positive student behavior. Based upon the findings of this study, the following recommendations for future research are suggested:

1. Investigations should extend beyond the boundaries of a single school district.

This would provide for a more extensive look into the interventions to transform a school.

2. <sup>①</sup> Where the need is present, a similar implementation should be administered at the elementary or high school levels and a similar study should be conducted.

<sup>②</sup> There may be unique differences in the varying levels of schools that could impact the relationships between teachers and administrators.

3. Since the results of this study suggest that differences in school leadership may affect teacher morale, future research should attempt to identify those differences in schools that may be contributing to high or low teacher morale.

4. <sup>③</sup> The research can be expanded to include a qualitative aspect as to why the teachers answered the survey questions directly related to principal trust and leadership satisfaction as they did. <sup>④</sup> This could provide more information as to factors that may improve the morale of teachers.

5. Because of the individual nature of teacher morale, other research methods should be employed to study the phenomenon in more depth.

6. And, finally, the research could be expanded to include the effects of superintendent interactions with principals and district leaders as they relate to teacher morale and student achievement.

Teacher morale is a complex phenomenon that is of the utmost importance to administrators, students, and parents. Practitioners and researchers need to address the relationships between principal leadership and teacher morale in order to develop effective plans to keep teacher morale high and to keep our schools productive and positive places for teaching and learning. It is unfortunate that state and national obsessions with standardized tests and accountability have led to a system of “industrialized” education that negates positive school culture and climate; thus, forcing teachers to “teach to a test” rather than to the interests of students. Principals who develop positive relationships with their staffs, students and communities, provide appropriate, ongoing staff development, initiate professional learning communities and maintain manageable student enrollments and classroom student to teacher ratios, prove to be leaders who embrace relationship building, teacher creativity and student exploration in learning. In order to have schools that truly embrace this type of teaching and learning, we must first have educational goals, objectives and values that are focused on the relationships built within our learning communities, rather than goals, objectives and values centered on standardized assessment data. In the United States, during the Industrial Revolution, and for some time afterward, schools were perceived as mass producers of educated citizens. As we transform our schools from industrialized memorization factories with low teacher morale and student achievement to learning environments built on trust and relationships, we must not forget that the most influential denominators to make such a transformation lies in the hands of our leaders. Our campus and district leaders must embrace the agents of change that lead to high teacher morale,

increased student achievement, and positive student behaviors. Our leaders must accept that positive school climate and culture are the necessary ingredients for school environments that lead to positive outcomes for all stakeholders.