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Communicative Feedback and its Influence on Leadership in a Rural School Setting

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COMMUNICATIVE FEEDBACK AND ITS INFLUENCE ON
LEADERSHIP IN A RURAL SCHOOL SETTING

DEBORA BUCHAIM REGOS ZAMORANO

Educational Leadership and Foundations

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Miryan and Helcio Regos, to my husband, Mauro Zamorano, and to my son, Guilherme Zamorano. Mom and Dad, you have taken this journey with me since my first school year. You have always valued education and through the years made me share such beliefs with you. I thank my husband and son for helping me overcome the obstacles of my path through the doctoral program. Realizing that you were fine, healthful and happy, encouraged me to keep going.

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I hold the four of you very close to my heart. Every prayer you said for me and every word of encouragement offered were answered. I will always love you.

Debora.

COMMUNICATIVE FEEDBACK AND ITS INFLUENCE ON
LEADERSHIP IN A RURAL SCHOOL SETTING

By

DEBORA BUCHAIM REGOS ZAMORANO

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ABSTRACT

Bulach, Boothe, and Pickett (1998), identified that most of the shortcomings educational administrators make fall into the category of poor human relations, and one of the categories of mistakes identified by the researchers is poor-interpersonal communication skills. Bulack and colleagues found that ineffective principals had interpersonal communication problems in the areas of providing and receiving feedback. Cannon and Witherspoon (2005) point out that providing feedback involves describing observed behaviors, as well as the reactions created.

Reeves (2004) also suggests that poor communication and ineffective feedback is relatively constant within the realm of educational leadership. Reeves notes that in terms of feedback, communicative leadership can be messy. He states that the expectations for effective communicative leadership are often ambiguous. This occurs because the primary problems, as related to school administration, are often associated with poorly defined standards of leadership and undefined standards of leadership performance and communication.

The purpose of this study is to identify and describe the subjective experience of a rural school principal relative to the manner in which the principal utilizes communication skills, including feedback, to ensure organizational improvement and student success. Furthermore, this study also aims at investigating the current views of the rural school principal relative to leadership styles and effective communication techniques, including feedback. The investigative process will determine how patterns of communication with different publics are established and how these patterns of communication flow in the school and thus impact the climate and culture of the school.

Moreover, the investigative process will also determine how patterns of communication can improve the school organization and increase student achievement.

The focus of this study is related to one rural school principal. This principal was chosen because during the two year period she has been principal in a rural West Texas school, the campus has achieved tremendous success relative to campus climate and student achievement. In addition, three teachers, three parents, a custodian, a secretary, the cafeteria manager, librarian, and the assistant principal were interviewed.

A qualitative research method known as case study was used for the study. The experience analyzed the manner in which a school principal handles communication and utilizes effective feedback. Data were gathered through a series of semi-structured, open-ended interviews with each research participant. The questions utilized in the interview process were designed to understand how a principal handles communication, as well as the process of providing and receiving feedback from differing publics. The questions were also designed to understand the influence of the manner in which participants handle feedback relative to the principal leadership role.

The results of the study found that when developing and establishing communication strategies with publics, the principal enhances interpersonal relationships through vision, humor, accessibility, team-building skills, and genuine praise, all of which help create a positive school climate and open organizational culture.

Results also indicated that the principal removes communication barriers through being accessible and scheduling regular meetings with teachers, and by ensuring a

constant, yet informal, exchange of feedback. A sense of team-work is nurtured through efforts by the principal to assist each staff member achieve his or her potential. When creating opportunities for informal relationships, such as having lunch with the teachers of the school, the principal utilizes a sense of humor when interacting with her publics.

This study also revealed several communication strategies utilized by the principal. Furthermore, the study revealed that the principal develops trust and motivation, which resulted in a positive school climate and open culture, where effective feedback and increased student achievement are the norm. Finally, this study highlights possible differences and similarities concerning communication strategies and their influence on leadership roles in both rural and urban schools.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study describes leadership and its interconnection with communication as a part of principal practice. Effective leadership is a critical ingredient in an effective school. As a result, effective principals are leaders who must be excellent communicators. Communication skills are essential for leaders. Shroer and Baughn (2006) believe that effective communication skills are one of the most important leadership techniques a principal can possess. Hughes, Gineet, and Curphy (2005) suggest that few skills are more vital to leadership than communicative skills. Principals must understand that effective communication makes the school work properly. “Communication is the glue that holds the organization together. Therefore, effective and proactive leaders need to look constantly at the importance of communication” (Daresh, 2007, p. 148). Mai and Akerson (2003) state that good leaders use leadership communication, that is, effective leaders have the ability to build relationships in all of its dimensions. Mai and Akerson also point out that when leaders manage communication effectively, work relationships are strong, well informed, and purposeful.

The effective management of communication is directly related to feedback and the relevant role it plays in an organization. The concept of feedback originated in the hard sciences, with applications in electronics, computers, servomechanisms, and various cybernetic devices. Only later was feedback as a concept adopted by the behavioral sciences (Nickols, 2000). Feedback is a way of letting people know how effective they are in what they are trying to accomplish, and how they affect others. It provides a method by which people learn how they affect the world around them, and it

helps leaders to become more effective. If leaders know how other people view them, then they can overcome problems by effectively communicating and interacting with others (Rich, 1994).

Statement of the Problem

Bulach, Pickett & Boothe, 1998), identified that most of the shortcomings educational administrators make, fall into the category of poor human relations, and one of the categories of mistakes identified is poor-interpersonal communication skills.

Bulack and colleagues found that ineffective principals had interpersonal communication problems in the areas of providing and receiving feedback. Cannon and Witherspoon (2005) point out that providing feedback involves describing observed behaviors, as well as the reactions created. These researchers offer the following guidelines: 1) the receiver should be ready to receive feedback; 2) comments should describe, rather than interpret; 3) feedback should focus on recent events or actions that can be changed or altered, but should not be used to force people to acquiesce.

Reeves (2004) also suggests that poor communication and ineffective feedback is relatively constant within the realm of educational leadership. Reeves points out that in terms of feedback, communicative leadership can often be chaotic. Expectations for effective communicative leadership are often ambiguous. This occurs because the primary problems, as related to school administration, are often associated with poorly defined standards of leadership and undefined standards of leadership performance and communication.

One problem often encountered is the existence of poorly defined standards of leadership in which ambiguity, typically confounded by educational jargon, replaces

clear expression. For example, one can often observe leaders relating to personnel that they want more hands-on work, for example. It is difficult for the personnel to understand what is meant by the leader relative to “hands-on.” Teachers, for example, may ask themselves if such means working more with manipulatives or providing more one-to-one guidance to students. Another problem is undefined standards of performance; a problem that prevails even in those cases where the evaluation system has purged itself of offending jargon and ambiguity. A third and different problem relates to the responsibility-authority disequilibrium. Personnel may be responsible for the actions of others, ranging from the most recalcitrant employee to the most disinterested community member. This can be the case when teachers are blamed by parents for not solving psychological or certain school related problems their children may have (Reeves, 2004).

Therefore, when considering potential leadership domains for an evaluation system, it is important to consider the degree of influence the leader will exert over that domain. A cardinal principle of leadership evaluation is that the evaluation system will have the greatest impact on improving individual and organizational performance when the evaluation is focused on those decisions and behaviors that are under the direct control of the leader. To a lesser but still an important degree, evaluation should focus on those areas the leader can influence, but not directly control (Reeves, 2002).

Beyond the problems stated above, there also seems to be a disconnect between school principals and the school community. According to a survey conducted by The Metropolitan Life Survey on the American Teacher (2003), principals believe their relationships with teachers are open, friendly, supportive, and respectful. On the

other hand, teachers suggest that principals need to listen more, give more credit for hard work, and keep the school safe and orderly. The same survey showed that principals are satisfied with their relationships with parents. Nevertheless, half of the surveyed parents did not feel welcome or connected to their children's school. Parents also suggested that principals need to be more visible and friendly, get out of the office more often, and communicate better.

This disconnect of perceptions may imply poor feedback, which, is an important part of the leadership communication skill process. Feedback is a way of letting people know how effectively they are trying to accomplish their goals, or how they affect individuals (Rich, 1994). Imperato (1998) states that feedback is the only way for people to get better at what they do. She also points out that leaders have to bear in mind that feedback is not about forms, but about conversation. "Directors don't tell employees how they're doing. They ask open-ended questions to see what will help employees do a better job" (p 3). School leaders cannot delay feedback. Feedback delayed is feedback denied. Leaders have to be sensitive to the timing of their feedback; otherwise they may not be helping their personnel. Finally, leaders should always receive feedback on their feedback, and most important, on their performance (Imperato, 1998, p. 3).

Leadership and its relation to communication is part of the educational leadership role, no matter how demanding and difficult the leadership role may be. Creating a collaborative environment through transparent and open channels of communications is a critical factor for successful school improvement (Halawah, 2005). The results of a study conducted by Halawah (2005) emphasizes and corroborates the importance of

effective communication between principals and personnel in schools. School climate is also found to be positively associated with a principal's communicative effectiveness. Enhanced school climate is the result when effective communication between school principals and personnel exists (Daresh, 2007; Halawah, 2005; Sorenson & Goldsmith, 2009). The inability of leaders to communicate a sense of presence creates an oppositional shield and prevents engagement, dialogue, and understanding (Kerfoot, 2004).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe the subjective experiences of a rural school principal relative to the manner in which the principal utilized communication skills, including feedback, to ensure organizational improvement and student success. Furthermore, this study also aimed at investigating the current views of the rural school principal relative to leadership styles and effective communication techniques, including feedback. The investigative process determined how patterns of communication with different publics were established, and how these patterns of communication flowed in the school and thus impacted the climate and culture of the school. Moreover, the investigative process also determined how patterns of communication served to improve the school organization and increase student achievement.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study serves to help school leaders become more aware of the importance of effective communication skills as related to their jobs, including how communicative feedback can develop a positive campus climate and ultimately,

increase student achievement. Such awareness can enable principals to use the effective communication strategies described both in the theory of this study and in the findings and results. By employing such strategies principals will certainly become better school leaders.

The study will contribute to the field of educational leadership, as it provides the reader with a detailed understanding of the role of communication in leadership. Leaders must recognize and understand that creating and utilizing effective communication is a critical factor for successful school improvement (Halawah, 2005).

Guiding Research Questions

Qualitative research is an investigative process of understanding based on different methods of inquiry that study a social group or an individual. Schwandt (2001) states that qualitative research denotes or relates to quality. Quality is an inherent or phenomenal property as well as an essential characteristic relative to effective leadership. Mason (1996) points out that qualitative research involves reflecting on three important aspects when deciding what the research will be about: (1) to identify the ontological and epistemological positions; (2) to identify their intellectual puzzle; and (3) to identify their research questions. Research questions for this study were utilized in open-ended interviews. In qualitative research, data are generated or constructed within conceptual schemes and by various means that are deemed appropriate to serving particular purposes and answering particular questions (Mason, 1996).

The research questions guiding this study were descriptive in nature and included the following:

1. How are communication strategies established between:

- principal/assistant principal;
 - principal/teachers;
 - principal/parents;
 - principal/students; and
 - principal/other learning community members?
2. How do these strategies ensure an inviting and positive school climate and thus serve to increase student achievement?
3. Which communication strategies does the principal utilize to provide and receive feedback to/from:
- assistant principals;
 - teachers;
 - parents;
 - students; and
 - other community learning members

Conceptual / Theoretical Framework

The conceptual/theoretical framework of this study was based on the situational theory as described by Grunig (1997) and comes from the study of public relations. Schneider and Hollenczer (2006), state that the best theory for effective communication does not come from educational administration, but from public relations. Grunig & Hunt (1984) define public relations as the management of communication between an organization and its publics (p.6).

In the past, educational leadership programs taught principals how to develop their communication skills. At the time, communication skills involved the ability to lead

meetings, and interact with personnel and community groups. Nevertheless, Schneider and Hollenczer (2006) suggest that “these attributes are insufficient for school leaders who intend to use communication management methods to gain and maintain the trust and respect of their stakeholders, to operate a transparent school, and to carry out the administrative qualities the job requires” (p. 20). Instead, they believe that “principals need to worry about publics that have an involvement with the school, recognize the school’s problems, and believe that they have the ability to help address them. These are the primary publics that may arise in any given situation” (p. 21).

The above theory is explained in Grunig’s situational theory of communication behavior and its three independent variables (1997, p. 10, in Schneider & Hollenczer, 2006):

1. Problem recognition: people detect that something should be done about a situation and stop to think about what to do.
2. Constraint recognition: People perceive that there are obstacles in a situation that limit their ability to do anything about it.
3. Level of involvement: This is the extent to which people connect themselves with a situation.

Schneider and Hollenczer (2006) suggest, it is not enough for school leaders to simply know who their stakeholders are: “When an issue or problem arises, it will create a corresponding public within the stakeholders. These publics will vary, depending whether they face the problem, recognize that it exists and attempt to do something about it. In some cases, an issue will create all three audiences across the stakeholders. Usually, publics are divided into three categories: publics that are active

on all the issues, publics that are apathetic on all issues, and publics that are active only on single issues” (p. 29).

Grunig’s theory implies communicating with the school’s external and internal publics is an essential leadership skill. Pawlas (2005) suggests school leaders should listen to their different publics in order to acquire knowledge about the way they think and act. Knowing all the different publics or stakeholders will obviously help principals when providing and receiving communicative feedback. The more a principal listens to the differing publics, the more a principal will develop good interpersonal communication skills, through the development of trust and team building. Proper feedback cannot be given without the capacity to listen. Bulach, Pickett, & Boothe (1998) state that “the example most frequently given for poor interpersonal communications is the failure to listen. A perceived failure to listen is often interpreted by the speaker as a sign of not caring, whereas the perception of listening is viewed by the speaker as a caring behavior” (p. 3). This failure to listen reveals problems concerning feedback. Bulack, Pickett, & Boothe (1998), also found that ineffective principals had interpersonal communication problems in the areas of providing and receiving feedback. Examples offered by teachers were failure to provide feedback regarding the following: how teachers handle a fight, a parent conference, and what kind of discipline students receive when sent to the office. Therefore, the development of interpersonal communication skills is directly linked to the knowledge principals have of their different publics and the ability they have to provide and receive communicative feedback.

Organization of the Chapters

Chapter I introduces the problem of poor communication skills and other problems relative to providing and receiving feedback and the negative impact such may have on leadership in organizations. Chapter I also describes the statement of the problem, theoretical framework, the purpose of the study, research questions, and the significance of research.

Chapter II presents the review of the related literature. This review includes the interconnection between leadership and communication, and within communication, the importance of feedback within the rural schools context, along with leadership and communications in rural schools.

Chapter III includes information regarding the research methodology. This discussion includes information about participants, and selection of the participants, ethical considerations, procedures, and proposed data analysis.

Chapter IV presents the case study researched, along with information relative to the main participant, who is a principal at a rural West Texas school.

In Chapter V the data collected from the case study in relation to the literature review is analyzed. Triangulation and emerging themes are described as established in the case studies. Triangulation seeks to quickly examine existing data to strengthen interpretations.

In Chapter VI implications for school administrators, ending with personal reflections relative to the study are detailed.

Summary

In Chapter I, the critical issue of effective communication and its effect on leadership in schools is introduced. The purpose of this study is to explore leadership styles and communication strategies utilized by a principal and how such can improve school climate and increase student achievement. This study is framed by the theory for effective communication, which comes from public relations. The questions guiding this study are framed with Grunig's situational theory of communication behavior (1997) and attempt to understand how communication strategies are established between the principal and the differing publics, the impact these strategies have in a rural school, and how a principal receives and provides feedback to the differing publics.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the concepts of leadership along with differing leadership styles, effective communications, and essential feedback will be explored, as well as their interrelations. As these concepts were “borrowed” from business, it is important to investigate the literature relative to the business arena, and then transfer the findings to the field of education, more specifically to the role of the principal. This knowledge base will assist in better understanding what principals can do to improve their leadership role through effective communication skills; especially through the manner in which they provide and receive feedback.

Initially, definitions of leadership will be presented, along with the different leadership styles. It will then investigate the interconnection between leadership and communication. Moreover, this review of the research relates to how leaders manage their communication skills and to what extent certain strategies they use serve to increase given and received feedback from their internal and external stakeholders.

Next, a definition and context of rural schools will be provided. It will then investigate the connection between community relations and accountability in rural schools. Furthermore, this review will illustrate the connections between leadership and communications in rural schools. It will also explain methods for improving communications between rural schools and the community, conflicts principals may face as a result of these relations and the relation between feedback and rural schools. Finally, this chapter will describe the implications of the reviewed literature for this study.

Leadership Defined

Among the many definitions of leadership, the following is most relevant to this particular research and study. Sergiovanni (2001) suggests that leadership involves building relations, bonding with people, and binding ideals as well as people. Leaders must be willing to be right in the middle of their followers rather than in front of or behind them (Pellicer, 1999). Leadership is a process by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective and directs the organization in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent. Leaders carry out this process by applying their leadership attributes, such as beliefs, values, ethics, character, knowledge, and skills (Forio, 2007). For Lipham and Hoeh (1974) "leadership is that behavior of an individual which initiates a new structure in interaction within a social system, it initiates changes for the goals, objectives, configurations, procedures, inputs, processes, and ultimately the outputs of social systems" (p. 196). While this definition is somewhat dated, it is most relevant and applicable to this study. A more recent definition of leadership has been proposed by Yukl (2005) who states that "leadership can be defined in terms of individual behavior, influence over other people, interaction patterns, role relationships, and perceptions by others" (p. 2).

Bass' (1989 & 1990) theory of leadership states that the basis of effective leadership is honorable character and selfless service to an organization. Respected leaders concentrate on what they are made of (beliefs and character, for example), what they know (such as job, tasks, and human nature), and what they do (the implementing, motivating, and providing of direction). According to Kouzes and Posner (2007), the process of effective leadership involves the five steps:

1. Challenge the process; find a process that needs to be improved the most;
2. Inspire a shared vision; in words that can be understood by followers;
3. Enable others to act; give followers the tools and methods to solve the problem;
4. Model the way; a leader shows others how it can be done, instead of telling others what to do; and
5. Encourage the heart; Share the glory and credit with followers thus instilling trust and confidence in personnel.

The Hay Group (2005) found that trust and confidence in top leadership was the single most reliable predictor of employee satisfaction in an organization.

Moreover, effective communication by leadership in three critical areas was the key to winning organizational trust and confidence:

1. Helping employees understand the overall strategy of the organization;
2. Helping employees understand how they contribute to achieving key organizational objectives; and
3. Sharing information with employees on both how the organization is doing, and how an employee's own area of expertise is doing - relative to strategic organizational objectives.

Boulding (2007) describes four major factors of leadership:

1. Follower: Different people require different styles of leadership. For example, a new hire requires more supervision than an experienced

employee. A person who lacks motivation requires a different approach than one with a high degree of motivation. Leaders must know their people! The fundamental starting point is having a good understanding of human nature, such as needs, emotions, and motivation.

2. **Leader:** Effective leaders have an honest understanding of who they are, what they know, and what they can do. Also, it is the followers, not the leader who determines if a leader is successful. If followers do not trust or have a lack of confidence in their leader, then followers will be uninspired and unmotivated. To be successful a leader must convince followers that she/he is worthy of being followed.
3. **Communication:** Effective leaders lead through two-way communication. Much of this communication is nonverbal. For instance, when a leader "sets the example," such communicates to followers that the leader would not ask them to perform anything that leader would not be willing to do. What and how a leader communicates either builds upon or harms the relationship between leader and followers.
4. **Situation:** All are different. What a leader does in one situation will not always work in another. A leader must use judgment to decide the best course of action and then incorporate the appropriate leadership style needed for each situation. For example, a leader may need to confront an employee for inappropriate behavior, but if the confrontation is too

late or too early, too harsh or too weak, then the results may prove ineffective.

Effective leaders should develop their leadership skills by: 1) developing and reinforcing the bond of trust that must exist between leader and follower; 2) affirming the organizational vision, mission and values; 3) facilitating a two-way flow of information throughout all levels of the organization, including manager to employee, employee to manager, and peer to peer; 4) creating the impetus for organizational effectiveness; and 5) driving results (Baldoni, 2003).

One can conclude that leaders have to be reliable and must be able to communicate a vision as to where the organization needs to proceed. Therefore, communication is one of the main factors in leadership. Boulding (2007) reveals that leaders should lead through two-way communication, and what and how leaders communicate either builds upon or harms the relationship between the leader and the followers.

Another relevant definition of leadership includes the explanation given by Hemphill and Coons (1957), as noted in Daresh (2007): Leadership is the “behavior of an individual when he is directing the activities of a group toward a shared goal” (p. 7). Clarke and Grossland (2002) describe leadership as an act of faith in other people. Vroom and Jago (2007) state that all definitions of leadership share the view that leadership involves the process of influence. Therefore, if leading is influencing, leadership refers to a potential or capacity to influence others. Drath and Paulus (1994) understand leadership as the process of making sense of what people are doing together so that people will understand and be committed. Finally, Katz and Kahn

(1978) see leadership as the influential increment over and above mechanical compliance with the routine directives of the organization.

Current Views on Leadership

Current reviews on leadership tend to negate the idea that leadership encompasses a leader's ability, behaviors, styles or charisma. Instead, leadership is viewed as the "interaction" among the people. Today scholars also discuss the basic nature of leadership in terms of the "interaction" among the people involved in the process: both leaders and followers. Thus, leadership is not only the work of a single person; it can moreover be described as a collaborative endeavor among group members. Therefore, the essence of leadership is not the leader, but the relationship (Rost, 1993). Thus, leadership is a dynamic, relational process involving interactions among leaders, followers and sometimes outside constituencies. For the purpose of this study, leadership is identified as an "interpersonal influence, exercised in a situation and directed, through the communication process, toward the attainment of a specified goal or goals." Thus, leadership is not the work of a single person. Furthermore, it cannot be explained nor defined as a collaborative attempt among group members. Therefore, the essence of leadership is not the leader, but the relationship (Rost, 1993; Tannenbaum, Weshler and Massarik, 1961, p. 24, in Daresh, 2007). Stephen (1998) points out effective principals are perceived by superintendents as those who establish and maintain positive relationships with teachers and parents and are able to appropriately communicate and thus provide essential, if not critical, feedback. Interpersonal influences imply communications, which lead to a further definition.

Engleberg, and Wynn (1995) suggest that communication is the vehicle which allows us to recall the past, think in the present, and plan for the future. It enables us to manage our relationships with others and to interpret and interact with our environment. Communication is a learned skill. Most people are born with the physical abilities to acquire necessary communication tools, but such potential does not guarantee that they will learn to communicate effectively. Language, rhetorical strategies, listening skills, and a lexicon of verbal and nonverbal meanings are developed in various ways. It is theorized that people gain their communication skills by having them modeled by persons in their environment, by being taught specific techniques through the educational process, and by practicing their abilities and having them evaluated (Engleberg & Wynn, 1995).

Leadership Styles

After defining leadership, it is important to examine the different leadership styles and their connection with communication. Understanding leadership styles and their impact on organizations can help leaders adapt their own leadership style and thus help them become more effective leaders. Mindtools (1995-2007b) identified ten popular leadership styles:

1. Autocratic leadership: In autocratic leadership, the leader has absolute power over the team. This power usually leads to high levels of absenteeism. Therefore, it can remain effective for routine jobs where the advantages of control outweigh the disadvantages.
2. Bureaucratic leadership: Bureaucratic leaders work by the book, making certain their staff follow procedures exactly.

3. Charismatic leadership: The leader is extremely enthusiastic towards the team. The leader also exhibits a high drive towards employees. As employees tend to relate the success of the organization to the leader, this can create a problem when the leader leaves the organization.
4. Democratic leadership: This style of leadership invites all members of the team to participate in the decision-making process. Although employees are highly motivated by this style of leadership, it may slow things down at the organizational level. Thus, it is more appropriate in an organization where teamwork is essential and quality is more relevant than speed relative to productivity.
5. Laissez-faire leadership: This style of leadership permits co-workers to get on with their jobs. It can be effective if the leader monitors what is being achieved and communicates this back to the team. It usually works well with experienced and skillful professionals.
6. People-oriented leadership: The leader emphasizes organization, support, and staff development. This is a very participative style.
7. Servant leadership: The leader leads by virtue of meeting the needs of the team. This can be a form of democratic leadership, as everyone gets involved in the decision-making process.
8. Task-oriented leadership: The leadership style focuses on getting the job done. This type of leader may find it difficult to motivate staff as well as retain them.

9. Transactional leadership: This style implies total team member compliance towards their leader. Consequently, it becomes a way of managing rather than leading.
10. Transformational leadership: This kind of leader is highly visible in nature, thus the leader dedicates a good part of his/her time communicating.

Burns (1978) distinguishes between transactional and transformational leadership: Transactional leadership occurs when one person takes the initiative in making contact with others for the purpose of valued items. "Each party to the bargain is conscious of the other" (p. 19). "Transformational leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. Their purposes, which might have started out as separate but related, as in the case of transactional leadership, become fused. Transformational leadership ultimately becomes somewhat moralistic in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leader and follower, and thus it has a transforming effect on both" (p. 20).

This difference is relevant to school principals, because transactional leadership is utilized for structures and authority relationships. It is employed to work with policy, and routine tasks. On the other hand, transformational leadership reconceptualizes the basis of working relationships at schools (Douglas, 1990).

Consequently, effective leaders will switch between styles according to the people and work in which the leader is dealing. Barrier (1995) states that when the connection between particular skills and business survival is no longer obvious, a leader may change his or her leadership style. After researching differing leadership styles,

one can perceive that in all styles communication is implicit. In all the different leadership styles, leaders influence, persuade and negotiate. These are necessary tools for workplace success and therefore demand effective interpersonal communication skills. Barrier (1995) further believes that a leader should be defined not as someone who rules with a bullwhip and a chair, but as a person who can communicate and motivate. Therefore, the correlation between leadership styles and communication is always present.

Leadership and Communications

Providing leadership in educational settings is challenging. Administrators strive to implement fair and consistent student discipline and keep positive relationships with parents, teachers, and stakeholders (Schroer & Baughn, 2006). As a result, a critical skill for all administrators is communication. According to a study conducted by Bulach, Pickett, & Boothe (1998), on average, leaders are engaged in one form or another of communication for about 70 percent of the time.

Tyson (2006) suggests that an educational leader cannot possess a keen vision without an ability to communicate. Cerra and Jacoby (2004) believe that “communication is the genuine exchange of information, ideas, and thoughts, whereby an agreement is reached, a schedule is established, a goal is promoted, or a conflict is resolved” (p.17). The authors also point out that an essential attribute of a true leader is knowing how to communicate and recognizing how communication can transform a competent principal into a great leader.

Clark (1997) states that “studying the communication process is important because you coach, coordinate, counsel, evaluate, and supervise through this process.

It is the chain of understanding that integrates the members of an organization from top to bottom, bottom to top, and side to side” (p. 1). Hensley and Burmesiter (2004) surmise “good communication is a complex, idiosyncratic and sometimes subtle human process, that of sending and receiving meaningful messages to and from one another. The success of this process depends on the clear connections that can be established between the sender’s beliefs, attitudes, style, language choices, perspectives and non-verbal cues; the content of the message; the channels selected for transmitting the message; and the receiver’s beliefs, attitudes and perspectives”(p. 30).

In other words, communication is the cornerstone of any successful leadership enterprise, including educational leadership. As a result, a school leader cannot promote programs, set goals, motivate students, involve parents, nourish community partnerships, coordinate professional development, build leadership capacity, or celebrate individual and communal successes without the command of essential communication skills, both verbal and non-verbal, all of which are necessary to perform any of these functions well (Tyson, 2006).

Daresh (2007) notes that “communication clarifies an organization’s goals, procedures, and rules for people who are both inside and outside of the organization” (p. 148). Therefore, one can say that effective leaders have effective communication skills. Hamman (2006) believes that in order to be an effective administrator, one must first be an effective communicator. Hensley and Burmeister (2004), along with Cerra and Jacoby (2004) define communications as the genuine exchange of information, ideas, and thoughts, whereby an agreement is reached, a schedule is established, a goal is promoted, a conflict is resolved, a problem is solved.

Communication skills are an extensive part of the capacities that a leader must possess to be an effective leader. Schmuck and Runkel (1995) describe three types of communication: unilateral communication, directive communication and two-way communication. Unilateral communication happens when the original source of information is unable to clarify any misunderstandings. Directive communication happens when the messages' acceptance is implied; and transactional or two-way communication happens when each participant initiates messages and thus attempts to understand the other.

When exploring leadership and communications, it is important to reflect on what educational organizations today are looking for in a leader, insofar as communications skills are concerned. Mai and Akerson (2003) suggest that there is a new context for leadership communication, and school organizations want to accomplish three related goals:

1. "Create a learning community that attracts, engages, and retains talented people;
2. Maintain an even keel and a steady course through times of transition and difficulty;
3. Stay at the leading edge of change through a process of continuous innovation and renewal" (p.2).

The ideas stated above surmise that organizations are looking for leadership communication. Mai and Akerson (2003) define leadership communication as leadership that involves communication that leaders have with people, not simply words spoken, or information passed to them. While leadership cannot exist in the absence of

dialogue (p. 14), effective leadership is about relationship building, in all of its many dimensions. Additionally, leadership is both an instrument of communication strategy and a strategy in communication itself. It is the means by which leaders build community and trust (Mai & Akerson). Deal and Petterson (1994) believe that effective school leaders are poets who use language to reinforce values and to sustain the school's best image. "In its simplest forms, leadership communication is communication that flows from the leadership perspective. It is grounded in the character of the leader as well as the values of the organization. It is an expression of the school culture as well as an indicator of the climate, e.g. openness, integrity, and honesty" (Baldoni, 2003, p. 5). Baldoni further stresses that leadership communication aims at affirming organizational vision and mission, driving transformational initiatives, such as change, issuing a call to action, crafting an environment in which motivation can occur, and promoting a product or service and affirming its link to the organization's vision, mission, and values. Honest, open communication is a key to effective leadership performance, organizational credibility, employee trust and motivation, and organizational innovation and productivity (Schwahn & Spady, 1998).

Therefore, many of the problems that occur in an organization are the consequence of communication failure. Problematic communications cause most organizational difficulties which lead to misunderstanding and can destroy good planning. Thus, it is through the communication process that followers can have guidance, supervision and evaluation from leaders and leaders can instruct, evaluate and manage followers (Clark, 1997). In a study of 37 highly effective principals and 150 other educators, parents, and school board members, McEwan (2003) found

communicator and change master among the ten traits of highly effective principals. ability to communicate receiving the highest recognition factor.

Consequently, effective leadership correlates with the ability to effectively communicate. Therefore, communicating relates not only to the words one uses to transfer realistic information to others, but also to other messages that are sent and received. After having established the relationship between leadership and communication, the study will now delve into how effective principals manage communications.

How do Effective Principals Manage Communication?

Communication has always been part of a principal's job. Principals have always had communication responsibilities. Throughout most of the 20th century, superintendents hired principals and told them their job was to make certain that stakeholders had confidence in their schools. Key to this, of course, was implanting in people's minds favorable images of their schools, their students, faculty, the academic programs, and, of course, the principals. Just about everything positive associated with the schools was fodder for principals to consider when communicating with their school's stakeholders (Schneider and Hollenczer, 2006).

However, the principal role of today is not necessarily the same. As a consequence, the manner in which they communicate has also changed. Schneider and Hollenczer (2006) stipulate that in the past, superintendents used to hire principals to manage schools, whereas today they want principals to serve as instructional leaders. Thus, a major responsibility of the school leader must be to keep communication of an instructional nature going in the school, the district, and the community (Daresh, 2007).

Schneider and Hollenczer (2006) point out that the principalship of today is about leadership communication and therefore principals should acquire different management skills than their predecessors. One of these skills is communication management, which begins with identifying and knowing the school's various stakeholders. Schneider and Hollenczer (2006) divided these stakeholders into enablers, colleagues, partners, critical friends and the silent majority. The "enablers" are the school board, the superintendent, central office, and State Education Department. "Colleagues" can be defined as mentors, other principals, state associations, and national associations, for example. The "partners" are the teachers, professional staff, assistant principals, and others. "Critical friends" could be the parents as partners, community partners, advisory committees, unions, and PTA members. The "silent majority" are the passive parents, clergy, the media, neighbors, and politicians.

Once principals have identified all their stakeholders, they should also identify publics among those stakeholders. Dewey (1938) wrote that public is "a group of people who face a similar problem, recognize that the problem exists, and organize to do something about the problem" (as quoted in Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 145). The next step would be to engage the stakeholders in meaningful communication. Schneider and Hollenczer (2006) suggest that publics tend to fall into three categories: 1) those that are active on all the issues; 2) those that are apathetic on all issues, and 3) those that are active only on single issues of relevance and consequence. As a result, principals have to learn how to communicate with the differing publics, the constituencies of the modern school systems.

Schools settings of today are very complex, and thus, force principals to develop differing leadership styles and communication strategies. Schneider and Hollenczer (2006) point out that a common strategy is interactional principal leadership, which assumes that even though individuals may enter into a social relationship with different degrees of power, each must reach accommodation with others to serve their mutual interests.

Pawlas (2005), examines the importance of communicating with both the internal and external publics. First, Pawlas explains why leadership communication with the internal public is important.

- “The various groups of people who collectively make up the internal publics can make or break a principal;
- What goes on in a school each day is the base from which an effective school – community relations plan is built and maintained;
- The messages the internal public’s members carry from the school are generally believed to a higher degree than the messages that come from an administrator;
- The large army of public relations agents – the students, for example- in every school is a key conduit to sharing the proper story about a school” (p. 35).

Pawlas (2005) also describes the importance of communicating with the school’s external publics:

- “The external publics will base their opinions about a school on the messages they receive from the members of the internal publics;

- Parental involvement with their children's education is an indicator of an effective school;
- Key communicators help to keep other members of the external publics informed while also sharing their questions, comments, and concerns with the leadership of the school;
- Most citizens do not have school-age children, so strategies need to be used to keep them informed" (p. 65).

The Role of Conflict in Communication

Although this review of the literature has presented the importance of communicating with different stakeholders, it has not addressed conflicts that may occur between different publics, as a result of interactions. Conflicts occur from minor, unimportant differences to disputes which can threaten the existence of a relationship. If conflict is properly dealt with, it can be productive – leading to deeper understanding, mutual respect and closeness (Bellafiore, 2008). Therefore, effective communication techniques should be used to reduce conflicts. Bellafiore suggests a rational model that may help resolve interpersonal conflicts:

- Identify the problem;
- Come up with several possible solutions;
- Evaluate these alternative solutions;
- Decide on the best solution;
- Implement the solution; and
- Continue to evaluate the solution.

Nevertheless, when conflicts occur, principals should know that no single communication strategy works effectively all the time. When faced with conflicts of this nature, the two-way symmetrical method of communication works well. Schneider and Hollenczer (2006), explain that “in the two-way symmetric model, the organization and their public together address an issue that impacts them both, use dispute-resolution techniques to negotiate mutually beneficial outcomes, and work together to develop a win-win position” (p. 36).

Therefore, according to Dozier (1995), the way this particular model would work in schools is noted below:

In thinking of symmetrical and asymmetrical practices as parts of a common mixed-motive game, knowledge of both models makes sense. As organizations pursue their own interests in relations with publics, [principals] try – from time to time- to persuade publics that organizations are right on an issue. At times [principals] try to convince publics to behave as their organizations want. Sometimes, [principals] try to manipulate publics scientifically. Indeed, publics will likewise follow similar asymmetrical strategies to persuade, convince, and manipulate organizations. However, organizations and publics also need to find equilibrium, a middle position, between the desired outcomes of each. Such equilibrium must be sufficiently satisfactory so that neither the publics nor organizations have cause to regret their actions, given how the other side would have responded. Publics and organizations can be described as cooperative antagonists, looking for a compromise around an issue in which true differences exist between the parties (p. 47-48).

For principals to place into practice the models described above, it is obvious that some pertinent knowledge is needed. Therefore, the next section will indicate what types of knowledge and expertise, relative to communication, effective leaders should possess and utilize.

Effective Leaders' Knowledge on Communication

After having described the magnitude of how effective leaders manage communication, it is intriguing to understand what effective principals knowledge entails relative to communication. If they are effective school leaders, their knowledge base should be a part of their effectiveness. The research literature has indicated that effective leaders know that there is a close relationship between trust and effective communication. High levels of trust go beyond medium levels of respect and compromise and promote high levels of cooperation (Hughes & Hooper, 2000).

Hensley and Burmeister (2004) reveal that effective administrators know that through the effective use of communication relationships are built, trust and credibility are established, and respect is gained. Once they have garnered the trust and respect of those with whom they work, they know that they can go about the business of shaping a school's culture and crafting a shared vision with all constituents. The good use of communication involves effective listening skills. Cerra and Jacoby (2004) suggest that "proper listening is a communication skill that creates a positive acceptance for understanding, affirmation, validation, and appreciation. Effective listening skills will elicit a better response from students, parents, faculty and staff, school board members, and community leaders than simply talking at them" (p. 78).

Effective leaders also know that one of the best ways for them to develop trust and credibility is by being visible. Credibility is earned and nurtured over time through human contact. Staying in touch with constituents enables leaders to sustain the credibility they have desired and deserve (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Hensley & Burmeister (2004), state that "a great communicator develops both the skill and the

artistry to send meaningful and important messages. These messages are critical to developing learning communities in which a common commitment to a noble goal thrives” (p. 33).

Feedback

When exploring communications, feedback is crucial. Effective communication does not exist without feedback. The concept of feedback originated in the hard sciences, with applications in electronics, computers, servomechanisms, and various cybernetic devices. Only later was feedback, as a concept, adopted by the behavioral sciences (Nickols, 2000). Feedback is a way of letting people know how effective they are in what they are trying to accomplish, and how they affect you. It provides a way for people to learn how they affect the world around them, and it helps leaders to become more effective. If leaders know how other people view them, then they can overcome problems in how to communicate and interact with others (Rich, 1994).

Rich (1994) notes that feedback is a must for people who want to have honest relationships. It connects us, and our behavior, to the world around us. Effective feedback should be supportive, direct, sensitive, considerate, descriptive, thoughtful, and helpful (Rich, 1994). Giving and receiving feedback has long been considered an essential skill for leaders. School personnel need to know how they are doing and that their performance is meeting expectations. Unfortunately, many leaders are poorly equipped to provide constructive feedback to personnel about conduct or performance. Bulach, Boothe, & Pickett (1998) found that ineffective principals have interpersonal communication problems in the area of giving and receiving feedback. Principals who are competent provide for ongoing feedback as a means of support for their campus

personnel. Sharing and exchanging information with personnel, and this obviously includes feedback, enhances the educational environment for students and promotes the efficient operation of a school (Cooke, 2007).

Leaders must incorporate as one of their goals, the encouragement and support of individuals along with organizational learning through communicative feedback. Hoske (1999) suggests that effective feedback should motivate, encourage, and guide personnel, thus creating a positive teaching and learning environment. Dialogue that accompanies feedback should clarify what is expected, what was done, look at the results and consequences, and serve to seek alternative methods to apply success.

Leaders should not only be concerned about providing feedback, but also with receiving it. Goldsmith (2003) believes that school leaders themselves need feedback from their personnel, in the form of suggestions for how to improve procedures and processes. Feedback from campus personnel also encourage ideas and can positively impact a principal's leadership style. Stephen (1998) also emphasizes the importance of what he calls periodic feedback. Accordingly, it is important for principals to understand that the perceptions of others are critically important to the leadership role. "All too often, principals find themselves too caught up in the day-to-day volume of work and the intensity of the job to notice how their behaviors are being perceived by teachers, parents, students or district office administrators" (Stephen, 1998, p. 5).

The purpose of feedback is to change and alter messages so the intention of the original communicator is understood by the second communicator. "Feedback can be very powerful. Those who look for and accept it, position themselves to be more competent and capable. Those who resist, reject, or avoid it, doom themselves to the

limitations of their own personal insights – which may be right or wrong, but they will never know. They fail to see the power in feedback” (Zenger, 2006, p. XV). Clark (1997) describes five main characteristics of feedback:

1. Evaluative: making a judgment about the worth, goodness, or appropriateness of the other person’s statement;
2. Interpretative: paraphrasing – attempting to explain what the other person’s statement means;
3. Supportive: Attempting to assist or bolster the other communicator;
4. Probing: Attempting to gain additional information, continue the discussion, or clarify a point;
5. Understanding: Attempting to discover completely what the other communicator means by statements made.

Effective principals always ask for feedback. These leaders desire to be savvy about their performance, and also seek to change direction and make corrections if necessary – all based on essential feedback. Feedback can improve job performances as well as relationships in the workplace. Today’s employees want to be asked for feedback and they want to be heard. (Gallo, 2007). Gallo points out that feedback involves good listening skills. “Great listeners solicit feedback and, more important, take action based on that feedback even if the action is as simple as responding in an e-mail” (p. 2). The relationship between a supervisor and a subordinate is inherent in organizational life. As feedback is supposed to help workers improve performance, both supervisors and subordinates need to optimize their methods of exchanging feedback

information (Lee, Park, Lee, & Lee, 2007). Therefore, the first part of the feedback subsection will explore how educational leaders provide feedback to their subordinates.

Providing Feedback

According to the Organization of the Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Educational Reform Unit (2005), one of the broad areas of responsibility of the principalship is to establish and maintain viable communication and feedback mechanisms between principal and teachers and support staff, among teachers, between school and the school district and with the community at large. As feedback is so important, it should not be solely viewed as disapproval, criticism or a personal attack. However, feedback must be provided so that people can improve their work to ensure their aims for better organizational success and achievement in the future. Feedback is a way of letting people know how effective they are in what they are trying to accomplish: it provides a way for people to learn how they affect the world around them and it helps leaders become more effective (Sorenson & Goldsmith, 2009).

The (New York State) NYS Governor's Office of Employee Relations (2003) states that providing feedback is critical to maintaining an open dialogue and to focusing on positive, constructive outcomes. The NYS Governor's Office of Employee Relations also describes three types of feedback:

1. Descriptive feedback is nonjudgmental and simply describes an event.
2. Negative feedback tends to raise a person's defenses and often the person feels punished. Negative feedback tells the person what NOT to do. It is sometimes necessary to help people avoid repeating critical mistakes, but it is usually overused.

3. Positive feedback focuses on telling the person what TO do; it can be used to productively guide future behavior.

The NYS Governor's Office of Employee Relations (2003) also suggests a formula for providing feedback. Leaders should let their employees know that when they receive feedback, they should reflect on what the person said or did. Then, they should describe the effect the action or how the words affected them, and finally, describe how others felt as a result of the feedback. Such an communicative approach would help to remedy many areas that need improvement.

Although feedback can be constructive and useful, people have difficulty in accepting critical feedback. It is hard to keep a non-defensive and open attitude, as the implication, when receiving feedback, is that we are flawed or wrong. However, a defensive reaction to feedback may reflect a feeling that it may be partially accurate. Nevertheless, personnel should not always accept feedback in a negative fashion. However, people should have the right to refuse feedback if it is not provided in a meaningful, productive, and respectful manner. Moreover, people should have the right to think about the person's credibility and validity when assessing the statements provided by the feedback received (Sloan Communications Program, 1998). In the educational setting, this means principals must have an open channel of communication with their subordinates, and must further be able to make employees feel at ease when providing or receiving feedback.

One of the problems often associated with providing feedback is the feedback is not always immediate. Sometimes personnel are provided feedback about a specific manner of conducting a specified task some time after the initial task occurred. It is

difficult for an employee to remember all the steps of a previous task and as a result, the feedback provided does not make sense. Some principals utilize feedback by comparing one employees' behavior with another employee which invariably causes embarrassment to each of the employees being compared.

Methods for Providing Effective Feedback

This portion of the literature review serves to examine proven methods which leaders can utilize to provide feedback in a positive and effective manner. Feedback is a way of providing another person information about his or her behavior in a given situation. The person receiving the feedback is made aware of how this behavior affects him or her and others in the group. Feedback helps individuals to maintain "on target" behavior and focus on intended goals. The person receiving feedback can decide if a behavioral change is desirable. How well feedback is received depends in part on how well feedback is imparted.

Some leaders seem to be extremely positive in providing feedback, whereas others are extremely negative. Rich (1994) states that there are effective and ineffective methods of providing feedback. Ineffective methods would include aggressiveness and focusing on the weakness of the person. Moreover, some people tend to be vague, express little concern for the person receiving the feedback, and in some cases are even impulsive in their delivery of negative feedback. On the other hand, feedback is effective when it is supportive, clearly stated, and intended to be of value to the person who receives it.

Feedback should not necessarily be prescriptive. The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (1978) provides some guidelines on how to provide for useful

feedback. The Laboratory suggests that feedback should be descriptive rather than evaluative; it should be specific; it must consider the needs of both the giver and the receiver; and it has to be delivered in a manner that the receiver can do something with it. Feedback should also be well-timed, that is, it is more useful when delivered at the earliest opportunity after the given behavior or event has occurred. It goes without saying that there has to be clear communication, and checking for accuracy must always occur. It is important to know that providing effective feedback is a skill. And like all skills, it takes practice to build one's confidence and to improve in utilizing effective feedback (Mindtools, 1995-2007c).

When providing feedback, principals must bear in mind that the more immediate the feedback, the more helpful it will be. Principals should also be descriptive, rather than judgmental or evaluative, and their criticism should focus on the performance, that is, the focus should be on what the person did, rather than on the employee (Sloan Communications Program, 1998). Furthermore, principals should be supportive, not authoritarian. This will encourage subordinates to openly express their views.

Additionally, principals should support feedback and judgments with evidence from observations, offer constructive criticism only for actions that can be changed, and are related to the assessment criteria, restrict feedback to what can be absorbed and understood that they should never compare the person's behavior with that of others. In addition, leaders should not apologize for their criticism when it is made in good faith and supported by evidence.

Unfortunately, principals usually provide campus personnel with negative feedback (Cannon and Griffith, 2007). The negative delivery of feedback often involves

the principal being aggressive and focusing on the weaknesses of other people. In addition, feedback is frequently vague and the issues are hinted at rather than addressed directly. Moreover, negative delivery of feedback also happens when it is demeaning, evaluative, and/or judgmental rather than behavior-oriented, aimed at broad issues which cannot be easily defined, given long after the prompting event, or at the worst possible time (on Friday before the weekend; the week before Spring Break; the day before Summer Break), given thoughtlessly, with little regard for the consequences, and when it meets the giver's needs, rather than the needs of the other person. In other words, feedback should be positive, helpful, and should identify areas to target for growth so that the subordinate can work on said areas and improve the issue/problem (Sloan Communication Program, 1998).

Receiving Feedback

So far, the review of the literature has explored the topic of how principals deal with providing feedback to their subordinates. However, how they handle the receiving of feedback from their subordinates is equally important. Receiving feedback is as important as providing feedback.

Often school personnel or team members can point out leader, behaviors and attitudes that can be improved, aiming at a better environment at the organizational level and ultimately, better performances at the individual (leader) level. Most 360-degree feedback (getting feedback from your staff) involves the description of interpersonal skills, leadership, decision making, delegating, and time-management. Such is powerful as it provides school leaders with opportunities to receive useful

information about their behavior from identified sources that are professional experts and thus, often know what is best (Dyer, 2001).

Being receptive in receiving negative feedback is an important quality in a leader. Effective leaders have to be open to their personnel's comments; they also have to be certain that their staff knows they are willing to listen. Baumgartner (1994) believes that leaders should constantly ask themselves if there are aspects of the feedback behaviors that contribute to follower perceptions, both good and bad. The risk leaders may run is not receiving useful feedback. However, Baumgartner states that even if this is the case, leaders have nothing to lose by trying to implement a feedback approach to effective communication.

When receiving feedback, leaders should exhibit a positive and open style. Otherwise, trust may not be present, and when there is no trust, feedback cannot occur in a way that makes leaders recognize where they can improve for the benefit of the whole organization. Rich (1994) states that in order to have a positive style of receiving feedback, principals have to be open, responsive, accepting, engaged, actively listening, attentive, thoughtful, interested and sincere. On the other hand, principals should avoid patronizing, rationalizing, and being superficial, that is, they may appear to be listening and possibly agreeing with followers, when in actuality giving the impression that the received feedback will have little actual effect.

Receiving feedback also makes leaders reflect on the goals and expectations of those who report to them, and consider where improvement is needed, and what progress is being made toward their assigned goals and objectives. Reflective feedback encourages leaders to focus on setting and achieving goals. Chapelow (1998) makes

some suggestions as to how to approach goal setting and further identifies a blueprint for achieving and sustaining behavioral change. He suggests that leaders, as a result of feedback, can identify a developmental need and capitalize on it; leaders can also identify a previously unrecognized strength and make the most of it.

The benefits of feedback based on observed behaviors and clear criteria are immeasurable. Through feedback, employees know their principal's expectations, know the impact of their behaviors, and get involved in an effort to improve their performances. Leaders also benefit through an open channel of communication, which contributes to everyone's professional development. The organization can define and communicate the leadership profile it intends to follow, and further identify professional development needs.

Feedback also provides school leaders with opportunities to receive useful information about their behavior from identified sources (Dyer, 2001). Fleenor and Prince (1997) state that providing and receiving feedback involve certain factors that contribute to the overall quality, effectiveness, and integrity of the communicative process: 1) Feedback is developmental, not evaluative; 2) A coaching or mentoring session accompanies feedback; 3) The development of a goal or action plan follows feedback; 4) Feedback data belongs to the receiver; and 5) The process is confidential.

School leaders must also focus on listening as a method of communicative feedback. When a principal first seeks to understand, then the principal is able to be understood. Sorenson (2005) states that active listeners "focus on understanding the individual speaking without interrupting the speaker and also withhold judgments about

a speaker's message until the entire message is delivered" (p. 9). Additionally, principal communications should be timely and positive (Schroer & Baughn, 2006).

School leaders who have successful experiences, as far as problem-solving is concerned, initiate positive feedback toward solving problems solution and thus, better ensuring the development of effective leader/personnel relationships (Sorenson & Goldsmith, 2009). When there is positive interaction and feedback with others, trust is developed. Consequently, effective communication is critical to effective problem solving (Hart, Bredeson, Marsh, & Scribner, 1997) and personnel development (Sorenson and Goldsmith, 2009). Communication is essential to effective employee trust of a leader and motivation all of which enables personnel to work efficiently and effectively (Schwahn & Spady, 1998).

According to the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (1978) principals should facilitate and model effective communication by receiving feedback openly, thus creating a valuable opportunity for their own learning and professional growth. Effective leaders are eager for feedback, and must always seek insight into all areas that will improve their own personal development, in order to enhance their overall effectiveness (Dawson, 2007).

In the educational setting, receiving feedback as an effective communication tool builds trust. Only by creating a safe, open environment -where feedback is positively and proactively sought - can a principal gain personnel trust and ultimately solve problems. Ineffective communication, including a principal's inability or unwillingness to listen to what others have to say, is a sure way to confound problem solving, reduce trust, and magnify feelings of isolation among administrators, teachers, and support

personnel (Blase & Blase, 2001). As Lambert (1998) notes, “trust is built and experienced within the context of multifaceted communication systems...a communication system needs to be open and fluid, include feedback loops, and be practiced by everyone in the school” (p. 79-80).

By receiving feedback it is implied that principals look for ways to include staff members in school meetings and activities. Having a well-informed staff is good for community-relations (Pawlas, 2005). When receiving feedback from their subordinates, principals should be open and responsive, willing to hear what has been said without turning the table; accepting; respectful, by recognizing the value of what is being said and the subordinate’s right to say it; interacting appropriately with the subordinate, by asking for clarification when needed; listening carefully and trying to understand the meaning of the feedback; being thoughtful and trying to understand the personal behavior that has led to the feedback; and being interested and sincere, by genuinely making personal changes if appropriate (Dawson, 2007).

360-Degree Feedback

Another way of handling feedback is through the implementation of 360-degree feedback. In most school districts one or more professionals have also experienced 360-degree feedback in their careers. Manatt (2000) states that many school administrators, in their principal preparation programs or through professional readings, have learned how multi-source personnel evaluations are much better than a unilateral rating by the leader. Mannat also points out that public and independent school districts have used forms of multi-rater feedback for evaluating job performance long before

Teams, Inc., a consulting group in Miami, trademarked the term “360-degree feedback” in 1973.

The 360-degree feedback is basically a sampling process, which can be used at three levels 1) for developmental purposes, 2) appraisal, and 3) compensation. Schools can use 360-degree feedback for administrators and teachers, as well as feedback to the principals, the superintendent, and to school boards. As Manatt (2000) suggests, for effective implementation, there should be an array of respondents. “For example, insights about a principal should be sought from teachers, students, parents, assistant principals, support staff and central administration. For feedback about a teacher, students, parents, peer teachers, support staff and building administrators would be asked for input” (p.3).

In other words, in order for principals to have an open feedback channel with their staff, they should share and exchange information with faculty and staff to enhance the educational environment for students and to promote the efficient operation of the school, always encouraging faculty participation through department or team meetings which are held on a regular basis to ensure that teachers understand their role in the achievement of the school district’s instructional goals, the school’s goals, and their respective departmental goals. Principals should also encourage teachers to suggest improvements in operational procedures. Faculty should also be involved in the design of the academic programs (Cooke, 2007).

Reeves (2004) points out that effective leadership evaluation is:

- “Proactive. It starts before the first day on the job;

- Reciprocal. It gives the leader the opportunity to provide feedback to the organization;
- Empowering. Leaders have authority to make decisions that will improve their effectiveness;
- Standards based. Success is not a guessing game, as the standards for proficient and exemplary leadership are clear;
- Truthful. Feedback is honest and accurate; and
- Objective. Leadership behaviors are a matter of description, not conjecture” (p. 24).

Thus, principals should incorporate a constructive evaluation system in their professional routine. The best leaders of today and the most promising leaders of tomorrow will not accept an interview for a position that fails to ensure an evaluation system that is constructive, fair and clear – that is, in brief, robust (Reeves, 2004).

As noted thus so far, it is essential that principals provide and receive feedback. However, they should also provide and receive feedback from the schools’ customers, that is, the students. For principals to give and receive feedback from students, they should first of all, know the students. Pawlas (2005) says that principals can get to know their students by inviting them into the principal’s office to chat, by being present or involved in differing student-oriented venues (i.e. band, choir, athletics), by being attentive to details, and by encouraging and participating in student recognition ceremonies and activities. This attitude will open communication channels between principals and students. These channels will enable principals to provide constructive feedback to students. These channels will also enable principals to receive feedback

from students, since principals are making themselves available to listen to their students. Peters & Waterman (2004) suggest that leaders need to be close to their customers. Pawlas (2005) says that leaders need to listen to the publics, especially the students. The best organizations learn from the public they serve. In the case of schools, these customers would be the students, first and foremost.

Therefore, it is important that students know that they are listened to and heard. Cooke (2007) says that when principals show that they value their students' input, they personalize the school and empower students to be active participants and problem solvers.

As a final note, students' opinions about their school are extremely relevant, because their opinions usually influence other stakeholders. People's opinions about a school system in general, and their local community school in particular, are based primarily on information received from students. Parents are strongly influenced by their children's comments. Other community members base their opinions of a school and school system on their personal encounter with parents of the students or the students themselves. If students comment favorably about their school, the school staff and principal are likely to benefit from the support and confidence of the school's external publics (Sorenson & Goldsmith, 2009).

How Principals Give and Receive Feedback to and from External Stakeholders

Although giving and receiving feedback from students and personnel is important, it is equally important for a principal to give feedback to and receive feedback to and from the external stakeholders. Feedback is also part of passive communication. Leaders need to understand that feedback will often happen spontaneously. What the

leader needs to do is to ensure an outlet for feedback (Baldoni, 2003). According to Baldoni, leaders should plan for feedback, by letting people know that they will be soliciting feedback and sharing the results of that feedback with them and with other members of the learning community. In addition, leaders should provide feedback meetings for discussion of issues. Moreover, posting feedback on websites and making themselves available to receive feedback is another action that leaders should incorporate.

This is also the case with the external stakeholders, or external publics, which, in the case of a school are taxpayer groups, alumni groups, service clubs, legislators, teachers' unions, preschool parents, churches, media, industry, athletic boosters, and others. Principals should, first of all, be aware of what these people want from them.

Pawlas (2005) points out that external publics usually want to ask the principals:

- How do the students' performances on standardized test scores compare to those of neighboring schools or school districts? Also, how do their performances compare to the national averages;
- What is each school's and the school district's dropout rate?
- What percentage of the students who graduate from high school go on to college?
- Are graduates who are not going to college prepared to enter the workforce?

Pawlas (2005) also mentions that the external public are interested in the adults who interact with the students. Some of their questions of interests include the following:

- How much training and what academic degrees do the teachers possess?
- How is their teaching evaluated? How often is this done?
- What support is given to teachers?
- How much teacher turnover is there? What are the ages of the teachers and their years of experience?
- What qualifications do substitute teachers need? Are enough qualified substitute available? (p. 67)

The academic program is of interest to the school's external publics. They want to know:

- How are features/components of the learning program determined?
- Is there a regular plan to review, revise, and evaluate the curricula?
- Are computers available for the students? How much time/how many periods can a student spend each day/week on a computer?
- What percentage of the students are in special education? How are their needs met and served? (p. 67)

Some other areas of interest to members of various external publics include the following:

- What is discipline like inside the school?
- How safe is the school?
- What is done with students who are involved with gangs and drugs?
- How are visitors welcomed at the school?
- How many students are bused?
- How much time do students spend on the bus?
- Do parents have options in selecting what schools their children can attend?
- Are any of the schools on year-round schedules? (Pawlas, 2005, p.67).

Besides looking at the pertinent literature, principals can also make use of other techniques to obtain feedback from these publics. Morris & Vrabel (1979) note that principals can also obtain feedback from their external stakeholders through participation in community groups and through advisory councils. Written questionnaires or volunteer telephone surveys are also useful.

Moreover, principals can read the editorials and the letters-to-the-editor section of the newspapers. Surveying parents for problem-solving ideas is also a good technique for obtaining feedback. Once principals have the knowledge of what external stakeholders desire, it is easier for them to work on providing essential feedback. As a consequence of being in contact with the external publics through the techniques

previously noted, principals will find it easier to provide feedback to the external stakeholders.

Conclusions on Feedback

Feedback is essential, if not critical, to the principal role because it serves to build trust and open communications relative to the school's goals and the employee's professional development goals. In addition, feedback provides principals and stakeholders with a process to identify and discuss skills and strengths. It also identifies performance areas that need improvement and specific ways to improve them. Furthermore, it is an opportunity for principals and employees to enhance performance by identifying resources for skill development, as well as an opportunity for principals and subordinates to assess and identify career and advancement opportunities.

This section has served to make a connection between leadership and communications, which consist of those messages to a school leader that are rooted in the values and culture of a school organization and are of significant importance to key stakeholders. Moreover, this section has revealed the main goal of the leadership message, which is to build trust between school leaders and their constituency.

As a last note, Cooke (2007) points out, "communication is one of the many key behaviors leaders must use to carry out the responsibility they are charged with. Failure to communicate is frequently the stated reason for schools to lose well-funded and well-staffed business partners. Partners' expectations and benefits should be clear to everyone involved, which is essential to promote understanding and the level of trust" (p. 80). In other words, the art of giving and receiving feedback is an essential part of

effective communications; and effective communication is an essential part of effective and skilled principal leadership.

Rural Schools

So far, the literature review has described the interconnections between leadership and leadership styles relative to communication. It has also stressed the importance of providing and receiving feedback as an essential part of the communication process. Nevertheless, it has yet to address whether the above described theories and practices are pertinent to rural schools. As the setting of this study is a rural school, this review will describe the rural school context, leadership in rural schools and how the communication process is integrated with leadership in rural schools.

Rural Schools – Definition and Context

According to Weeks (2008), there is no single definition for rural America and rural schools. All that is not metropolitan is often said to be rural. However, one should remember that rural American is quite diverse from one part of the country to another. However, generalizations can provide a foundation of information for looking into trends in a regional and local area.

Rural schools traditionally have played a central role in their communities. Not only do they provide for basic education, but they also serve as a cultural center in the community. Athletics, drama programs, music, and other social activities conducted at schools have played a vital part in rural community life and identity formation since the nineteenth century (Miller, 1995).

Therefore, the greatest advantage for rural schools is their connections, and their close communication channels with the surrounding community. Williams (2003) explains that rural families often have deep roots in a community, dense relational networks. Although economic, educational, and some human capital may be lacking, there appears to be an abundance of social capital inherent in already existing relationships in rural communities. In addition, other advantages that need to be maintained include cultivating a sense of place, providing opportunities for parent involvement, strengthening church ties, and building strong school-business relationships (Driscoll, 1995).

Relations and Accountability

Effective communication techniques and skills help rural communities and schools meet the challenges of accountability. According to Beeson & Strange (2003), one in three students attending public schools in the United States attends a school in a rural area or small town. Nearly one-third of our public schools and public school teachers and close to one-half of public school districts are located in rural areas. Like their urban counterparts, rural schools face challenges to meet the student-achievement mandates of the federal government's 2001 No Child Left Behind legislation. The study conducted by Beeson & Strange reveals that in 1999-2000, a high percentage of secondary school classes and students in the 10 states researched required urgent attention because they had teachers without an academic major or a required certification in English, mathematics, science, and social studies. Therefore, the National Assessment of Educational Progress was not met. As for achievement gaps in rural states, a study by Education Trust reports that the eighth grade math and science

scores, and reading scores indicates achievement gaps of up to nearly four years of learning. Nevertheless, Williams (2003) suggests that many rural schools are finding solutions to those problems by entering into community and university partnerships.

Leadership, Communications, and Rural Schools

Developing partnership relations imply connections between leadership and communications. A study conducted by Muse (1999) reveals that the differences in the nature of the principal position between rural and urban settings have not been defined. Muse also focused on identifying the typical characteristics of rural principals and their schools. The survey included six hundred principals from seven different states, and results revealed that rural principals earned their credentials usually through a great sacrifice of time and effort. The rural principal is often the spotlight in the rural community with every individual action a reflection on the school as he or she may be expected to be in church every Sunday, at every school event, in every civic organization, and at every public occasion.

Findings also suggest that rural principals usually have no assistant principal or administrative assistant to whom tasks can be delegated, but must teach any class when a teacher is out, stoke up the boiler or shovel the sidewalk if the custodian is ill, take attendance if the secretary is late, provide counseling, first aid, disciplinary sanctions, or coaching when needed, and drive the bus when a driver is not available (Muse, 1999). Thus, the rural principal is the key person relative to the effective operation a rural school.

In terms of the relation between leadership and communications in rural schools, the research literature reveals that an effective educational leader should have effective

communication skills, problem solving abilities, collaboration, modeling, decision-making, listening and interpersonal skills (Esieh & Phen, 1998, in Zimmerly, 2006). Chalker (1999) explains that being an effective principal in a rural area means building positive relationships with the people in the rural community. The school in the rural community is still a respected institution, with much more focus on people than on business. Building trust and finding ways to make the curriculum incorporate the strengths of the community are key features of successful school leaders in rural areas.

A series of case studies into rural schools and communities partnerships conducted by Johns, Kilpatrick, Falk, and Mulford (2000), found that urban and suburban schools should facilitate transformational and distributive rural leadership programs and should consider the value and potential contributions of rural schools. Urban and suburban schools should also explore and develop personal values, and should develop skills common to rural school communicative processes.

Another case study conducted by Johns, Kilpatrick, Falk, and Mulford (2000) reveals that school-based interactions, through which relationships are built with others in the rural community, and rural networks which are established and maintained are the most important contributions of rural schools to their community's development.

Methods for Improving Communications between rural Schools and the Community

Di Benedetto (1982) states that because the principal of a small school is most directly responsible for maintaining the relationship between the school and the community, he or she must develop a strategy for school-community relations which takes into account the rural community's values and power hierarchy.

This process must consider factors such as the role of the rural principal and of the community, potential problems, evaluation procedures, and ways to involve the community. For instance, Wilson and Stanberry (1976) explain that all principals should learn from rural principals and:

1. interpret school programs for the community;
2. determine community expectations of the school;
3. communicate with parents through the media and in group conferences;
4. arrange for parents to visit the school;
5. work with parent associations and related groups;
6. interact with school critics;
7. plan and coordinate the visits of school professionals to the homes of students;
8. initiate special publicity campaigns;
9. support student publications;
10. appraise school community relations;
11. work with industry and community image groups; and
12. determine the community power structure.

Another way principals can contribute to the community is by recruiting community-minded teachers. Like rural principals, all principals should involve community members in recruiting and selecting teachers who fit their communities (Seifert & Kurtz, 1983; Lewis, & Edington, 1983). In addition, recruitment materials should include community

information (Seifert and Kurtz 1983). Administrators who have a community-oriented philosophy are more likely to have positive school-community relations (Charlton 1983).

Conflicts Rural Principals May Face

Conflict may emerge from differing expectations between rural community and rural school leaders. These conflicts may translate into problems principals have to solve. Husen (1982) lists some of the problems rural principals may encounter when managing communications with the community:

1. School boards and administrators who are fearful of losing control;
2. The need to be all things to all people;
3. Disagreement about the meaning of community involvement; and
4. Reluctance of some teaching staff to cooperate in community involvement.

DiBenedetto (1982) explains that in order to overcome the problems stated above, rural principals should develop needs assessment among local business and/or community groups to determine community needs for different programs. Moreover, rural principals should have team reviews of school relations and surveys of staff memberships in different organizations, such as churches and clubs.

Feedback and Rural Schools

Although the literature has not revealed reasonable amount of information on feedback in rural schools, a qualitative study on common issues faced both by rural and urban schools conducted by Baty (2006), touches on the subject of feedback. The study used a structured set of interviews to find out common issues rural and urban schools face. In the area of performance management and feedback, the study showed that the

teaching staff stated that all principals involved in the study participated in the process of appraising the teaching staff. Although the study stressed that principal appraisal was important in the fifteen schools studied, it only mentioned principals receiving feedback from a chairperson, an outside consultant, and by a sub-committee. The study does not specify who the members of this sub-committee were, nor the purpose of the sub-committee.

In terms of 360-degree feedback, The American Association of School Administrators (1997) suggests a model in which teachers should be evaluated not only by their supervisors, but also by their peers, students, parents, self-evaluation, and student achievement. All principals should be evaluated by their supervisors, students, teachers, parents, school climate, teacher performance data, student attendance, and dropouts. Nevertheless, the literature has not indicated if this does occur in most United States rural schools or the frequency with which it may occur.

Implications for this Study

Even though rural districts desire principals with strong communication skills, including the utilization of communicative feedback techniques, as well as leadership abilities, these are the areas in which most candidates are weakest, according to a study conducted by Stephen (2000). In addition, an accurate profile of the nature of the principal position between rural and urban settings has not been defined. Furthermore, there has not been any study that detailed communication strategies including receiving and providing feedback, as well as 360-degree feedback, which have been constantly utilized in most United States rural schools.

Therefore, through the investigative process of this case study and the description of the details involving leadership skills and the communication process as a means to improve campus climate and student achievement, those gaps at the very least addressed, may be achieved.

Conclusions

In Chapter II the related literature pertaining to school leadership, along with leadership and its connection with communication, including techniques for receiving and providing feedback were reviewed. This chapter also provided an overview of rural schools, their definition and context, as well as the role relations play relative to accountability in rural schools. In addition, the literature presented the connection between leadership and rural schools and communication and rural schools. Methods for improving communications between rural schools and the community were also emphasized. This chapter also described conflicts rural principals may face as a result of community relations and the issue of feedback relative to rural schools.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter includes the description of qualitative research and case study, the role of the researcher utilizing a case study approach, the descriptive case study, a personal perspective, and the description of the participants, description of the interview process, ethical considerations, procedures for data collection, and the research setting.

Qualitative Research Study

Qualitative research aims at understanding the meaning of human action. Eisner (1991) points out that all knowledge, including that gained through quantitative research, is referenced in qualities, and that there are many ways to represent our understanding of the world: “There is a kind of continuum that moves from the fictional that is “true”—the novel for example—to the highly controlled and quantitatively described scientific experiment. Work at either end of this continuum has the capacity to inform significantly. Qualitative research and evaluation are located toward the fictive end of the continuum without being fictional in the narrow sense of the term” (pp. 30-31).

In qualitative research, credibility depends less on sample size than on the richness of the information gathered and on the analytical abilities of the researcher (Patton, 1990). Credibility can be enhanced through the triangulation of data. Patton identifies four types of triangulation: 1) methods triangulation; 2) data triangulation; 3) triangulation through multiple analysts; and 4) theory triangulation. Other techniques for addressing credibility include making segments of the raw data available for others to

analyze, and the use of "member checks," in which respondents are asked to corroborate findings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In this study, data triangulation was used.

Case Study

In the sociological and anthropological literature, a case study is typically regarded as a specific and bounded (in time and place) instance of a phenomenon selected for research (Creswell, 1998). The phenomenon of interest may be a person, process, event, group, or organization. Cases are usually characterized by their concreteness and circumstantial specificity and by their generalizability (Raggin & Becker 1992; Schwandt, 2001).

Yin (1989) states that a case study strategy is preferred when the researcher seeks to answer how or why questions, when the researcher has little control over events being studied, when the object of study is a contemporary phenomenon in a real-life context, when boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clear, and when it is desirable to use multiple sources of evidence.

Case studies are also particularly useful in depicting a holistic portrayal of a person's experiences and results regarding a program. For example, to evaluate the effectiveness of a program's processes, including its strengths and weaknesses, evaluators might develop cases studies on the program's successes and failures. Case studies are used to organize a wide range of information about a case and then analyze the contents by seeking patterns and themes in the data. A case can study individuals, programs, or any unit, depending on what the program evaluators want to examine through in-depth analysis and comparison (MacNamara, 2008).

A case study was chosen for this study because the aim of the researcher is to determine the issues inherent to the case because such will be particularly useful in further understanding the issue of how a principal utilizes leadership styles to employ different communication strategies and the associated complexities therein.

Role of the Researcher in a Case Study

According to MacNamara (2008), the role of a researcher, who utilizes a case study as a method of inquiry, is to gather data through a combination of methods, including documentation such as applications, histories, records, interviews and observations. The researcher's role also includes organizing the data into an approach that stresses the focus of the study. In addition, the researcher has to develop a narrative, a story, which integrates and summarizes important information within the case study. When writing the narrative, the researcher should make it clear for an outside reader what happened regarding the case. Narratives may include relevant demographic information about the phenomenon, phases in the process through which a participant passes, as well as major differences noted about the participant throughout the process.

In order to ensure validity and reliability, the researcher should prolong the process of data collection on site. This will provide the researcher with more concrete and accurate information to formulate interpretations. Furthermore, the researcher should use triangulation. In other words, the researcher should make use of a variety of data sources.

The Descriptive Case Study

Descriptive case studies involve the in-depth examination of a single person or the examination of a few people. Typically the individual or small groups of individuals being examined possesses some skill, or have some problem that is unusual. Such cases can expand our knowledge about the variations in human behavior. While most researchers are interested in what is the "general" trend in behavior, those using the case study approach highlight individuality. Considerable information is gathered. Thus, the conclusions drawn are based on a more complete set of information about the subjects studied (Stake, 1995).

Personal Perspective

As a qualitative researcher, my perspectives are influenced by my work experience. I worked in education for fourteen years in private settings. I worked for ten years as a teacher and an additional four years as an assistant principal.

Both my teaching and administrative experiences were in a large school of English as a second language (ESL) learners in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Brazil is my home country. This school was considered economically "high-income," and tuition was expensive. My teaching experience involved teaching students of different ages, ranging from five to sometimes sixty years of age. All students (young and adult), as well as parents were extremely demanding in terms of the service delivery they expected. As the school was maintained by the tuition students paid, student evaluations of personnel were highly regarded. As a consequence, if students or parents perceived their learning was not up to a certain level of expectation, they would make their opinion known to the principal and demand change in the specific situation

that was not satisfactory to them. Many times, teachers were punished without previous knowledge of the reason for such a reprimand. There was clearly a communication gap among administrators, teachers, students and parents.

When I became the assistant principal, the parent, teacher and student demands were even greater. The level of expectation towards the assistant principal was such that I had to assume diverse roles, according to the situation. I had play the role of a psychologist to teachers and students, for example. Only then I perceived the importance of effective communicative skills in the field of educational leadership. There were student and parent pressures, principal pressures, and sometimes teacher pressures. Although I could handle the different pressures in an effective manner, I did not experience professional growth due to the principal's lack of effective communication skills. In other words, I rarely had any kind of feedback from my principal over a four-year period. Additionally, teachers did not receive regular feedback from the principal. The only feedback they experienced occurred when students complained about them to the principal. Consequently, when teachers had feedback, it was negative, which made them insecure in relation to their own teaching. As a result, student learning was negatively impacted. Therefore, the school was not able to retain students, and as a result, dropouts were rampant and ultimately, the principal was dismissed.

Such case examples exemplify my interest in investigating communicative feedback and its influence on the leadership role in schools. As a principal, it is easy to get lost in the accountability process, the dictates and demands of the daily role, and the push for increased student achievement and thus forget that the manner in which a

principal communicates with his/her differing publics can negatively impact their own professional growth as well as that of campus personnel.

I decided to investigate how principals in the public school setting utilize their communicative skills, especially as it relates to providing and receiving feedback from their differing publics. I anticipated that the findings would amplify my knowledge base in the field of principal practice and help educational leaders become more aware of the main reason for the existence of the educational system, relative to students specifically, and their successful progression through the system.

Description of Participants

The focus of this study relates to one rural school principal. This principal was chosen because during the two years she has been principal, the campus has achieved tremendous improvement relative to campus climate and student achievement. (See Appendix D). Therefore, it was assumed that this improvement was due to the principal. In addition, three teachers, three parents, one custodian, one secretary, one cafeteria manager, one librarian, and the assistant principal were also interviewed. After the participants were chosen, initial meetings were held with the participants to explain the study, how the transcripts would be used, how the data would be analyzed, how and when the data would be destroyed, and finally to ask the participants to engage in the study. At the time, the participants were also provided two letters of consent – one for permission to be interviewed and another for permission to be audio-taped – and then, the participants were asked to sign the permission statements if they desired to continue with the study. Participants and all the persons named in their interviews

incorporated into and this study were provided with fictitious names to ensure their confidentiality.

Description of the Interview Process

Data were gathered through a series of semi-structured, open-ended interviews with each participant. Schwandt (2001) suggests that qualitative studies use unstructured, open-ended, informal interviews because these allow the most flexibility and responsiveness to emerging issues for both respondents and interviewees. The questions utilized in the interview process were designed to understand how a principal handles communication, and the process of providing and receiving feedback from differing publics. The questions were also designed to understand the influence of the manner in which participants handle feedback relative to the principal leadership role. Fifteen questions made up the survey, but within most of the questions, there are up to six embedded questions, depending on the participant. The purpose of the embedded questions was to clarify any question whose answer was not totally grasped by the researcher. For example, "Question #3" asked about the role of communication in each participant's position. The embedded questions to this particular question sought to ask the participants about their communication with different stakeholders, such as parents, co-workers, administrators, and others.

As far as the principal was concerned, the first interview was essentially one in which the leader and the researcher became familiar with each other. The second interview allowed for the collection of data about the principal's communication skills and strategies. The final interview was a time to review the interview process as a whole and an opportunity by which interview questions and answers could be clarified. It was

also a time where the principal leader could reflect on participating in the study and provide further insight and recommendations for school practitioners.

In total, twelve interviews were conducted for this study. The interviews were about thirty minutes in length. Nine of the twelve interviews were conducted with the assistant principal, the custodian, the cafeteria manager, the secretary, the librarian, three teachers, and three parents of the school. The remaining three interviews were conducted with the main participant of the study, the principal leader. All the interviews were conducted at the rural campus. The principal arranged for a private conference room to accommodate the interviews. The interviews were scheduled between 8:00 am to 2:30 pm, according to each participant's availability, so as not to impede upon the instructional process during the school's regular operations. Teachers were interviewed during their conference hours. Arrangements were made to interview parents in the afternoon to accommodate their schedules.

Ethical Considerations

The main participant was interviewed three times during a period of one month. The other participants were interviewed one time each during the period of one month. The names of the participants were changed to ensure confidentiality. The main participant was also observed interacting with her different publics, such as students, personnel, and parents. Each participant was required to sign a separate permission slip allowing for the interview and another to agree being audio-taped. Because the interaction with students was indirect, permission was not required. A copy of the informed consent form can be found in Appendix A. Before each interview, the participant was briefed by the interviewer – both verbally and in writing. There were no

apparent risks or direct benefits for the participants who were actively engaged in this study.

Before acquiring university approval, through the Institute Review Board process, permission was requested and granted from the school district involved in this study. Copies of the “permission to proceed” letters can be found in the appendix. If the participants felt uncomfortable with the procedure, they were permitted to ask that the interview be stopped, that a certain question not be answered or even excuse themselves from the proceeding. Each of the participants was given a copy of their section of the study for their review.

Procedures for Data Collection

The interview questions were designed to be open-ended, so that the essences of the participant’s views were captured through their words and experiences. The first interview conducted with the principal asked descriptive information about her life and biography as related to education. The second interview aimed at the principal’s experiences relative to the communication skills utilized by her to ensure campus improvement. The third interview summed up the interview process and filled voids in the data. The other participants were interviewed once, and the purpose of interviewing these additional participants was to triangulate the information collected as a result of the principal interviews. A copy of the interview questions is provided in Appendix B. Interviews with the custodian and the cafeteria manager took approximately fifteen minutes each. The essence of those questions was to capture these stakeholders’ relationships with the principal. The questioning was done by utilizing a style of language in order that these participants could be able to understand and answer the

questions. All interviews were tape-recorded using a digital audio-recorder. The primary investigator transcribed the audiotapes using word processing software and then coded and analyzed all information. For added security, the audiotapes were kept in a locked file cabinet and were destroyed following the completion of the study.

The use of several types of data procedures, such as interviews, reports, observations, and messages contribute to the validity of the results and provide triangulation that includes both quantitative and qualitative data (Padron, Hersholt, & Huang, 2000). Triangulation was also provided through interviews with differing participants. In order to ensure validity, findings were based on responses provided by multiple interviews with the main participant and interviews with the differing participants. This study obtained data from AEIS for the last 5 years, as well as Professional Development and Appraisal System Forms. A model of written communication utilized by the principals was also provided.

The design of the study presents a threat to validity, however, as many of the questions imply subjective answers, and as a result, respondents could choose to withhold information. As a consequence, some answers may not have been reflective the participants' actual perspectives. To increase reliability and validity, multiple sources of data were utilized to ensure that the study was dependent on one single source of data.

Interpreting the Data

In case studies, researchers interpret their data in one of two methods: holistically or through coding. Holistic analysis does not attempt to break the evidence into parts, but rather draws conclusions based on the text as a whole. Flower and

Hayes (1981), for example, make inferences from entire sections of their students' protocols, rather than searching through the transcripts to look for isolatable characteristics.

However, composition researchers commonly interpret their data by coding, a process that is systematically completed by searching the data to identify and/or categorize specific observable actions or characteristics. These observable actions then become the key variables in the study. Merriam (1985) suggests seven analytic frameworks for the organization and presentation of data:

1. The role of participants
2. The network analysis of formal and informal exchanges among groups
3. Historical
4. Thematic
5. Resources
6. Ritual and symbolism
7. Critical incidents that challenge or reinforce fundamental beliefs, practices, and values

The two goals for said frameworks are to look for patterns among the data and to look for patterns that give meaning to the case study. As stated, while most researchers expect to find meticulous observable characteristics, some additional and important variables may surface during data collection. Typical variables coded in the case studies of researchers include pauses a writer makes in the production of a text, the use of specific linguistic units (such as nouns or verbs), and the writing processes (planning, drafting, revising, and editing). In the Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman (1988) study,

for example, researchers coded the participant's texts for use of connectives, discourse demonstratives, average sentence length, off-register words, the use of first person pronouns, and the ratio of definite articles to indefinite articles. All the above variables were utilized within this study.

Research Setting

The site chosen for the study was where the main participant (the principal of the school) is employed. The campus is located in a rural area of West Texas along the Rio Grande. Because of the school's location, the campus enrolls students from the surrounding county, as well as students from Mexico.

Summary

Chapter III described the study's research design and methodology. A qualitative research method known as case study was used for the study. The experience analyzed was the manner in which a school principal handles communication and utilizes effective feedback. Every ethical consideration was taken to ensure that the participants' identities were safely protected. Chapter III includes information relative to how data was collected, coded, and analyzed.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

Introduction

Campus General Description

The campus where the interviews and observations were conducted is located approximately 35 miles southeast of a major urban center in West Texas. The student growth rate of the school is between 15 and 20 percent. The campus serves students in fourth through sixth grades. Campus facilities are well kept, and pleasant to work in. The school has 249 students, 48.97% female and 51.03% male. The majority of the students are Hispanic (98.63%) (Interview with Mary, June, 8, 2008).

At the entrance of the school, there is the secretary's office, which leads to the principal and assistant principal's offices. Their doors are always open and parents, students, and community members are welcome to talk to the principal. There is a well equipped library where students constantly enjoy reading books, along with other instructional materials, such as flash cards, educational toys, and games. There are also good sports facilities, such as a soccer field and a gym.

Classrooms are organized, and well equipped in terms of academic materials. A typical classroom contains tables with four chairs, each for students to do their school work. Furthermore, there are two large boards, a television set with a Digital Video Disc, and a special board for media projections. The walls are decorated with student works, along with Math and English charts to help students with their academics. The cafeteria is also organized and it is extremely clean. Students seem to enjoy the environment and the food.

According to the school secretary, almost 80% of the students come from Mexico, and as a result, have little knowledge of the English language and American culture. Therefore, standardized exam passing rates were previously very poor, and the school was in the risk of being reconstituted by the state of Texas. However, the new principal has brought numerous changes thus resulting in increased scores, even with the difficulties faced by students such as English language acquisition and culture barriers.

The school met all of the standards of the Federal Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) report in 2005, missed the reading standards in 2006, and met all standards again in 2007. In 2004, the school was not evaluated due to the fact that it was a new campus. As for the Texas state Academically Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) report, the school was considered “academically acceptable” in the years 2004 and 2005. In 2006, the school was once again considered “academically acceptable”, but achieved “gold performance” in attendance, and in English Language Acquisition (ELA). In 2007, one year after Mary took over as a principal, the school was “recognized” according to state standards of excellence, and achieved “gold performance” in attendance and in ELA. Furthermore, the school was noted by the state of Texas as “commendable” relative to mathematics and science (TEA, 2005; TEA, 2006, TEA, 2007b).

Retention Rates by Grade and Class Size Information

Class size information was derived from Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) reports which reveal that in grade 4 there were 20.0 students per teacher. In grade 5 there is an average of 20.6 students per teacher and in grade 6,

22.0 students per teacher. As for student retention, grades 4 and 5 have 0% retention rates, whereas grade 6 has a 27.5 retention rate (TEA, 2007a).

Staff Information

According to the principal, the campus has 22.6% of the district's staff members. Eighty percent of the staff is considered professional staff. Professional staff includes teachers, professional support such as librarian and nurse, and campus administrators. Teachers compose 82 % of the professional staff, and campus administrators, comprise 4.4% of the professional staff. Rate (TEA, 2007a).

In terms of teachers' ethnicity, 68.4% are Hispanic, 24.1% are white, and 7.5% are Asian. The majority of teachers (71.8%) are female with 28.2% male. As for teachers' experience, 13.4% exceed twenty years. Most of the teachers (56.2%) have been in the profession for less than 5 years, whereas the remaining teachers (43.8%) have been in the profession for less than 10 years (TEA, 2007a).

Introduction of the participants

Principal

The main participant of this case study is the principal of the school. Several previous individuals have been principals at the school for only a period of one year. The current principal, Mary, was born in the county in which the school is located, graduated from a local school, went to college at the nearest university, and "became a teacher because that is what many educated women do in this region", according to herself.

In her first year teaching, she enjoyed all aspects of the profession and decided to continue teaching. In her third year teaching, she began to realize that teachers can

make a difference in the lives of their students. Mary regards herself as a very competitive person and enjoys the challenge of the profession along with the opportunity to excel as a teacher. As a consequence, in her first year teaching fourth grade, she had one hundred percent of her students pass the state accountability exam. Such positive results only made her even more competitive in her desire to motivate her students. Motivating people brings out the best in Mary (interview, June, 10 2008).

Therefore, Mary thought that if she could inspire and motivate twenty children; why not inspire even more students in the service role of a school administrator. The current district superintendent provided Mary with the opportunity to serve as an assistant principal at this rural school prior to graduating with her master's degree from the local university. During her first year as an assistant principal, Mary began to make a difference at the school. She provided teachers with the tools they needed to excel in terms of curriculum development, and instructional techniques and methodologies, and in terms of motivation. In her second year at the school, she became the principal and continued her "quick fixes", as she explained. After her second year at the school, one as an assistant principal and the second one as the principal, scores went up 30 points on average (See Appendix D).

Philosophy of Education

In terms of her philosophy of education, Mary believes that if teachers are not doing their jobs properly, it is the administrator's fault. School administrators and teachers have to work together. According to Mary, if teachers do not know how to teach, it is because administration has not provided them with the necessary support. Thus, it is the principal's responsibility to provide the teachers with the guidance

needed, to team with them, model activities to help them prepare their classes when necessary, and to show them that they are not alone in this process.

Accountability

Mary also believes in an accountability system. Without standardized tests, she believes there is nothing to hold teachers, staff members, and administrators accountable. As far as the difficulty of having students who do not speak English, she believes in starting from the native language foundation, pushing reading, and introducing vocabulary in the English language with frequency. One of the activities she developed is having students who have not mastered the English language to participate in tutoring sessions with her.

Leadership Style

When asked to describe her leadership style, Mary stated that she is a transformative leader. She stated that on her campus there are always people engaging with others in such a way that leaders and followers transform one another to higher levels of motivation. Power is linked not as counterweights but as mutual support for a common purpose. In order for such to occur, according to Mary, there has to be charisma, motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. Mary explained that charisma, motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration can only occur through interactions; and satisfactory interactions imply effective communications.

Report of a Week at Mary's Work

Through observations and interviews with Mary, I was able to experience Mary in her instructional leadership role and in her various tasks and in her interactions with

staff members, parents and teachers. On a typical week of work, Mary performs different tasks at the same time. I first observed her on a Friday. She started the day by greeting her students and parents at the drop off point for children at the rural school. Students went into their classrooms in a very orderly manner and many of them greeted the principal, and asked her about her newborn baby.

The same happened with teachers, the secretary, and other staff members. When everyone was in the classrooms, Mary sent an e-mail to every staff member relating all the activities to take place during the upcoming week, such as meetings, field trips, and other activities (See Appendix E). Later, she answered a telephone call from the superintendent. During that call she reported that she had been out to dinner the night before and had met a teacher from another district at the restaurant. Mary pointed out to the superintendent that she had talked to the teacher and tried to convince her to accept a position as a teacher at Mary's campus. Mary justified this conversation with the superintendent by explaining that she knew the person to be an excellent teacher. In order to increase school improvement and overall campus climate, Mary is constantly alert to informal chats and casual meetings with people, including individuals such as the teacher she met at the restaurant. Her mind seems to be connected to her job almost one hundred percent of the time.

After the telephone conversation with the superintendent, Mary attended a parent conference. Mary seemed attentive and interested in the parent's concern. Mary makes parents her priority and she puts everything aside when talking to parents, in order to help them with any possible concern they might have. Although the parent had not scheduled an appointment, Mary met with her.

Mary's next task was her regularly scheduled grade level meetings with teachers. First, she had a meeting with fifth-grade teachers and then with fourth-grade teachers. In these meetings, Mary reviewed data in terms of student grades after examining academic improvement areas. Results were compared to grade-level goals. Data relative to mock accountability exams were also reviewed. Such data analysis is done on a constant basis.

In the meetings, teachers had a very informal relationship with the principal, conversed as to how they could improve math scores, and discussed how they would handle certain difficulties their students had experienced with some of the math problems. Every idea was acknowledged as teachers were invited by the principal to explain their ideas on the board, while other teachers wrote the ideas down. Team work was present during each meeting. Mary also analyzed possible difficulties students might be experiencing relative to areas of instruction and provided pedagogical suggestions to the teachers.

In the fourth-grade meeting, the principal discussed discipline problems with teachers and suggested methods by which the teachers could motivate students to meet their goals in terms of the accountability process. Difficulties students experience were also analyzed and suggestions were provided. After this meeting, the principal had lunch with the teachers. The principal does this everyday when she is not in a meeting. During lunch, teachers chatted informally with the principal, and talked about work and non-work experiences.

After lunch, the principal provided reading lessons to students whose reading is considered weak by their respective teachers. The lesson went from 1:00 pm to

3:00pm. During the lesson, students were at ease and seemed to enjoy interacting with their principal. Mary, the principal, was reading a novel with the students and as they read, they discussed the author's ideas, and the principal worked with each student on vocabulary. The objective of the lesson was not only to improve student reading, but to also introduce as much vocabulary as possible so that students could improve their communication in the English language. The students were asked to share their opinions and knew exactly what they were supposed to do when working in this tutorial session. Their rapport with the principal flowed in a natural and relaxed manner.

The week of principal observations that followed was not a typical one. On Tuesday there was an administration of the state accountability exam, and as a consequence, on the previous day Mary had spent most of her time trying to get the test booklets ready for the administration of the exam. On Wednesday, the testing process continued.

On Thursday, Mary met with grade levels again, requesting that the teachers suggest some incentives for the fifth-grade students. The teachers made such plans. As for the fourth and fifth grade level meetings, data was discussed, as well as methods of improvement. On Friday, Mary was not at the campus, because she had to attend a principal's meeting in another school district.

In sum, Mary revealed that the most difficult part of her job is the constant changing of her mind set:

"It is tough because you have your mind set on administrative issues, meeting with the superintendent, parents, teachers, and all of a sudden you have to teach a class and get into a teaching mood. It takes a lot, because sometimes, it is not that you do not want to do it, but sometimes you have so much to do, to catch up and then you have to stop what you

are doing to teach the kids. After 10 minutes of teaching, you have to go back to the office and get into the administrative mode.”

Mary also explained that some days are less active than others. However, tasks that she must perform suddenly emerge. For example, on the next Tuesday she would take a test for first year principals. As a result, it was one more day away from her campus. The following day, she would have to make up for the time she was absent.

Role of Communication in the Rural Principal Position

Mary considers the role of communication crucial for a rural principal’s effective job performance. Although she regards herself as someone who communicates well, Mary explained that sometimes there is miscommunication. When that happens, she blames herself. Mary believes a principal has to be extremely organized because organization leads to effective communication, thus making all the staff members aware of what is happening on campus.

When I asked her how collaboration between parents, students, and teachers occurs, Mary reported “sometimes it is not that easy.” She explained.

“I cannot say that the minute I walked in here there was collaboration. This is my second year here, and honestly, last year was not the same. I was new at the school and there was a lot of resistance; maybe because I was too young, maybe because they did not like me, or maybe because, you know, it was nothing personal, but they simply did not want to do what they were supposed to. So, there was not collaboration.”

Mary told me that when she became principal, the following year, she made it very clear to the teachers the importance of team work, motivation, and good relationships through transparent interactions. Consequently, those teachers who did not meet those requirements simply left:

“Sometimes you do what you have to do to make your message clear. I am responsible for good communication flowing on campus, but I also have to have their help. It goes both ways.”

After some teachers resigned their positions the previous year, Mary hired five new teachers. Mary described the current teachers as professionals who want to be there, who take their profession seriously, who are motivated, and who are willing to do everything they possibly can to provide students with a quality education. Furthermore, these teachers are portrayed by Mary as flexible, understanding, and individuals with whom she can collaborate.

Mary also emphasized that “her job” is to treat them humanely. According to Mary, an administrator should never yell at the people with whom he or she works. A principal has to understand that sometimes teachers make mistakes, and sometimes they need help. Therefore, the notion of making a mistake has become part of the learning process. Moreover, if someone is weak in a certain area, help should be pursued by the principal leader. In other words, as Mary pointed out: “It should feel like a family, and not like the principal is the boss and the teachers are my employees.”

Role of Relationships on Rural Campus

As a consequence of this collaboration and clear communication, Mary explained that all the staff members value each other. Thus, relationships flow in a familiar manner:

“At the beginning of the year, there were some issues. Maybe a teacher said something to another teacher, and then there is resentment, but luckily we do have a relationship that when something like that happens, at the meeting we will discuss it; and luckily the teachers are very open, and apologize to each other.”

Conflict

After telling me her opinions about relationships at campus, the conversation led to the issue of conflict and conflict resolution. Therefore, I asked Mary how she manages conflict on campus. She said that if there was an issue, she would solve it immediately. She also made it clear that the last dilemma she wanted to face was having a division among teachers. Mary usually brings the people involved in a conflict in for a meeting with her. During this meeting, Mary and the individuals talked about what made them hurt. Mary tried to brainstorm with them possible solutions relative to the conflict, so that resentment did not take place. Hopefully this process helped the people involved grow both as human beings and as professionals.

Mary revealed that she has the same attitude when conflict happens among the students:

“Conflicts are usually misunderstandings that got out of hand. I have to point out to them what the issue is and go from there. Most of the time they are very understanding and everything is clarified. You cannot let it go on, because it tends to escalate and then it might get irreversible, I mean, although you can solve it, resentment will remain.”

In addition, Mary stated that when there is conflict, a principal has to first recognize that there is a problem and act upon it. Furthermore, as a principal, Mary has to let people perceive that there are barriers in situations that constantly impede progress within a work environment, and that these barriers or conflicts may limit their ability to perform as expected. Thus, Mary has to make certain that people connect themselves into the situation at hand and try to solve it through interacting with each other, as members of a team.

Strategies for Internal and External Communications

Mary believes that as far as communication is concerned, the main focus for a principal is to communicate with the students, the teachers, and the parents. As she shares a campus with an elementary school, there has to be communication with the elementary principal as well.

When communicating with families, and other community members, Mary describes the parent chats, which are held twice a year. The turnout is usually beyond expectations. The vast majority of parents attend. In these meetings, parents can communicate their concerns, present ideas, and even criticize issues that they do not agree with. These meetings are held by the superintendent, and there is a translator for parents who do not speak English. The superintendent also communicates to parents about the major issues happening in the district and future plans for improvements, such as, remodeling of the building initiatives relative to academics.

At the campus level, the principal communicates with parents through monthly newsletters. Furthermore, she offers open houses in which parents are able to learn about the campus facilities, have conversations with teachers, and the principal. Mary also communicates with parents informally. She has an open door policy, and they are welcome at any time they need to talk to her.

As for communications with the external publics, the principal stressed that such does not happen in a formal manner.

“What we have is some people that help us when we order pizzas, but I wouldn’t call them partners; but we do know these business members pretty well because we do business with them. Besides, here we are so small, we have only one restaurant, one gas station, and of course we have to do business with them. We do have communication going on, but

it is not something planned or elaborated. Thus, honestly, I cannot say that I have developed strategies for external communications.”

Opportunities for Parents to be Engaged in the Education of their Children

When Mary pointed out the manner in which she communicates with parents, I brought up the subject of parental involvement. Mary explained that this is a work in progress on campus. She pointed out that the school does not have a parent-teacher organization (PTO).

As Mary is constantly communicating with parents informally and asking their opinions about issues concerning the school, parents have expressed their wish to have a PTO. The campus is short-staffed. In the office, Mary has only herself, the assistant principal and the secretary. In order for Mary to have a parent organization, there should be more professionals who could be involved in this initiative.

For next year, the campus might incorporate a “Communities in Schools” (CIS) person. The principal is applying for a grant and if the grant is awarded this extra person will be in charge of bringing parents together in a more formal manner.

Providing Feedback

Mary reported that she provides feedback on a constant basis. Every staff member receives feedback from her at least once a week. Mary believes that feedback should be provided “on the spot.” According to her, delayed feedback is not effective.

Mary specified the way she provides feedback to her teachers:

“When I do walk-throughs, I leave a copy of my notes, and let them know they can see me to talk about those notes. Again, this is all about establishing relationships. I do not want for teachers to start panicking the minute I walk into the classroom. When they get nervous, they start acting very weird, and then nothing will get done. Thus, in the beginning it is just establishing for them a chance to just feel comfortable with me being in the classroom, talking to students. I also communicate to them that I will

not be there to judge them, or to give them a bad grade. I'm only there to help them. I mean, that is what feedback is all about. Fortunately, for the most part, they see it that way and after some time they get so used to me being there that they request it. I guess the tricky thing is to make it clear for them the purpose of the walk-throughs. I do this not only through oral communication, but also through my attitude in the classroom and through the way I discuss the lessons with them, and help them guide the class if needed. In other words, I walk my talk."

Besides walk-throughs, Mary motivates teachers towards peer evaluation, through observing each other's classes. Mary believes principals have to take advantage of the effective teachers they have on campus:

"Sometimes I have a teacher, and rumors spread, that so and so is effective in teaching math. Then, teachers come to me and ask if their rooms can get covered so that they can observe that teacher's class. I always make adjustments for them to do it, even if I have to cover for them. They can go there, spend an hour, and see how that teacher teaches. You can tell a teacher to do something, but it is different when that teacher can actually see how it is done. It is a lot more effective if they go and see it happening. Sometimes I also encourage teachers to go to other classrooms and actually teach students that are not his or her students. The purpose of this is to make the classroom teacher see another teacher interact with his or her students. This also makes them feel more comfortable with each other and communication flows easily."

Mary explained that one problem she, as a principal, has to face is that sometimes teachers tend to be extremely competitive. Due to the fact that she stresses the importance of mastery of the state accountability standards and exam, it is natural for teachers to compare their passing rates with the passing rates of their colleagues. This attitude was the prevailing attitude on campus last year, when Mary was the assistant principal. Therefore, she has had to work with the teachers and convey the message that it is not important for her to know that one teacher has higher passing rates than others, but that she would like to see them helping each other in improving their colleagues' rates. As a result, this past year she observed teachers encouraging

their colleagues when they do not have the rates expected. According to Mary, this encouragement also translates into concrete help, such as modeling lessons, and suggesting differing activities.

As it relates to the assistant principal, Mary mentors him, and considers him a team member. She communicates with him on a daily basis, sometimes for two hours. She also communicates constantly with the secretary. Mary emphasized again that feedback is constant and immediate. According to Mary, constant and immediate feedback helps with team building.

Receiving Feedback

In terms of receiving feedback, Mary reported that she is always open to suggestions and encourages all her stakeholders, such as staff members, faculty, parents, and students, to let her know about her own job performance. Although there is not a formal evaluation, such as 360 degree feedback on her campus, Mary believes that this is done on an informal basis:

“I encourage this (stakeholders giving me feedback), because if we stay stuck doing the same thing over and over again, sometimes that doesn’t work; so we need to try new things, and if it fails, it fails, at least we tried it and know that it does not work. Here it is not: I’m the boss and you’re the employee.”

Interaction with Staff Members

Mary believes that in order to “get the best from people” she has to interact differently with different people. Therefore, a principal has to be constantly alert to differing personalities on campus. For instance, if a teacher is extremely sensitive, Mary explains that she has to measure her words when providing feedback to this specific

teacher. On the other hand, there are people who are more direct and want to be provided with feedback in a more straight forward manner.

In order for Mary to have a better understanding of everyone's personality, she has conversations with staff members at the beginning of the year (if they are new ones and she still does not know them) to find out about their persona and to consider methods in which she can communicate with them. Furthermore, Mary also observes the professionals she works with to better understand their personality traits.

Mary also detailed that she makes use of non-verbal communication and body language when necessary. She believes this helps her have her message conveyed. This is also done with parents as well. According to Mary, a simple wave to a parent when he or she drops off a child at school is enough to make parents feel that they are welcome and that the principal cares about them and their children. Mary explained that she also requests teachers to treat students differently, according to their personalities:

"It is the same with teaching. I tell the teachers you cannot treat all the students the same. Everybody is going to be different. Everybody learns differently; and they should act the same way with other teachers. Not everybody understands the same way. Not everybody speaks the same way. Not everybody teachers the same way; and therefore you have to keep that in mind. I ask teachers to keep the kids engaged, make them feel fine, and so on and so forth. Some teachers will definitely just take a hold of that; but you have some teachers that are more traditional, and it is almost impossible for them to be that outgoing teacher that is going to put on a show every day. As a consequence, you have to find different instructional strategies for that teacher to still keep the kids engaged, but still being true to herself."

After Mary provided the above explanation, I asked her if the communication skills she utilizes are part of her personality or if they are part of the research literature. Mary pointed out that the manner in which she communicates is part of who she is. Nevertheless, she also explained that as a teacher she worked with both effective and

ineffective administrators. She was very observant towards her administrator's skills, especially insofar communication was concerned. She reported that she either had "micro-manager, data driven" kinds of administrators or the oblivious types, who never seemed to know what was happening on campus, never attended any grade level meetings. As a result, when Mary became a principal, she added her experience as a teacher to her own personality traits to communicate with her different stakeholders.

Motivation/Trust/Student Achievement/School Climate

Mary also believes in motivating staff and community members to develop trust on campus. She explained that motivation and trust "go hand in hand". According to Mary the crucial motivator element is the fact that teachers know they are not on their own. When I asked Mary to exemplify a situation for me, she said:

"As an example, this teacher was struggling with reading. When I walked into his classroom, I told him that I was not there to judge or reprimand him, but to help him. After observing him, I thought that maybe he could have improved here or there and he received my feedback as constructive criticism. When it comes down to fixing it, the teacher and I just get together and work on what needs to be worked on."

Mary also pointed out that when additional help is needed, she goes into the classroom and actually teaches a lesson to let a teacher know what she expects from him or herself in terms of methods, rapport with students, or classroom management. In Mary's opinion, this translates into open communication. Mary believes that one should never take him or herself too seriously, and thus she jokes around with the teachers in order to let them feel an administrator is one of them.

Mary explained that the above noted attitude is necessary because teachers tend to see principals as people above their level. When they feel they have someone who cares for them and is there to help them, they feel motivated. According to Mary, this

same attitude must be shown to students. An administrator has to listen to them and try to discover their concerns and considerations. In other words, students have to see that the principal is genuine. Mary stated that this motivation leads to trust.

Mary's description of trust development is directly linked with respect and understanding. People should treat others the way they would like to be treated. When explaining to me about trust, Mary reported that trust also leads to student achievement. If a principal motivates his or her teachers, teachers will pass their motivation on to students, who will tend to make extra efforts to improve in their academics.

Finally, Mary strongly suggested that student achievement leads to better school climate. She stated that before she became a principal at this rural campus, there were high expectations from teachers. Nevertheless, teachers were confused and did not know what to do to achieve better academic results. According to Mary, the main difference is that now she shows them exactly what they have to do in order to obtain increased student achievement. Mary also stresses that if a teacher does not want to follow through what is expected from him or her, she will be forced to take necessary and corrective steps. However, Mary believes it is her responsibility to make certain teachers have all the necessary tools to ensure an excellent performance.

Mary suggested that when teachers feel secure, students feel the same and climate improves. When a teacher is not stressed, students will tend to not feel stressed. Unfortunately, the opposite is true. When a teacher is extremely stressed, it will reflect upon the students, and as a result, students and parents will be stressed. This usually leads to lack of motivation, trust, and ultimately negatively affects student achievement.

In summary, there is an interconnective chain which includes motivation, trust, student achievement, and school climate. As Mary pointed out, one leads to the other and all are interdependent. Furthermore, all imply effective communication skills to. It is part of a principal's role to ensure that the above elements are part of his or her administrative tasks.

Large Urban Campus versus Small Rural Campus

My next question to Mary was whether the campus size and location have any influence on her success as far as her communication skills are concerned and therefore, the improvement of campus climate and student achievement. Mary stated there are positive and negative aspects to both campus size and location. In terms of positive points, the fact that it is a small rural campus might have made it easier. She believes that if she worked in an urban campus triple the size, for example, she certainly would have more stress, because she would have to attend to more grade level meetings, would have to supervise fifty teachers instead of sixteen, and would have to spend more time on numerous managerial issues.

Nevertheless, at a larger campus, principals usually have more administrative staff. Mary noted that at larger campuses, she would have instructional coordinators, literacy leaders, math and science leaders, and three or four administrative assistants. Therefore, since principals at larger campuses have many more professionals, communication basically involves delegating responsibilities and making certain administrative and instructional tasks are being performed according to principal expectations.

When describing communication skills utilized by principals on smaller campuses, Mary stated a principal must be extremely effective when conveying his or her message, because of the many tasks rural principals have to perform:

“Here you are it. I have to be the literacy leader, the person in charge of the curriculum, in other words, a principal at a rural campus like this wears all the hats. I substitute, I make copies, I go to Sam’s to buy snacks; I make the tests for the teachers, and yet being so busy I have to find time for everyone, so communication flows the way it should.”

In summary, Mary believes that communication skills are crucial regardless of the location or size of a school campus. However, at a large urban school, these skills are played out differently. At a large urban campus, a principal has a larger support system, such as more assistant principals, more office staff, and more academic coaches that can help. However, the principal’s job in the small rural school is to ensure that he or she has the necessary communication skills to provide the teachers with the necessary tools needed for student achievement, for trust, motivation and ultimately school climate improvement.

Relation between Students and Principal at a Rural School

When I asked Mary about her relationship with students, she pointed out that she makes certain she memorizes the students’ names and does everything she possibly can to have a positive rapport with all the students. However, Mary stressed that she also ensures that students have to understand that she is the principal and if they break a rule they will get disciplined despite their cordial relationship. In other words, Mary does not want to be their “buddy” because when a teacher sends a student to the principal’s office, Mary has to be the disciplinarian and help her teachers insofar as discipline is concerned.

Mary also stated that discipline is an expectation on her campus. If she sees students running inside the school, for example, she usually makes use of body language, or even a disapproving glance. When there is a field trip, Mary communicates with the students that on a field trip the students represent the school, and they have to represent it appropriately. If not, Mary makes the students aware of the consequences. She is quick to point out that she has never had a major discipline problem since she became the principal at the rural campus. Mary compared her relationship with students to a good teacher/student relationship: "It is like the good teacher: the good teacher will do fun things with the kids, but at the same time will be the disciplinarian."

When describing her relationship with students, Mary refers to the state accountability exams. Mary believes it is the principal's role to make students understand that these exams are not to cause stress on students, but the students are to have fun with the exams. In order for this to happen, Mary converses with teachers to remind them that their attitude can influence students negatively or positively towards the accountability exams.

Teachers have to make it clear to students why they have to take the state accountability exams and what it means for them. Teachers also have to communicate that the examination process is part of the educational system, and goals have to be set. For example, if students have only mastered 30% of the test, instead of providing them with negative feedback, teachers should be supportive and encourage them to perform better next time.

This gives the students motivation and incentive, and when children are motivated they can make extra efforts to accomplish what is expected from them. This

also helps building strong relationships within the classroom. As a result of all this positive attitude towards the state accountability exams, Mary states that her students do not see testing as another task they have to perform, they actually look forward to the testing process. In this way, students take responsibility for their own learning.

Mary also pointed out that as part of the encouragement given to the students, teachers effectively explain the learning objectives of the school year. Thus, once the students know the objectives, they are able to check what they understand. Students evaluate themselves and request feedback from their teachers in terms of instruction. This also enables the students to take control of their own learning. That translates into being part of a team.

Observation of Mary Interacting with a Student

When observing Mary's work, one could not help but notice the dynamics in the administrative office. For example, a student came looking for staples. The school secretary was out for lunch and her substitute did not know where to find the staples. Therefore, she called the principal and Mary came in and started an immediate conversation with the student.

First, she asked why the student needed the staples. The student explained to Mary that it was for a project in art class. Mary asked the student to describe the activity. The student then reported that the class had been divided into groups and pointed out that some conflicts had emerged among students. Finally, the student described how the teacher resolved the conflicts. This situation revealed that through informal chats with students, opportunities for communications are created by the

principal. Through these opportunities, the principal obtains knowledge of what is happening on her campus, and if necessary, actions can be taken.

Mary's Reflections

When I asked Mary to reflect on her role as a communicator, and as a principal, she explained to me that she is not the type of person who spends an enormous amount of time reflecting on herself. Instead, she reported that she makes changes on the spot. If she notes that something is in need of personal change, change takes place immediately. According to Mary, some decisions have to be made instantly and an administrator cannot afford to wait and think it through. This would be the case when teachers' negative attitudes can prejudice a student academically. A principal would have to take actions immediately. Firstly, by mentoring this teacher, and by providing him/her with assistance as needed, both personally and professionally. If expected results are not achieved, then the next step would be to replace that teacher.

Of course this does not mean that planning is out of the equation, even though change is constant. Nevertheless, Mary pointed out that she would like to continue with the grade-level meetings as these meetings not only represent planning, they also serve as the impetus for change. The manner in which these meetings are conducted has a positive impact on student achievement.

As I finished my last interview with Mary, she received the standardized test scores from the state and informed me that the results improved drastically as compared to the previous year. Therefore, Mary believes that she is on the right track and that these results will improve the campus climate even more. Consequently, trust

and motivation will naturally be reinforced among staff and community members, and students.

Other Participants

In order to triangulate the information obtained from the principal, I interviewed other stakeholders who are involved with the principal, and therefore, regularly interact with her. A brief narrative relative to these other participants is described and subsequently, the main points of their interviews are detailed as follows.

Assistant Principal

Peter used to be a middle school teacher in a different school district before becoming an assistant principal at the rural school. He worked as a teacher for four years, finished his master's degree at the local university, and began interviewing for positions as an assistant principal. Following his first interview, he was offered the assistant principalship at the rural school and he readily accepted it. Peter has been the assistant principal at the rural school for one year.

Peter stated that most of his communication efforts and people relationships at school were effective, especially when compared to what he had observed in the past, when he worked at a different campus in a different district.

When I asked Peter to provide an example of the type of interaction he has experienced with his principal, Mary, he told me that it is a transparent relationship and the principal makes him aware of all the details involving the school. For example, when the principal came back from a principal's meeting at the district level, she immediately met with Peter to give him an update relative to the meeting. She explained forthcoming changes and other pertinent information. In other words, all the information the principal

had been made privy to her, she shared with Peter. Through this transparent relationship with his principal, Peter believes that he gains self-confidence, which enables him to enhance his job performance.

Peter pointed out that at the rural school there is a very cordial and welcoming environment. There are few conflicts, and there is very little negative talk around the campus. When Peter was asked to detail any conflicts and negative talk, he reported that he had not observed any, but had only heard of a few minor conflicts.

According to Peter, his principal does a fantastic job, she has great communication skills, and she is always willing to discuss openly any matter at hand. Furthermore, Peter stressed that he and the principal have developed a good working relationship and he that he values everything he has learned from the principal.

Strategies Used by the Principal When Communicating with Families and Other Community Members at the Rural School

Peter reported that Mary is never intimidated when it comes to calling a parent, or when there is a need, discuss anything with anyone in the community. Peter believes that this is the reason why community members, such as parents, are constantly on campus. Peter pointed out that parents and community members almost always leave with answers to their questions, concerns or problems.

Therefore, the lines of communication between the school and members of the community, be it business, parents, and/or families are very open. Peter also mentioned newsletters that are sent to parents and to the community members on a monthly basis as a form of written communication: "We do have our newsletters that we send out on a monthly basis".

When I asked Peter to describe strategies utilized by the principal for internal and external communication that is what he had to say:

“I think she is open with everyone and I believe everyone returns the favor. Everyone knows that if the principal has something to tell them, she is going to tell them. She is going to let them know how she feels, what she is thinking, and what her next move is going to be. That seems to work in her favor. All the stakeholders are very open with her and very honest with her, very straightforward. I guess communication here is such that the openness of it has become the status quo. It is hard for me to evaluate what has made it so successful, or what strategies she utilizes because they have become routine. Therefore, it is difficult to understand or to backtrack to what really began the process because it really is just the way the school operates right now. All I can say is that communication has played a role in the changing process here, for the better. It is just trust. If you are communicating, you will develop trust among employees, students, community members and parents. Thus, if we are being honest, people are being honest with us. It has opened everything up and this leads to the idea that conflicts are resolved within very short periods of time. The few conflicts that are resolved immediately add to everyone being honest which equals a successful campus.”

Conflict at the Rural School

Peter explained that he has seen very little conflict. He pointed out that the principal is very direct in her communication style when managing disagreement. According to Peter, Mary deals with conflict in a very straightforward manner and works for immediate resolution. As a consequence, when there is divergence, it does not extend beyond a day, because when a conflict presents itself it is addressed and resolved immediately.

However, when I asked Peter to give me an example of a conflict that has taken place on campus and give me detail as to how it was resolved, he responds that they have not had many conflicts and he would not be able to answer my question in a satisfactory manner.

Opportunities for Parents to be Engaged in the Education of their Children

When describing the opportunities the principal creates for parental involvement, Peter mentioned parent chats. He explained that in the parent chats, parents are encouraged to come to the school so they can understand what is happening both in the district and on campus, and as a consequence, in the community.

Peter also pointed out that parents' chats are not always simply the dissemination of the principal's ideas. She listens to the ideas of the parents and often embraces them. When I asked Peter about the percentage of parents that attend these meetings, he responded that at the last parent chat, which took place in January 2008, they had 200 parents attending the chat. The campus has 320 students. Therefore, it can be considered an excellent attendance rate as more than 60 percent of the students had parents in attendance. Peter noted:

"We communicate the good, the bad; every teacher is required to send home daily progress, reports. I know that is something that sometimes is taken for granted, but when parents have an idea of what their students are doing everyday, both academically and behaviorally, then they know what is going on when they come to speak to us as well."

Partnerships with Rural Parents and Businesses

When asked about partnerships with parents and businesses, Peter stated:

"Any program that we have requires committees. We make campus improvement committees, such as a safety committee. Any academic committee that we have, we invite a lot of parents and the turn out is good. Thus, these people feel that they are part of the process to create whatever happens."

Feedback

In terms of feedback, Peter reported that it is provided in a direct manner. As Peter pointed out: "There is no beating around the bush here." He explained that every staff member knows exactly where they stand, including students and parents.

Feedback is constant, immediate and precise, according to Peter. It is provided through e-mails, informal chats, walk-throughs', and in the case of teachers, meetings are held even at lunch time, when both the principal and assistant principal have lunch with all the teachers. As a consequence, lines of communication are always open and feedback is an instrument to make staff members develop as professionals.

As for providing feedback to his principal, Peter reported that he feels comfortable doing it at any moment he feels necessary, and regarding any possible issue. Peter also mentioned that whenever he provides the principal with feedback, she has readily accepted his ideas and suggestions.

According to Peter, the principal is always willing to listen to his recommendations and discuss every topic with him. In addition, the principal brainstorms the smallest of topics with him. As a last note, Peter suggested that listening skills are important in the communication process and the principal is an effective active listener.

When I suggested that he explain what an effective active listener is, he responded that such listeners are not judgmental when listening. Moreover, effective active listeners consider the other person's ideas and show interest in what they are hearing.

Finally, I asked Peter about a formal evaluation for the principal and mentioned 360 degree feedback. He simply reported that there is not such a formal evaluation of the principal and he does not feel the need for that. According to him, the principal already knows and understands "where she stands" in terms of the constant feedback she receives from her stakeholders.

The Secretary

Ann has been working as the school secretary for five years. Ann is a local community member and loves her job. She is studying to become a school counselor. After she graduates she intends to go through the alternative certification program and become a teacher for a couple of years, then Ann can become a school counselor. She defines her job as key in terms of communication, because she really has to communicate with everybody everyday.

It is her responsibility to make certain that everybody has what they need in terms of information, grades, and report cards. Ann also serves as an interpreter for the assistant principal, who does not speak Spanish. The assistant principal is in charge of student discipline and he has to communicate with numerous parents, many of whom do not speak English. As a result, Ann serves as his interpreter.

Ann sees her principal as being somewhat harsh at times, but she understands that this is for the good of the school, especially the test scores. Ann points out that since Mary started leading the school, the climate and student achievement have both improved dramatically.

Strategies Used by the Principal When Communicating with Rural Families and Other Community Members

When describing strategies utilized by the principal to communicate with the rural families or other community members, Ann, the secretary, compared other schools with the school she currently works. She said that parents who have a child on campus as well as other children on different campuses often complain about the difficulty they have in scheduling a simple appointment with the principal on the other campuses. Ann

also emphasized that the principal was a good active listener, a quality that she sees as essential for an effective communicator. Furthermore, the principal communicates by telephone, through written messages, and even makes use of non-verbal communication to convey her message.” For instance, if there are two parents here wanting to talk to her, all she has to do is look at me and I will understand which one should talk to her first.” Ann also pointed out that the most important aspect of the strategies utilized by the principal is that she lets everyone know, through her communication skills, that she is available; that everyone can express their feelings and that she is someone everyone can trust.

In terms of the implementation of strategies for effective internal and external communication, Ann described that the principal sends e-mails on a daily basis. According to her, this yields satisfactory results, because “everyone is on the same page.” Furthermore, with e-mails, there is a written message which, according to Ann is a more effective tool of communication than oral messages. When I asked her why, she responded that with a written message, there is proof that everyone has received it, and as a result, the message is clear. On the other hand, Ann explained that when messages are provided orally there is no guarantee that all the internal publics will listen to it, and some of those who do listen, might simply forget, due to the significant amount of information disseminated on a daily basis.

Insofar as the external publics are concerned, Ann explained that the principal sends them communicative fliers. Ann explained that these fliers serve as a guarantee that external publics, especially parents, will receive the necessary and important information. Furthermore, confidential information which is only relative to certain people

is mailed out to them. Follow up telephone calls are made to ensure that certain mailouts were received.

Conflict at the Rural School

Ann explained that the principal is very confidential relative to managing conflict with her staff members. Nevertheless, Ann pointed out that the principal is very straightforward and this translates into confidence and trust. As a result, Ann described that she feels confident in talking to the principal when she fails insofar as her own job is concerned.

When I asked Ann to describe a conflict that she had knowledge of and how it was managed, she responded that she had never witnessed a conflict, but she could imagine that the principal would manage it in a direct manner and the resolution would be immediate. She also pointed out that she believes that conflicts do not happen on a constant basis at the rural campus, and when they have occurred, she does not believe they are major issues, otherwise she would have knowledge of them, which she does not.

Opportunities for Parents to be Engaged in the Education of Their Children

According to Ann, it is difficult to encourage parent involvement at school. Nevertheless, the parent chats are offered. Each campus holds two parent chats a year. In those chats, parents are provided with important information. There are also opportunities for parents to volunteer. Ann explained that this is a strategy the school utilizes to involve parents.

Partnerships with Rural Parents and Businesses

In terms of partnerships with parents and business, Ann explained that this is accomplished according to strategies and actions initiated within the campus improvement plan. She knows that some businesses are involved in the school. However, Ann was unable to provide any concrete examples.

Feedback

Ann regards feedback as communication. Since there is effective communication on campus, Ann believes that there is also valuable feedback. When I asked her to explain what she believes valuable feedback is, she responded that valuable feedback is a helpful and useful form of communication. In other words, feedback serves as a means of how an organization can improve. She believes that through feedback she can be a more complete professional. Ann also reported that feedback at the school is constant, transparent, and immediate. It is also provided both informally and formally:

“Sometimes it is formal and sometimes it is informal. It just depends. When I get my evaluation, it is formal. However, throughout the year she lets me know how I am doing, of how I need to improve this or expand that. Then, when my evaluation comes, the feedback I’ve had throughout the year helps me with it.”

When I asked Ann if she provided feedback to her principal, she responded that what she was about to state was just her personal opinion. She wanted to share her experience:

“I being the only one here in the office, find it hard at times. I am the school’s registrar, I am the attendance clerk, I am the secretary to the principal, I am the only one that is in charge of perfect attendance; so it is very overwhelming. The fact that I love my job is what keeps me here; but all can be so hectic. Sometimes I go home crying. Thus, I am always running around, trying to do everything. The principal gives me stuff to do, the assistant principal gives me stuff to do, and at the same time I have to print report cards, payroll, and many more tasks. Then, sometimes I ask myself if I am doing a good job. Then, I go to the principal and ask and she tells me very directly and in a helpful manner. If

she is not satisfied with anything, she will let me know, and she will explain the way she wants things; so you always know what you have to do. Her feedback is never vague. Then, there is no fear. As a matter of fact, I long to hearing from her, because I know that whatever she says to me, it will make me improve”.

As for providing feedback to her principal, Ann explained that she has never felt that freedom. However, she pointed out that this might be part of her personality, as opposed to the principal not being opened to receiving feedback. When I mentioned 360 degree feedback, Ann explained that she did not have any knowledge of that particular communicative process.

The Librarian

Carol has been in the education profession for seventeen years. She tried different career options before becoming a librarian. She was in accounting and then became a secretary at central office. Carol decided to go into education because her son starting school and she wanted to be able to have a work schedule which would allow her to attend to him more closely. After working with children she discovered that this is what she wanted to do for the rest of her life. Carol’s philosophy of work is to impact at least one student in a positive manner everyday. Carol believes that she has been successful in what she is doing, because as a librarian she is able to be in contact with all the students of the school.

Therefore, she can influence many of them in a positive way. Carol also believes that regardless of what happens to the students at their homes, they can always find comfort at school, which, as she describes, is a stable part of their lives.

Carol sees the role of communication on campus as critical. She believes that effective communication is the main reason why the campus has become so successful. Carol considers effective communication to be the link to understanding “why things are

the way they are,” and as a consequence, trust is created, and relationships flow as if the members working on campus were like a family.

As for the principal, Carol describes Mary as a very sweet lady, very driven, and someone who knows what she wants, and she knows what she has to do to accomplish her goals. According to Carol, the principal has brought new ideas to the school, such as less bureaucracy when dealing with paperwork in the library. Mary also strikes Carol as someone who is willing to experiment with suggestions given to her by staff members.

Strategies Utilized by the Principal When Communicating with Families and Other Community Members

When I asked Carol to report strategies that the principal utilized to communicate with parents and other community members, Carol responded that she is not very familiar with those strategies. Nevertheless, she mentioned the parent chats. In addition, Carol suggested since it is a small rural community, parents feel that the school is a part of their lives, and as a result, she believes that such strategies are not always necessary. Carol also explained that she was not aware of any strategies for internal and external publics.

Opportunities for Parents to be Engaged in the Education of Their Children

Carol reported that the opportunities for parents to be engaged in the education of their children are created through the open door policy established by the principal. According to Carol, parents know that they are welcome and have an informal and close relationship with the principal. Therefore, parents often discuss issues concerning their children with the principal, and parents and principal work together to try to resolve

potential problems. Carol also mentioned that since the school district and community are both small, a special bond is created between parents and principal.

Conflict

Carol said that there was little that she could relate in terms of conflict because she does not believe conflicts occur on campus; at least not on a regular basis. She reinforced the idea that the principal is a “nice lady” and she believes that if a conflict emerged, the principal would manage it in a helpful manner.

When I asked her what she meant relative to “a helpful manner,” she explained “that a helpful manner” is the method the principal uses to solve conflict and thus ensure that the people involved experienced a positive outcome. It should be relevant to point out that conflict was defined by the librarian as divergences among staff members about technical issues.

Feedback

Carol reported that feedback is always positive and both the principal and she are very flexible. She also believes that this form of receiving feedback is possible due to the harmonious environment at the campus.

In terms of providing feedback to her principal, Carol explained that she feels comfortable in approaching not only the principal, but any staff member:

“If I can see a different way in which things can work better, I do not feel intimidated. This is where our open door policy comes in. Thus, I would feel very comfortable in suggesting a different way of doing things. As an example, last year, when the principal started working here, she had good ideas, because she came from a big district. However, what I pointed out to her is that things that work in a big urban district will not necessarily work in a small rural one. She wanted me to give IDs to the kids. We ended up losing a lot of money because they are small kids and keep losing their cards. So, I told her that on a campus like ours this is not necessary. These kids are humble, they do not deceive me, because I know every one of them; I know their families. I even told her to start

talking to people to know them. It is amazing what we learn from them. The good part of it is that she immediately accepted my ideas and implemented them. The same goes for her job performance. I feel at ease to go in there and speak up because I am very communicative.”

Cafeteria Manager and Custodian

Both the cafeteria manger and the custodian did not feel comfortable being interviewed, despite my efforts to ease the situation. When interviewing both of them, I had to rephrase my questioning so that the questions could be better understood.

During the interviews, both the cafeteria manager and the custodian limited themselves to providing me with short answers, even when I asked for examples or for more detailed explanations.

Cafeteria Manager

Lourdes has been in food services for twenty one years and has served as a cafeteria manager for eleven years. She attended the same school in which she works today. Although Lourdes is not a communicative person, she did say that communication is important. She has to communicate with everybody in order to perform an effective job. She described communication and relationships on campus as “good and positive.” When asked to describe her principal, Lourdes simply said that “she is a pretty nice lady and she takes care of the problems.”

Lourdes did not know which strategies are utilized by the principal to communicate with families and other community members. She just explained that the principal is “always nice” to everyone. I rephrased the question about strategies relative to communicating with internal and external publics, explaining to her the meanings of internal and external publics. She just looked at me and said that everyone in the community knows the school and knows the principal and the principal knows everyone.

“That is all I know,” she replied. Lourdes was also vague when I asked her about parental involvement. Once again I rephrased the question in order for her to better understand what I meant. She also responded that she knew parents are always talking to the principal and that they like her because the principal is a nice lady and treats everybody well.

Feedback

When I asked Lourdes how the principal evaluated her job, she said that if the principal has to talk to her about any issue, she will do so, and she gives examples of what needs to be accomplished, so that she can better understand. Lourdes pointed out that she has been very fortunate because her relationship with the principal is positive and whenever she seeks feedback from the principal, the principal provides it in a polite manner.

When I asked Lourdes if she felt comfortable in providing feedback to her principal, she responded:

“When there is something that I feel is wrong I just go to her and say it. There is something wrong going on here. Can we do it differently? The principal appreciates that.”

Custodian

Lupe has been a custodian on the rural campus for one year. She works sometimes at night and sometimes during the day. Lupe was somewhat intimidated by the interview and did not have much to say. However, she described the school environment as being “good” and she also mentioned that she communicates with the principal and the secretary in an “easy way.” When describing her principal, Lupe explained that Mary is “nice and everybody can talk and speak up.”

When I asked Lupe if she knew how the principal communicated with family and community members, she just responded that she did not know. I also mentioned conflict and she just nodded her head showing me that she did not know of any conflicts.

I decided that it was pointless to continue to ask about internal and external publics, as well as business partners. Thus, I rephrased the questions and asked Lupe if she knew if the principal contacted people from the community to help her achieve her goals. I also explained to Lupe that I meant somebody from the community helping with books, or any other project on campus. Lupe responded that she did not know, yet reinforced that the principal is “nice” and treats people with respect.

In terms of parental involvement, Lupe said that she “thinks” parents like the school, the principal and the teachers. She also pointed out that she sees many parents talking to the principal.

Feedback

Lupe explained that the principal provides support to her when she needs it, especially when she has a question and does not know what to do. The principal lets Lupe know about her job performance and in what areas she needs to improve.

When I asked Lupe if she feels free to provide her principal with feedback, she responded that she has confidence in telling the principal how she feels as it relates to her job and to the ideas the principal has suggested. As a last note, Lupe informed me that she has a good relationship with everyone on campus and she likes the principal both as a person and as a boss.

Teachers

Teachers were interviewed during their conference periods. They were willing to be interviewed and felt proud of their participation in this study.

Teacher #1

Vivian began her career in the pharmacy field. Although she studied to be a pharmacist and was working in this area, she was not happy. On Sundays she was a teacher at bible school, and discovered that she loved being in contact with children. She noticed that she could find satisfaction in helping the children to learn the answer to questions, and then realized she had earned the wrong degree. Thus, she studied to be a teacher and started teaching at this rural campus seven years ago. This is Vivian's first job as a teacher.

Vivian also pointed out that effective communication skills are the answer to campus improvement. She explained that communication on campus is done on a constant basis and every staff member knows what they are supposed to be doing at times. Teachers work very closely together, which facilitates communication among them.

As for relationships on campus, Vivian explained that staff members are like friends, and this union is passed on to students and parents. As a consequence, they also feel that they are part of the campus "team."

About her principal, Vivian said that she is wonderful. "She tells you exactly what she wants and what she expects." Vivian also explained the difference between the current principal and the previous administration. She described the new principal as someone whom teachers can rely on. They know that their boss has a solid knowledge base and therefore is able to help them, not only with the administrative tasks, but also

with academics: “If you have any problems, like, with the curriculum, or you are not sure of something, you can go to her and ask her and she will show you different ways, she will sit down and she will make time for you.”

Vivian also noted that she agrees that there has to be accountability. “If there is no testing, how are teachers going to be held accountable?” She also mentioned that although she knows it is stressful it is necessary.

Strategies Used by the Principal When Communicating with Families and Other Community Members

Vivian mentioned the parent chats and breakfast meals the principal offers parents. Vivian also described how communication with parents and teachers flows:

“If we have any concerns with a student we go ahead and set up an appointment with the principal. We tell her that we want to have interventions, and she will contact the parent, have parents come in and she will sit with us listening and going over strategies to use, whatever needs to be addressed. The principal is really helpful.”

When I asked Vivian about strategies utilized by the principal to attract internal and external publics to strengthen campus goals, Vivian responded that the principal sends out notices, and talks to the parents frequently. Furthermore, the principal has the teachers send out daily progress sheets to the students, so that they can show them to their parents. Nevertheless, other than parents, Vivian did not mention any additional publics with whom the principal might interact.

Conflict

When introducing the issue of conflict, Vivian interrupted me and said:

“If you are talking about teachers not getting along, this does not happen. I have never seen it since I started working with this principal.” Therefore, Vivian explained that she did not feel comfortable to speak about conflicts. She would not be able to provide any concrete examples.

Opportunities for Parents to be Engaged in the Education of Their Children

Vivian reported that opportunities for parental involvement are created through the open door policy. In other words, parents know that when they need to come to campus to discuss a problem they may be experiencing, they will be welcomed, and accommodations will be made for them:

“For example, if I am in class when a parent comes in, they will get a substitute for me to talk to that parent. As I am not bilingual, the principal participates in the conversation and helps me with the translation.”

In terms of partnerships with business, Vivian did not respond. She explained that she, as a teacher, does not know about this matter. She believes it is discussed among administrators only.

Feedback

When I asked Vivian to describe to me the manner in which the principal provides feedback to her, she responded that the principal focuses on her strengths, and feedback is transparent. Vivian also described situations when feedback was provided to her:

“The principal truly does not criticize. When she does her walkthroughs, she writes down things and she wants to call you into her office and just talks about it. She really focuses on our strengths. When she notices problems, she helps. When I was in fourth grade and she wanted us to implement a new writing strategy, I was really shaky and I asked her to come into my classroom and model for me and she was willing to do it right on the spot. Another time, when she came to observe me, she noticed that I was nervous. Her reaction was to help me teach the class a little bit. When she realized I had calmed down, she let

me do it by myself. She is always there to help us and she offers meetings in which we can address issues that she has seen during her visits. As feedback is transparent, I always know what I am supposed to do. If our performance is really low she will let us know, but she will say it in a way that does not hurt our feelings. I mean, she is kind, but she will address whatever needs to be addressed. If teachers don't know what they are doing, students will not know what they are doing, and then we will not fix that and then our goal will not be achieved."

When I asked Vivian to explain to me about the formal evaluation process, she responded that there is a formal teacher evaluation developed by the state of Texas (See Appendix F). According to Vivian, there are different domains in this evaluation and teachers have to follow all the domains. Vivian also reported that at the end of the school year these domains are discussed with every teacher. She detailed that there are three different sections within the teacher evaluation process. She explained that she had completed the first part. Subsequent to this first section, there will be two sections. Teachers are to turn in their responses to the topics as related to each domain and then discuss the entire evaluation with the principal.

When explaining about providing feedback to her principal, Vivian described the principal as a very open person. Vivian said in the regular meetings teachers have with the principal, they can provide feedback to her, in terms of agreeing or disagreeing with her suggestions. Moreover, teachers feel free to express any discontent they might have in relation to the principal's work without any fear of reprisal: "I know she sounds too good to be true but she really is. She is very open-minded and I think that has helped our scores go up."

Vivian also compared the current principal with the previous one:

"Our present principal is really into trying anything that will work. That builds trust among everyone, because you can count on her. She is very supportive, and she

is a go-between between teachers and parents. She protects both the parents and the teachers. She is very fair. I believe that this trust does not come from us being small, because in the past things were different. It was horrible. There was no trust. Even in our meetings, we would just sit there and look at each other. We would not talk and this was in the fourth grade level. I taught fourth grade. Before the present principal, we had two principals. One stayed for six weeks and left. The other came in and started changing things for the better. And then Mary came. Campus climate changed, everything changed. Maybe this happened because many teachers left. That was good because the ones who left did not care. I mean, they were good people, but they had different goals, and I do not know if they cared about their students. I cannot say that about them.”

When I explained to Vivian about 360 degree feedback and asked if this process was done on campus, she responded that it was not.

Teacher #2

Paul is in his first year teaching. He became a teacher because he started to substitute and realized that teaching made him happy and complete. In terms of communication on campus, Paul said that communication flows naturally on campus and this is part of their success.

Paul also mentioned that being a rural campus makes it easier insofar as communication is concerned. He pointed out that everyone on campus is aware if they do not keep their relationship open, it will be dreadful for everyone else, including the students.

When describing the principal, Paul portrayed her as someone open to ideas. Moreover, she is someone who tries to bring the best out of the teachers. The principal reinforces teamwork on a constant basis.

Strategies Used When Communicating with Families and Other Community Members

Paul explained that among the strategies utilized by the principal to communicate with families and other community members was the parent chats. According to Paul, in these meetings, parents can express any concerns they might have at that particular time. They are also informed the district current events, and the community is informed as to what will occur throughout the school year.

When I asked Paul about strategies the principal might use for effective internal and external communications, he responded that the principal tells the teachers to be in constant contact with parents, and to keep a record of everything. I tried to rephrase the question to see if I could induce a more satisfactory answer, but Paul did not have knowledge of any other type of communication strategy the principal might utilize.

Conflict

When Paul was conversing with me about conflict, this was his response:

“I can tell you that if we have an issue with a parent, then we can get together with her and resolve it together and resolve the situation. Although it has never happened to me, I know that this is the way it is done.”

I asked Paul if he meant that the principal, Mary, and the parent would talk together or separately. He responded that it depended on the situation. Sometimes these meetings could involve only the parent and the principal and then only the teacher and the principal, and sometimes the three participants together.

Opportunities for Parents to be Involved in the Education of Their Children

Paul said that parents are invited to be involved in the education of their children by attending the parent-teacher conferences at school. Parents also receive messages from the principal informing them that they are welcome to talk to the principal any time

they wish. Furthermore, Paul pointed out that the school offers open houses, and parent meetings. Paul then apologized stating this was all he knew.

I asked Paul if most parents attended the parent meetings. He replied that at least fifty-percent of the parents attend. According to Paul, other parents do not attend the meetings because they have to work.

Partnerships with Businesses

When I introduced the topic of communication with partnerships and businesses, Paul mentioned that some of the school board members are businessman, and he believes these are to be the only business connections with the principal. Next, Paul explained that he is not certain how to answer the question because there are no important businesses in the rural area. In addition, Paul reported that he is not certain if the principal contacts small businesses in the rural community.

Feedback

When I asked Paul about the manner in which the principal provides feedback to him, he explained that she usually has some “quick observations” and then discusses the observations with the teachers. Subsequently, I asked Paul if the principal would let teachers know that they would be appraised in advance or if she would just appraise the teachers without any prior notice.

Paul explained that the principal “just walks in” without previous notice and stays for five or ten minutes. Afterwards, she lets teachers know about their performance and provides teachers with suggestions on how to improve their teaching. According to Paul, these suggestions are practical and sometimes the principal models them for the

teachers. After teachers have tried her suggestions, they report the results back to the principal.

Paul also described what he called the formal evaluation process. He detailed that in the formal evaluation, the principal observes the teachers and students for forty five minutes. When the appraisal feedback is negative, the principal provides teachers with suggestions and then provides another opportunity for teachers to be observed.

When I asked Paul if he would feel free to provide feedback to his principal, he responded he would. Furthermore, he explained that he felt comfortable expressing his concerns when the issues are related to school operations.

“In the beginning of the year, teachers were in charge of committees, such as the intervention committee, and hospitality committee. In these committees we get together and if anything is wrong we can go to the principal and let her know we do not approve this or that. We know that she will not take that against us.”

Nevertheless, he explained that since this is his first year, he feels pressure to perform the tasks he is requested to complete. He explained that there is trust between teachers and principal and this helps. Moreover, Paul replied that teachers understand they work in a small district and as a consequence, they do not have other schools from which they can ask other teachers for ideas or assistance. As a result, teachers realized that if they do not work together, they can destroy the exiting trust built among one another and this would have a negative impact on campus as a whole.

Teacher #3

Teaching is a second career for Marta. Before teaching, she worked in the corporate world for several years. She worked for a property management company that owns several properties across the United States. Although Marta worked for that

company for so several years, she felt that something was missing in her life.

Consequently, she went back to school and became a teacher. Marta has been working at this rural campus for three years. She explained that she has no regrets and that this has been a wonderful experience for her.

Marta said that communication is the “wonderful thing” about the school. Due to the fact that the school is so small, staff members know each other very well. As Marta explained:

“We are able to cross the street and go talk to a parent if we really need to; I can walk in my principal’s office and I know that she is going to set something aside to speak to me if I have a concern, for instance, and I work with some wonderful people. It’s not about competing against each other, it is about working together and helping each other strive, because we are all here for one purpose, you know, which are our students.”

The principal is Marta’s role model: “Look how young she is, and she has accomplished so much in so little time. I know she comes from another district and she was “Teacher of the Year there”. Thus, I have nothing but the most respect for her. She is a mentor. She is someone to look up to.”

Strategies Used When Communicating with Families and Other Community Members

In terms of strategies utilized by the principal to communicate with families and other community members, Marta mentioned open houses, where parents come and learn about the school, the teachers, and all of the staff members. Furthermore, she cited parent/teacher conference nights, where more specific aspects of the student learning is discussed. She also discussed the parent chats.

However, Marta pointed out that the parent chats originated from the superintendent. As a final note regarding this topic, Marta revealed that when there is a concern about communicating with parents, either the principal or the teachers will contact the parent and then discuss the issue that has caused concern.

In terms of strategies for internal and external communications, Marta responded that she really does not know of any particular strategies utilized other than what she had already revealed. She mentioned that they do inform the community stakeholders of district and campus current events via the parent chats. According to Marta, having external stakeholders attend the parent chats is a strategy to communicate with them.

Relative to internal communications, the focus is on the students:

“As far as internal publics, it is all about the students, mainly. It is just about motivating them. The principal has pep rallies, and makes every possible effort to bring us altogether and motivate each other to pass our standardized test. That is all I can think of.”

Conflict

When I asked Marta how her principal managed conflict, she responded:

“I’ve never had any conflicts. I know that she is really good at listening to both sides of the stories, if there is a conflict. The principal is not someone to have favorites, she is not someone to be biased, you know, judgmental. She is very fair and she will listen to both sides. She will make whoever is having a conflict come together and work it out.”

I asked Marta if there was anything else she would like to describe to me regarding conflicts, and she replied that what she had revealed to me was the knowledge she had about this particular topic.

Opportunities for Parents to be Engaged in the Education of Their Children

Besides conferences, Marta informed me that parents are welcome to come to school and directly help with the education of their children. I asked her how this was accomplished and she explained that parents can, for example, read to the students. Moreover, they come to the school to talk to the students about their careers, both the positive and the negative aspects of their careers. However, Marta pointed out that

unfortunately, these “engaging activities” for parental involvement only happen at the conclusion of the school year, because of testing: “With all the testing that we have, it is difficult to get parents in.”

Partnerships with Businesses

Marta reported that she is not certain as to how the principal employs strategies to establish partnerships with businesses. Nevertheless, she is aware that the principal has contacted partners to obtain coupons to give to the students whose attendance has been considered perfect, for example.

For good behavior, Marta explains that the principal provides students with pizza. She believes that this happens due to the principal’s contacts with some of the pizza establishments in the area. Marta reinforced that she is not certain how the principal develops strategies for more formal partnerships with businesses.

I asked Marta to explain to me what she meant by “formal partnerships.” She replied that it refers to partnerships with big corporations. When there are partnerships with such corporations, more formal contacts and marketing strategies are usually involved, according to Marta.

Feedback

When explaining to me how she receives feedback from her principal, Marta said that the principal commends her each time she is evaluated. Marta also mentioned the formal appraisal process teachers have each school year. She pointed out that in these formal appraisals the principal has a pre-conference with each teacher before the “real” evaluation and follow-up conference.

According to Marta, during the pre-conference, the principal discusses with the teachers exactly what she will be looking for, and what will be expected from the teachers during the lessons observed. After the pre-conference, there is the appraisal observation, then a post-conference. This is the process by which the principal evaluates the teachers. The final step is the post-conference, where the principal provides feedback to the teachers, and informs them of their performance. Furthermore, the principal discusses with the teachers information regarding their students' performance, and methods whereby both the teacher and the students can improve.

Marta explained that during the post-conference the principal also clarifies with the teachers certain aspects of teaching in which they need to improve. As far as the teaching improvements, the principal suggests strategies and practical ideas on how to work on specified areas to target for growth and other techniques as to how to be subsequently successful.

After explaining to me the details of her formal evaluation, Marta started describing the informal evaluation process. Marta reported that the principal provides informal feedback through her walkthroughs. Walkthroughs are brief classroom observations that last from five to fifteen minutes.

Furthermore, teachers receive feedback on a weekly basis relative to their test scores, because students have common assessments or benchmarks every week. Marta explained that every teacher is required to provide the principal with their assessment scores. The purpose of informing the principal of these scores is to provide her with data for the weekly Friday meetings.

I asked Marta to detail these Friday meetings. She responded that during these meetings the principal discusses the assessment score results, as well as strategies and techniques that can be utilized to improve the scores: “She has given us some wonderful ideas; and it helps us as well because we have self-confidence to try everything we feel like trying in terms of methods and activities.”

After learning about the methods in which teachers receive feedback from the principal, I asked Marta to explain how she as a teacher would provide feedback to her principal. Marta reported:

“I feel comfortable speaking to the principal. I feel that I can go there and express my concerns to her without feeling that she is going to come back later and throw it in my face. She is not that way. I trust her, and I do believe that she reassures us when we have problems with the students. She reassures us of strategies to be used and she puts everything into perspective for us. As teachers, we do not see things from an administrator’s eyes. We see it from the teacher side. We do not look at the bigger picture. Well, I can say that I do feel comfortable talking to her about everything because she has the door open and like I said, she does not judge us at all.”

After listening to Marta’s description, I felt it would be pertinent to ask her if she would provide the principal with feedback about the principal’s own job performance. Marta responded that she feels relaxed enough to do this, but it would have to be done in an informal way, because there is not a formal type of evaluation insofar as allowing the staff to evaluate the principal. When asked if it would be a good idea to have staff evaluates the principal, Marta pointed out to me that she believes it would be indifferent because staff members and faculty already do it in an informal manner.

Parents

The questions to parents did not involve elaborate queries such as partnerships with businesses or 360 degree feedback, because I felt that they would not be at ease

answering such questions. Another point I would like to make is that it was extremely difficult for parents to accept the process of being interviewed. Out of twenty parents that were asked to be interviewed, only three accepted. The person who made the contact with the parents was the secretary and the procedure was done in my presence. Before one of the interviews, one parent asked me if the questions were going to be difficult. I believe this is a perfect example as to why the other parents declined to be interviewed.

Therefore, I simply asked the three parents interviewed to provide me some general information about the school and their children, as well as their opinion about the principal. Furthermore, in order to obtain information relative to communication strategies that the principal utilized to communicate with parents, I asked the three parents to describe interactions they had experienced with the principal.

Parents were asked to explain steps that the principal takes when she needs to communicate with them as well as steps they, as parents, take when they need to communicate with her. Moreover, parents were also asked to describe their feelings when talking to their principal. Furthermore, the three parents were asked to explain their experiences at the school and the relationship that existed between the principal and their children.

Parent #1

Clara has a fourth grade daughter at the school. It is her daughter's first year at the campus. Clara said that the school is very inviting and when she has problems, everyone is helpful. By everyone she meant the secretary, the teacher and the principal. Clara also explained that she likes being on campus. She feels comfortable being on

campus. Clara describes the principal as someone who lets parents know about everything that happens on campus. This makes her feel secure as a parent.

Communications with the Principal

Clara reported that the principal communicates with her through letters she gives her daughter to take home. In addition, the principal makes telephone calls to ensure that she, as a parent, receives the messages. Clara believes the principal does such because children may forget to transmit the messages to their parents.

When Clara wants to communicate with the principal, she makes a telephone call to the school to ask when the principal will be available. Clara pointed out that every time she has called, the principal was available and told Clara that she was available to have a meeting with her immediately after the call.

School Campus

Clara described the campus as an inviting place. She mentioned that the secretary and the teachers are “nice” to her and they always seem willing to help parents. Moreover, Clara pointed out that there is a level of trust between the principal and the teachers, and as a result Clara stated she is never afraid to talk to the principal. In addition, Clara feels that she can participate in her daughter’s education: “I feel that I can really do something to help and I am always here. Because of the principal, I feel I can fully participate in my child’s education.”

Relation between Daughter and Principal

Clara describes the relation between the principal and her daughter as a good one. According to her, this positive relation occurs because the principal encourages her daughter and her daughter is proud of her own achievements. Clara also feels

relieved that her daughter is not anxious to take tests; on the contrary she longs for them because she is confident that her performance will be satisfactory.

Parent #2

Monica has a son who is in the fourth-grade at the school. Monica described the principal as very conscientious in her administrative position. In addition, she noted that the principal always does everything to benefit the students. Furthermore, Monica stated that she has great confidence in the principal's ability to bring people together.

Communications with the Principal

In terms of communicating with the parents, Monica mentioned that the principal send fliers home to notify parents of everything that happens at school, such as parent chats, the annual science fair, intervention sessions, and even lets her know when her son will be taking the state accountability exams. Research has long revealed that notes sent home with students are the backbone of communication with parents (Iowa School Administrators, 2008). According to Monica the principal provides parents with suggestions on how parents should prepare their children for the exams, and further recommends that the students eat properly before going to school and that they also sleep well. Monica also indicated that when there is a problem with her son, the principal will e-mail her, or give her a telephone call. Monica pointed out that the manner in which the principal communicates with her makes her trust the principal, which is important to her.

When I asked Monica how she communicated with the principal, she explained that since this is a rural community and a small district, there is an open door policy. This means that parents can talk to the principal without having previously scheduled as

long as the principal is available. In case the principal is not available, Monica said that parents can request a conference, which is usually held after school. Monica emphasized that this has occurred every time she needed to talk to the principal, and as a result, the principal was available.

School Campus

As for the campus, Monica described it as a pleasant place to be. She explained that she feels welcome on campus, staff members are friendly, and although the building is old, the maintenance is impeccable.

Monica also pointed out that she feels relaxed when talking to the principal. According to her, this relaxation comes from the fact that she knows the principal is open to listening to her, and will work to understand her, and moreover seek to find a solution to whatever the issue may be. In addition, Monica stated that the principal makes her feel a part of the school decision making team. In other words, she, as a parent, is certain that her ideas can be used to help her child improve, achieve, and be happy.

Moreover, Monica mentioned that another reason why there is trust between her and the principal is the confidentiality issue. She explained that she can express her feelings and concerns and she knows that what has been reported to the principal will be kept confidential. Monica also noted the level of education achieved relative to the parents of the school and district. According to Monica, most parents are not highly educated and do not even speak English properly. Monica admires the principal, because a parent does not have to be highly educated to be able to communicate with

the principal. According to Monica, the principal will communicate with any parent who needs her.

Relationship between Monica's Son and the Principal

Monica reported that the relationship the principal has with all the students is excellent because of the ideas the principal has initiated to make the students feel happy and content. According to Monica, her son enjoys school, his teachers, and his principal.

Parent #3

Alessandra has a son who has been on this campus for three years. Alessandra's son came from an urban district and a large school. Alessandra has been very happy since her son enrolled at this school. Since his arrival, his test scores have increased dramatically.

When describing the principal, Alessandra stated that the principal communicates with her, and with all the parents, through parent chats, which are held on a monthly basis. During these chats the superintendent lets parents know about the district's plans, as well as different issues the district may be facing.

Moreover, if parents have concerns, they can express them, as well as write their ideas down, if they do not wish to speak in front of the people attending the chat. Alessandra reported that if the superintendent approves the parents' ideas, they will be implemented. When I asked Alessandra how she felt when attending the parent chats, she told me that she felt welcome and never intimidated, because a translator is always present. As a result, parental attendance is considerably high during these meetings.

Communications with the Principal

Alessandra explained that the principal communicates with her, as a parent, by letting parents know that she is available. When I asked how she makes them know about her availability, Alessandra responded that the principal does so through welcoming gestures and she always smiles to a parent. Non-verbal communications can be extremely important in conveying messages of trust and acceptance (Porter, 1969). Alessandra stated that she did not know how to put this into words, but she knows that she will be welcome whenever she needs to talk to the principal: “It is just the way she greets us. It is not as if she is just hiding, you feel confident, and through the way she waves and looks.”

Afterwards I asked Alessandra how she communicated with the principal. She replied that she usually either sends an e-mail or makes a telephone call, or she makes an appointment if the principal is not available. Alessandra pointed out that if the principal is available parents can just “show up” and the principal will listen to their concerns and the principal then suggests strategies for their children’s instructional well-being.

School Campus

As for the campus, Alessandra described it as an inviting place with an welcoming atmosphere. Nevertheless, she complained about the sixth-grade classrooms being in another building. When I asked her why she was complaining about that, she was not able to provide an explanation. Alessandra just limited herself to responding that whenever there will be a parent night, she will have to go to another

building. Obviously, Alessandra will miss the inviting atmosphere of the Intermediate school.

Relationship between Alessandra's Son and the Principal

Alessandra reported that her son likes the principal because there is strong motivation relative to the state accountability testing process. There is usually a pep rally and her son is not afraid of being tested. He has gained self-confidence and he wants to show everyone that he can “beat it” (the exam). Alessandra also explained that communication between parents, teachers and principals is very important:

“It is my son we are talking about and if the principal does not communicate with you, then there is a problem; and if we cannot catch the problem, it will never be solved. Thus, communication is my main concern. If I compare this campus to the campus my son came from, I can say that communication here is much better, because it is a small district. I mean, it is not just the district. It is the principal. I did not feel comfortable with my son's previous principal and that is why I brought him here. There was something about that principal that I did not like. Maybe it was her way of not welcoming me, although it is not something she said. I just did not feel comfortable with her.”

Other Themes Emerging from Conversations with the Study Participants

Rural Campus versus Urban Campus

When asked if the “communication success” the campus had experienced was relative to the fact that the campus is small and is located in a rural area, most of the participants did not have an adequate answer. Nevertheless, several of the respondents stated that in a rural campus there is a natural bond because the school is the center of the community. As one teacher pointed out: “We can cross the street and talk to a mom if we need to.”

On the other hand, some respondents noted that at a small campus in a rural, community, communication can be more complicated for the same reason. One

participant explained that “when people know each other well, there is a tendency for conflicts and gossip, if communication is not properly dealt with.”

Two participants indicated that effective communication strategies, pro-active relationships, positive school climate and increased student achievement are not directly related to the size or location of the school. They explained that if this was the case, the campus always would have been successful and such was not the case before the current principal arrived. Although it was a rural campus, previously, relationships were difficult and communication did not flow. As a consequence, teachers and staff members were not certain of what they were expected to do and this negatively impacted student achievement. Scores were low and the school was on the verge of being reconstituted by the state.

Some respondents also explained that they believe the communicative success of the campus reflects the principal's personality and the manner in which she interacts with all members of the learning community. Finally one participant indicated that different communication strategies have to be used on different campuses. If a principal is able to utilize different strategies according to the situation he or she experiences, communication on campus will be effective.

Trust and Motivation

Both the principal and the other participants cited trust and motivation either directly or indirectly as being a part of the campus communicative success. Participants made it clear that motivation and trust are developed through the principal's leadership. The principal's personality traits obviously play an important role. According to the participants, trust was developed because they recognized that the principal exhibited a

strong instructional base, motivated faculty and staff, did not play favorites, and showed that she was willing to help.

Participants also indicated that motivation processes are exhibited during grade level meetings, rallies, via parental involvement strategies, through staff development and as a result of the constant boost of self-esteem from principal to participants. It was clear to see that participants were highly motivated and trusted the principal.

Conclusions

The information collected from this case study illustrates how Mary, a rural Intermediate School principal can effectively establish patterns of positive communicative skills on her campus, as well as how communication strategies are utilized to ensure student achievement and moreover improve school climate. Furthermore, the case reveals how the principal handles both the providing of and the receiving of feedback relative to her different stakeholders. Finally, the data also illustrates the principal's views relative to the administrative role at a rural school as opposed to an urban school.

The perceptions of other internal and external publics served to triangulate the information obtained from the principal for validity and reliability purposes. The views of the other participants demonstrate that there are no conflicting ideas as to how communication flows on campus as well as how strategies utilized by the principal serve to ensure increased student achievement and an improved campus climate through the utilization of effective communications.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Introduction

“How well leaders connect with the people in their organizations has enormous consequences for the contributions these people make and the likelihood they will choose to stay with the organization. Leadership communication entails nurturing and maintaining a workplace environment in which communication flows freely and quickly in all directions with minimal distortion or lag time” (Mai and Akerson, 2003, p.1). The focus of this study centers on the determination as to communication patterns flow in a rural school in West Texas, along with the role a principal in a rural school plays in developing effective patterns of communication as well as the results of the utilization of these strategies to attain increased student achievement.

The leadership communicative process has been extensively examined in numerous literature reviews and in research studies. Pinsonnault (1992) explains that communication involves relationships with team members, delegation, administrative responsibilities, behavioral flexibility, and team building. However, little has been researched about the impact such strategies have on rural schools and their stakeholders. In addition, relatively little has been examined in relation to the school principal providing and receiving feedback from their stakeholders. This chapter will discuss the intent of the study, the framework guiding the study, the process used in the development of the study, my personal perceptions and assumptions, my own experiences as a school administrator, the discovery and nature of the process, discussion of findings, and conclusion.

Intent of the Study

This study focused on a rural school principal in West Texas in relation to the communication strategies the principal utilizes for increased student achievement and improved campus climate. The study also focused on how this particular principal's leadership style changed, enhanced and improved communication patterns on campus and consequently improved student and teacher performance. Furthermore, the study sought to determine if the process of effective communication on campus, is influenced by the fact that it is a rural campus.

Effective communication can help assist team members in acquiring the incentive to support (vs. sabotaging) each other. Improved communication results in increased team member loyalty and increased motivation. Ineffective communication can create destruction relative to relationships and can cause irreversible organizational damage (Craven, 2008). The intent of this study was to delve into the life of a principal for a period of one and one half months through the qualitative methodology of a descriptive case study, thus discovering the methods by which a rural school principal communicates with differing stakeholders thus helping her achieve success in terms of academic improvement and campus climate.

Framing the Study

Framing the inquiry was an integral part of the study. Case studies focus primarily on the individual development, cognitive personality, and interpersonal interactions of a particular subject (Creswell, 1984). The framework aids the researcher in directing the focus of the study. I chose to base the framework of this study on situational theory as described by Grunig (1997).

Situational theory emphasizes public relations, the most relevant factor in managing communications between an organization and its differing publics. The theory implies problem recognition, constraint recognition, and level of involvement. In other words, for communication to flow, a manager, or in this case, a principal, has to recognize when a problem emerges. This can be observed, noted, or examined relative to the level of conflict within an organization, a rural school, for example. Following this recognition, a principal can permit stakeholders the opportunity to perceive the problem as well as determine their limitations relative to reaching a solution. The role of communication must be involved in order that an effective solution can be reached.

Therefore, I used situational theory as a framework to guide the development of relevant interview questions. Public relations, from the perspective of the situational theory framework, are reflected in the research questions guiding the study along with the interview questions utilized to initiate interactions with the participants. Effective communication involves the level of involvement of the school's stakeholders, trust, and team building, that is, the manner in which the stakeholders relate to each other. This method of interrelational processes is led by the principal, and it evolves from the principal's leadership style, which is influenced by personality traits and by administrative experience.

The Process

Qualitative research, as a process, is extremely satisfying due to the answers it provides relative to the inquiry. Case studies provide the readers with a time and place of the study. Readers can also identify with the issue being studied. A case study provide a description of the case, the situation with present themes, assertions or

interpretations of the researchers, and begins and ends with realistic scenarios (Stake, 1995).

As I interviewed, transcribed, and coded the data, I found that although the principal and other stakeholders might have different life experiences, they shared similar perceptions. Therefore, common themes and patterns emerged and united participants and perceptions.

As the participants described their views regarding effective communication and the impact on a rural school campus, as well their perceptions on receiving and providing feedback, nuances about the rural school operations were revealed.

Perceptions and Assumptions

There are many perceptions and assumptions regarding effective communication on school campuses from a harmonious campus climate to increased student achievement. Teacher's satisfaction with school policy is related to their relationship with the principal (Duckworth, 1984). Good communication and shared values are important elements in this relationship. Students' achievement is likely to be greatest where teachers and administrators work together (Buffie, 1989). Positive school climate significantly influences teacher performances and student outcomes.

Nevertheless, positive school climate only occurs when the principal, teachers, and students are empowered. Principals must model behaviors consistent with the school's vision and expand a clear rationale for the school, so that student achievement can improve. Principals must recognize and execute instructional strategies that will result in achieving the school's vision and mission. When there is effective communication, there is trust (Korir & Karr-Kidwell, 2000). Christenson (2007) reveals

that trust involves respect among the members of an organization, and it is built on kept promises. Furthermore, the building of trust in an organization requires the leader to hold followers accountable. In addition, for trust to be maintained over time, a leader must demonstrate competence.

When interviewing the participants of this study, I perceived that theory reflects practice. During my interviews, the word trust was verbalized numerous times. With trust, some of the respondents, especially teachers, revealed that they were comfortable and at ease with the principal modeling instructional techniques for them, and providing them with suggestions for classroom activities and lesson plans. These participant responses clearly implied a strong relationship between the principal's academic knowledge base and the teachers' reliability on their principal.

Another point revealed by a teacher, and the principal, relates to accountability. Both believe that an accountability system is necessary to guarantee that everyone will do their job as required. The ultimate result is increased student achievement. According to the participant responses, the principal respects her publics, holds them accountable, and reveals competence.

As an observer, I found such perceptions to be evident, even during my first contact with the principal. During this first contact, the principal seemed extremely confident in her work. This confidence was translated when the principal had me choose the teachers that I would like to interview. As for parents, the principal had the secretary prepare a list and make telephone calls to parents in order to see who would be available. I was allowed to observe the secretary completing this task.

When I was scheduled to interview the teachers, both the principal and the assistant principal shared with me that they would be available to substitute for any of the teachers I needed to interview. From my previous experiences working with principals, when there is such transparency, it indicates that communication flows naturally, and campus climate is positive. Moreover, there is trust among the staff members, and the principal is quite confident in his/her ability to lead.

When I was invited to observe a meeting between the principal and teachers, I was able to observe the interaction the principal had with the teachers and realized that there was not only trust, but two-way communication and even the presence of feedback. Teachers felt comfortable to express their ideas in relation to classroom management, and to the suggestions the principal provided to them. Furthermore, all participants exchanged comments as far as classroom ideas were concerned and were by no means embarrassed to reveal their students' scores on the assessment tests, even when their scores were lower than those of their peers.

Teachers frequently encouraged each other and suggested methods in which their colleagues' scores could improve. The principal was never judgmental and when a principal suggestion or recommendation to the teachers was not accepted, the teachers explained why they did not agree with it, said suggestions and would then recommend different ideas and explain the rationale for those new ideas.

My Own Experiences

I have been fortunate to have had the opportunity to be involved in education from the perspective of a student, teacher, a parent, and an administrator. Being a citizen of Brazil and having finished college there, I have been made aware of both

positive and negative relationships that students had with teachers, most notably from the students' standpoint. After becoming a teacher, I realized the complexity of relationships with parents, students, and administrators from the teachers' perspective. However, it was only when I became an administrator that I could deeply understand the impact communications have on campus climate and on student achievement. I also realized how important feedback is for professional improvement and the necessity for transparency, a non –judgmental approach, and how clear, concise, and efficient feedback is directly related to effective communication on campus.

About eight years ago, my husband was transferred from Brazil to the United States/Mexico border. This transfer provided me with the opportunity to obtain knowledge about educational processes in the United States of America, which enriched my professional career and academic vision and understanding.

Through my experience of living in West Texas, I could follow my son's education and therefore, became more acquainted with the methods by which communication plays an important role between a principal and students, as well as a principal and parents. Unfortunately, my experiences were quite negative. Every time I needed to talk with a principal about an issue concerning my son's education, I was transferred to the secretary, who would then take the necessary steps in answering my queries. Once my son told me: "Mom, it is pointless to talk to the principal. She is afraid of people." My son no doubt meant that the principal lacked effective or appropriate communication skills or strategies. The consequence was apparent: a high teacher turnover rate and parents decided to resolve issues on their own – issues that were actually pertinent to school administration, decision-making and problem-solving.

As a doctoral student, I also had the opportunity to observe principals interacting with their differing publics and through my observations, I could readily conclude when a campus was successful through effective communicative methods.

When deciding which school to conduct my interviews and observations for my dissertation, I chose one campus, in which the principal had transformed a negative, low performing school into one of excellence in terms of increased student achievement. The principal was able to achieve such changes in a brief period of time (one year). Moreover, the fact that it was a rural school also attracted me, because my experience was based on frequently large, urban schools. My assumption when conducting this study was that effective communication strategies do not depend on school campus size or location.

Discovery of the Nature of the Process

I discovered, through this process, that despite the perception that effective communication is so important for a positive campus climate and increased student achievement, a principal's knowledge base relative to teaching and instruction is also a key factor in the effective operation of a campus. As I interviewed the different participants, I could perceive both through their answers and from their facial expressions, when describing the principal and the school, that they admired the principal because she "always had the right answers." This perception was more visible when interviewing teachers, most notably because they are the ones who can accurately judge a principal's knowledge relative to the instructional process.

Although I had some previous experience with parents feeling welcome to participate in the education of their children, this study revealed how self-conscious

parents may feel about their own level of education. When interviewing parents, two of them pointed out to me that the principal and the district would accept them in parent chats even if they did not speak proper English and even when they did not communicate effectively or possess a high school education.

The receptiveness by the school administration of the parents allowed them to express their ideas and thus be an integral part of their children's education, overcoming possible embarrassments for not speaking the dominant language of the country. Through my interviews with parents, I discovered the importance they place on the relationship between their children and the principal. When listening to them, I immediately associated my son's relationship with his principal and, being a mother myself, could readily understand exactly what they meant and how they felt.

Through this study, I also discovered how a principal's leadership style, through communication strategies, can include children, whose language is not English, into the educational processes of the United States. When I observed the reading class the principal taught to students on a weekly basis, I perceived how sophisticated English words were integrated into the daily student vocabulary and how their pronunciation was developed, as well as their fluency in the English language. Through the readings of novels, their comprehension was also evaluated along with instructional strategies to guarantee improvement was utilized. I must admit that I never observed a principal completing such a task with such competence.

It goes without saying that these classes also created opportunities for effective relationships between the principal and the students. Moreover, the reading classes also provided the principal with knowledge relative to every child's academic skill level,

which enabled the principal to provide useful and helpful recommendations to teachers when helping them prepare their classes. Teachers, on the other hand, developed trust and team building through this process. One teacher even related during the interviews that “everyone on campus speaks the same language,” meaning that everyone knows what happens to each and every student in terms of their academic progress.

When I interviewed the assistant principal and observed the principal interacting with him, I could realize that the transparent type of relationship they had developed made the assistant principal more self-confident in his own work. I related it to my personal experience as an assistant principal, when feedback, most regrettably, was nonexistent. As a result, I felt insecure about my own work performance. Through this discovery process, I should point out that all of the participants felt honored to participate in this study. I sensed that they felt proud of their campus improvements and of the manner in which they conducted their jobs. They also felt proud of the leadership style they had observed and experienced and thus, they were receptive to talk and share.

Discussion of the Findings

Three research questions, each descriptive in nature, guided this study. The questions entailed how communication strategies were established between the principal and the assistant principal, the principal and parents, the principal and students, and the principal and other community members. Questions also entailed how communication strategies ensure an inviting and positive school climate and therefore serve to increase student achievement, along with how the principal receives and provides feedback relative to the differing publics. Through these questions, the study

also sought to discover if those strategies were related to the fact that the campus was located in a rural area of West Texas, as opposed to a large urban metropolitan center.

The questions were designed using a conceptual framework consisting of Grunig's public relations theory. The theory describes public relations as the management of communication between an organization and its publics.

The remaining portion of this chapter is a discussion of the findings, which includes a reexamination of the research questions and the theoretical framework based on the data collected from the interviews. The participants' names are fictitious to maintain confidentiality. The analysis will work within the theoretical framework incorporating the concrete narrative detail of actual events, combining description and analysis, utilized in case studies.

Question 1: How are communication strategies established between: a) principal/assistant principal; b) principal/teachers; c) principal/parents; d) principal/students; e) principal/other community members?

The participants in this study had similar perceptions in terms of how a principal establishes communication strategies between different publics. The principal's personality traits, motivation, level of trust, knowledge base, and the manner in which the principal provided and received feedback from different publics were some of the varied methods utilized to establish effective communication between the principal and the differing publics, which led to campus improvement and increases student achievement.

Mary (The Principal)

Mary believes that the manner in which she establishes communication strategies between her different publics is influenced by her personality and experiences. Mary utilizes power in a positive and meaningful manner, to develop mutual support for common purpose. She constantly clarifies to her publics that her main purpose is the students and their education. As part of her communication strategies, Mary believes the organization plays an essential role in effective communication.

An administrator has to know what has already been communicated to the different publics and ensure that the message has been conveyed. In order for this to occur, notes must be taken, and planning should always involve team members. As Brown (1985) suggests, the principal who does not organize and use staff, will truly be unsuccessful as a leader. It is a critical mistake when a principal does not cultivate individuals (most notably teachers) to assist in planning.

Part of Mary's strategy to establish effective communication related to the constant development of team work, motivation, and transparent relations. These transparent interactions led to a high level of satisfaction among all the players of the school. This particular personality trait Mary exhibited was directly related to her role in human relations when managing conflict through the utilization of effective communication skills. Principal's conflict resolution skills, face-to-face communication skills, as well as the emotional demands of the principalship are key issues in the development of effective and successful school principals (Anderson, 1991).

Communication Strategies Established Between Mary and the Assistant Principal

The relationship between Mary and her assistant principal was straightforward. Through my observations, I noticed that the assistant principal was empowered by Mary to be a real administrator, especially when she is not present. Messages were constantly exchanged between the two, and the assistant principal was immediately informed of any administrative or academic changes as such occurred, at both the district and campus levels.

This empowerment and guidance that Mary provided to her assistant principal influenced the manner in which teachers, staff, students, parents and other staff members related to the assistant principal. When Mary was not on campus or was busy with some administrative task, students and parents sought the assistant principal. Although he did not speak Spanish, parents asked the secretary to be the interpreter and were thus able to talk to him about any concern they might have. Despite the language barrier, parents did not feel intimidated when talking to the assistant principal.

The information obtained by the assistant principal insofar as communication strategies between the principal and him were very similar to what I witnessed during my observations, and through the obtained data via interviews with the principal and assistant principal. The assistant principal added that the environment established within the school thus promoting equality between the stakeholders, which permitted confidence and job satisfaction.

Communication Strategies Established Between Mary and the Teachers

Mary also maintained a straightforward type of relationship with her teachers. Teamwork, motivation, and trust were frequently mentioned when teachers describe

their communication with their principal. Mary emphasized that treating teachers humanly is an essential part of her strategies when establishing communication with her teachers.

Teachers also implied there was significant admiration for Mary's academic knowledge base. One of the teachers interviewed told me that Mary was a role model for her. Teachers pointed out that they could turn to Mary when preparing a class, which, in turn, gave them confidence. This confidence allowed teachers to experiment with new approaches in the classroom, aiming at improving their instruction, and consequently, increasing student learning.

According to the teachers, Mary understood the students' learning processes in a detailed manner. It is crucial that principals know and understand theories about human learning, so that they may serve as a resource in enhancing instructional effectiveness. Principals are looked upon as leaders who will inspire teachers to adopt innovative pedagogies in the classroom (Mendez-Morse, 1991).

When establishing this equality in communicating with her teachers, Mary promoted trust among them. She not only focused on instruction, but in building a learning community, both of which were part of her belief system as a principal. This promoted a positive instructional climate. Principals who create an exciting and reinforcing learning environment will find that students and teachers will want to accomplish organizational goals and needs (Krug, 1992).

Mary explained the importance she places on student achievement. She believes that being competitive helped her motivate teachers to improve. Furthermore, Mary revealed that achievement is reached through accountability. Teachers seemed to

share Mary's opinion as well. Therefore, they agreed that standardized tests were necessary; otherwise, no one would be held accountable. Villa (1992) states that effective principals promote an instructional climate that strongly values and reinforces learning and achievement. A positive school climate is established when interest, concern, and support for all students is exhibited. It is most important that principals articulate goals, timelines, and procedures to personnel in order to promote change and foster a climate of unity (Sorenson & Goldsmith, 2009).

Communication Strategies Established Between Mary and Parents

Mary asserted that the main strategy in communicating with parents was the open door policy she adopted and utilized. She believed that by establishing this policy, parents would feel welcome and thus confident to look for her when there was a concern. This open door policy was reinforced by Mary's body language when in the presence of a parent. She believed that an inviting face could make a positive difference when interacting with others.

The open door policy was also reinforced through notes Mary sent to parents through the students, as well as suggestions and recommendations made to parents relative to standardized tests, and updates on current events at the campus. When Mary felt it was important to send a second message to parents, she would make telephone calls to be certain they received the necessary messages. In addition, Mary established communication with parents through her teachers. This was a strategy that also made communication between parents and teachers flow in a more natural and constant manner. Weekly reports were sent home to parents, so that they would know about their child's academic performance. These reports helped parents in taking

measures for the academic improvement of their child and it also improved parental involvement. Kralovec (2006) states the importance of parental involvement strongly correlates with the level of communication between the school and a child's home such is a crucial component to success in kindergarten as well as high school.

Parents interviewed revealed similar views. They seemed to agree with Mary that an open door policy made them feel comfortable when expressing their opinions regarding the education of their children. One parent even reported that she felt a part of the decision making process when it came to the education of her daughter. In other words, this promotion of equality developed by the principal not only relates to teachers and staff members, but to parents as well.

Additionally, parents reported that they appreciated the fact that the principal was a good listener. According to one of the parents interviewed, when someone listened, it was because they cared. Halawah (2005), states that effective communicators are effective listeners. He also explains that experts in communications rate poor listening as the number one problem in human relationships. Principals may want to improve their communication skills by improving their listening skills.

Parents feel relaxed knowing that the person who leads the campus cares for their children. This also promotes trust, which leads to openness from the parents' side when talking to the principal. When parents do not trust the principal, it is more difficult for them to be open minded when discussing issues that concern their children, especially when the issue in question details family life or any particular problems the child might be experiencing.

Another aspect the parents revealed about the manner in which the principal communicated with them was related to the language barrier issue. According to parents, it was a relief to know that the principal understood Spanish and that there was always a translator present when they had to talk to the assistant principal. One parent also pointed out that the assistant principal made parents feel comfortable when talking with him, despite the fact that he did not speak Spanish. Kralovec (2006) explains that when a school has a large number of Spanish speaking students and parents, translators should be required. This enhances the level of effective communication between administrators and parents.

Nevertheless, a drawback in the process of engaging parents in the education of their children is the lack of a parent organization in a school. Mary believed that this was true because of the fact that the school was small, and therefore, short-staffed. Among her plans for next school year was the hiring of a person who would be in charge of a Parent Teacher Association (PTA). Although Mary tried to compensate for the lack of such a person on campus through the utilization of the effective communication strategies, she believed that such was not enough. According to Mary, a PTA would facilitate not only the communication between parents and principal, but the communication between parents and other staff members. Moreover, a PTA would bring parents together in a more formal manner.

Communication Strategies Established Between the Principal and Students

When communicating to her students, Mary revealed that she was someone who is there for the students in case they need her. However, she also made it clear to the students that she is in charge and disciplinary problems do have consequences. Mary

balanced the roles of disciplinarian, principal, counselor, friend, and instructor when communicating with students.

Through Mary's attitude she developed respect among students. Principals play an important role in establishing school discipline, both by effective administration and by personal example. Effective principals are liked and respected, rather than feared, and they communicate a caring attitude for students as well as a willingness to impose punishment if necessary (Halawah, 2005).

When parents described the opinions their children had about the principal, they revealed that the students liked the principal because she promoted rallies for standardized testing and they felt motivated to take the tests, as opposed to fearing the tests. The consequence was that they studied hard to improve their scores, and therefore, achievement was inevitable. One parent even compared her son's results when he was at a previous school to the results he had obtained on this campus. His academic improvement had been significant and his attitude had changed, according to the mother.

The fact that Mary fostered student independence also played a role in increased student achievement. Students understood the curriculum, knew what they had to learn, and the recognized importance of learning. This provided the students with tools to respond to their teachers when they felt the necessity to do so and such also made them feel a part of the decision making process in relation to their own learning process.

This empowerment model utilized by Mary, allowed her teachers to push the students to be as responsible as possible for their own learning, and makes the students become active participants in collaborative learning, in being optimistic about

learning, and in feeling free to express their ideas frequently. In addition, this model fosters the notion that students must actively pursue their educational goals, since these goals were presented to them in a clear and concise manner and in a way that enabled students to reach these goals.

Communication Strategies Established Between Mary and Other Community Members

Although the principal established effective communication strategies with parents, students, and staff members, she did not seem concerned about her relationship with her external publics or other community members. The principal believed that this is an area she does not need to expend extensive energies as the community is small and as a result, people know each other, including her.

Consequently, if she needs pizza or groceries, for example, she just makes a telephone call and negotiates prices with the pertinent leaders.

Summary

The principal established effective communication strategies when interacting with parents, staff members, students, faculty, and community members. These strategies were based on the principal's own experiences as a teacher. She reflected on the outstanding as well as the less effective principals she had worked with, and she noted their characteristics when communicating with teachers and staff members. The principal expanded on her previous principal's effective attitudes and had placed them into practice since she became a principal.

In addition, the principal's personality traits had a huge influence on the manner in which she interacted and communicated with her publics. Among her personality traits, participants pointed out that she was direct, fair, and open. The principal also

developed trust and team building, which provided staff members with confidence to perform their jobs.

The fact that the principal had a solid background as an instructional leader made teachers rely on her for help. Parents recognized this domain the principal had mastered and thus felt confident that the principal would help their children succeed academically. The manner in which the principal related to the students made them perceive her as a friend, disciplinarian, instructor, and principal. As a result, the students admired the principal, according to parent reports.

The research of literature relates that principals should be able to develop strategies to communicate with external publics and other community members. An effective principal should promote a two-way process of communication between the school and the community to build morale, goodwill, cooperation, and support. This process must include, among other characteristics, effective communication with the external publics (Pawlas, 2005).

However, Mary confessed that she did not see this as a relevant part of her job. She stressed more importance on her relationship with students, teachers, and parents. She believed that those were the most important connections for a school to succeed. Moreover, the fact that it was a small rural school influenced her decision not to establish extensive communication strategies with other community members. In small communities, there is not a need, according to Mary. Even without establishing such strategies, Mary accomplished high morale, cooperation, and support from her publics, including the external ones.

Question 2: How do these strategies ensure an inviting and positive school climate and thus serve to increase student achievement?

The most relevant factor of an effective school is an effective school principal (Whitaker, 1997). According to Halawah (2005), establishing a positive and nurturing school climate is an important steps in a long series of high expectations of principals. Mary has transformed her campus climate and student achievement in less than two years, one year as an assistant principal, and one as a principal.

School Climate

Despite that fact that little is known about how principal-teacher communication can positively affect school climate (Halawah, 2005), this study has revealed that effective channels of communication between principal and teachers can positively affect school climate.

Most research indicates that successful urban schools enhance school climate by supporting a connection that reaches out to students and families in a caring and respectful manner (Osher & Fleishman, 2005). Nevertheless, one can postulate that the same can be true in relation to rural schools most notably the one involved in this study. The caring and respectful manner noted above can be readily correlated with how Mary stands outside the school to welcome students and parents each morning. Furthermore, Mary makes her teachers aware that she is available whenever students and their parents need her.

Through the interviews with Mary, data obtained revealed that she enhanced the school's climate in a positive manner by defining what needed to be changed. In order to do this, Mary identified specific values and relationships that she should preserve, as

well as what she considered to be prejudicial to the school campus. Mary's first actions as principal was an administrative transfer for teachers who did not share the same values she considered vital for climate improvement and consequently, student achievement.

Second, Mary recognized the importance of her actions. Speeches and announcements are not enough. To lead challenging reform efforts, a principal must be willing to make personnel changes, revisions in decision-making policies, and positively enhance collegial relationships (Reeves, 2007).

Relationships changed from the moment Mary became the principal, according to reports from the participants interviewed for this study. Furthermore, Mary values what she actually does. Reeves (2007) explains that the greatest impediment to meaningful change is the gap between what leaders say they value and what they actually do. Staff members are not seduced by a leader's claim of "collaborative culture" when every meeting is a series of lectures, announcements, and warnings.

Finally, Mary made use of different change-oriented tools to improve the climate of her campus. Christensen, Marx, & Stevenson (2006), present different tools, such as rituals and traditions; power tools such as coercion; management tools such as training, procedures and measurement systems; and leadership tools such as role modeling and vision. Data collected reveals that Mary used all the tools described, with the exception of coercion. When she had to use her power, she did what was necessary, including the removal of teachers. Data also reveals that the most visible tools used by Mary were role modeling and vision development.

The manner in which Mary communicates and interacts with her publics has largely influenced necessary change. Mary developed effective communication techniques, along with shared values, which became important factors in her relationship with her publics. She was able to reach consensus among staff on rules that affected the students in a positive manner. For example, teachers started valuing standardized tests and their change of attitude was reflected in student behaviors.

Along with the change of attitude, there was academic support provided by the principal and the result was improvement in scores in a significantly short period of time. This change impacted campus climate, because with results, teachers started believing in the principal's capability as a leader. Improvement in school climate enhances the principal's effectiveness, teacher's performance, and students' achievement and behavior (Halawah, 2005).

Student Achievement

Research literature reveals that there is a relationship between positive school climate and student achievement. The principal's performance influences student achievement, including cognitive behavior, through the mediating influence of school climate (Korir and Karr-Kidwell, 2000). Mary's performance relative to increased achievement was visible. According to parents, teachers, and staff members, she has developed her students' power to excel and achieve through motivation.

In order to motivate students, Mary encouraged and supported students' initiatives in seeking success, and guided students to discover their own strengths and weaknesses. This was accomplished through curriculum development, where students have access to what they are expected to learn, where their performance is satisfactory,

and where improvement is needed. In addition, motivation included showing students and their parents how much they had improved, through daily reports sent home by the teachers. Moreover, Mary recommended that teachers display enthusiasm for standardized tests and thus, made test-taking fun.

Mary also involved students in active learning by encouraging their participation in reading classes, for example. By developing such a strategy, Mary engaged students in two-way communication. This two-way communication is a subtle and important tool because in most learning environments students are passive. Furthermore, students were directed toward independence. The more a student does, the more he believes he can do it.

Mary pointed out to me: "When I was a student I had no idea of my curriculum. I did not know what I had to study, where I had to improve. That is why I want my students to be in charge of their own education. They are able to see their progress, make self-assessments, through checking the list of teaching items they have and they know they can ask for help when needed." By doing this, Mary guides students to recognize the value of being independent and thus taking responsibility for their own learning as the outcome of this empowerment process.

However, it was only possible for Mary to do this because of her effective relationship with her teachers. These good relations were created because of Mary's open communication channels with her teachers. Through her communicative efforts, Mary modeled lessons, provided suggestions, empowered teachers, listened to them and effectively implemented their suggestions, and most certainly made the teachers part of her team as well as her educational beliefs. As Halawah (2005) reveals, this

relation can only be developed by providing the knowledge and information, materials and supplies that support the work of teachers and staff members as they go about accomplishing the mission of the school.

Approaches that successfully promote social and emotional learning include demonstration (for example, caring and role playing), direct instruction, modeling, practice, coaching, and support for generalizing the skills in new settings. These strategies are most powerful when implemented schoolwide so that all staff can coach and reinforce the skills that students are learning (Design for Change, 2003).

Among the approaches utilized by Mary, is the caring connection she was able to develop with her students through her teachers. One of the qualities of an effective communicator is ensuring care and understanding between students and teachers (Gemmet, 1977). The constant grade-level meetings served to motivate teachers toward improving their student scores, which allowed Mary to know each and every student of her campus.

As a result of Mary's leadership, students portrayed both the principal and the teachers as people who care for them, according to what the parent participants revealed. Students who believe that their teachers care about them perform better on tests (Ryan & Patrick, 2001).

Summary

In order to improve student achievement, Mary first changed the campus climate. Changes relative to campus climate started with the change of faculty. Next, teacher selection was based on Mary's core values and beliefs. According to Mary, her core values and beliefs include caring for the students and making certain they improve

relative to their academic achievement, which should be the ultimate goal of any educational leader. Finally, Mary's communication strategies with her different publics had a positive influence on campus climate.

Through the communication strategies established with parents, Mary was able to engage the parents in the education of their children, and encourage them to become active participants in the decision-making process relative to their children's education. In other words, she created a climate of confidence and teamwork between the school and parents. Furthermore, Mary ensured that effective communication was in place and that parents knew that their participation had a direct impact on student achievement. As McNeil and Patin (2007) state, parent involvement has a positive impact on student achievement and student success in school.

Parents can make a important contribution to their child's education in several ways. First, parents can provide a home setting that promotes and reinforces what is taught at school. Second, parents can contribute to the knowledge and skills acquired at school, enrich the instructional program, and provide additional resources as a means of support. Third, parents can serve as advocates by helping their children make their way through the school system and help the system become more responsive to all families. Finally, as decisions makers, parents can work with the school in solving joint problems (Henderson & Berla, 1994). Schools welcome parents in each of these capacities and know that their active involvement contributes significantly to the achievement of students.

Through the communication strategies established with staff members, Mary could make them aware of her vision and furthermore ensure that they were also

responsible for their students' education. The secretary explained: "We know that all the hard work is to benefit the students."

When communicating with her teachers, Mary made them aware of their responsibility in relation to their students' learning and independence. The awareness in relation to teachers' responsibility was created through constant communication with the teachers. This communication involved grade level meetings, and making teachers aware of the importance of teaching and learning through test score improvements. Meetings were always supported by the principal's suggestions and recommendations, as well as the principal's acceptance of teachers' suggestions and recommendations. Teamwork was created and goals and beliefs were shared. Consequently, increased student achievement was inevitable.

Mary changed the school climate in order to achieve student improvement by establishing interest, concern, care and support for all students. Mary also articulated goals, timelines and procedures to support change and ultimately promoted a climate of unity. This new climate created room for increased student achievement.

Question 3: Which communication strategies does the principal utilize to receive and provide feedback to: a) the assistant principal; b) teachers; c) parents; d) students; e) other community members?

Communication Strategies Utilized by the Principal to Provide and Receive Feedback from the Assistant Principal.

Providing Feedback to the Assistant Principal

From the interviews conducted with the principal and the assistant principal, data indicates that the manner in which the principal provided feedback to her assistant

principal was direct and simple. According to Dicks (2005), feedback should be straightforward. Another point emphasized by the assistant principal was that the principal's feedback allowed him to know exactly where he stood. Peter (the assistant principal), also pointed out that the principal valued his work and took into consideration his ideas and suggestions. The need to be valued is very strong in humans, and humans will go to great lengths to ensure that this need is satisfied (RWK Enterprises, 2008).

Receiving Feedback from the Assistant Principal

As far as receiving feedback from her assistant principal, Mary described that she is open and receptive to his recommendations. The assistant principal also informed me that he feels confident to provide his principal with feedback when necessary. Although the research literature supports the utilization of 360-degree feedback in schools, which would be a more formal manner for employees to provide feedback to their administrators, this rural campus does not adopt this particular procedure. Data indicated that stakeholders, including the assistant principal, did not see the need for such a formal procedure, because feedback was provided to the principal when necessary.

Communication Strategies Utilized by the Principal to Provide and Receive Feedback from Teachers.

Providing Feedback to Teachers

Teachers reported that when feedback was provided to them, the principal did it through motivation and inspiration, not criticism. The principal pointed out that she interacted with people in different ways, respecting their differences in personality traits.

RWK Enterprises (2008) asserts that providing a highly motivational environment is challenging because one size does not fit all. Each person has unique biological, emotional, cognitive, or social forces that activate and direct behavior. This impacts feedback, which impacts organizational success.

Teachers also mentioned that when feedback was provided to them, the principal did it very specifically. For example, when test scores in math were not as expected, the principal identified the points that needed improvement and provided suggestions to the teacher. Furthermore, teachers explained that the principal provided constant feedback so they could work on what had to be improved without having to wait for the formal evaluation process, which happened once a year. RWK Enterprises (2008) specify that feedback should be specific, as opposed to vague, and timely. "Providing feedback that is current is more effective than waiting for the next performance review. the quicker a desirable behavior is reinforced, the more likely it will be repeated" (p. 2).

Another topic teachers described was feedback received through e-mails. According to the teachers, the principal sent out daily e-mails, reminding the teachers of what needed to be accomplished, as it related to administrative and academic matters. Teachers noted that the daily e-mails helped maintain their focus on what needs to be accomplished. One teacher stated that the strategies utilized by the principal to provide feedback to the teachers allowed her know exactly what she had to accomplish.

As for the formal evaluation process, teachers reported that the principal provided them with some time to assimilate all the domains and specific target areas in which they would be evaluated. This opportunity created teacher confidence when having to discuss the actual evaluation with the principal. Teachers also reported that

the evaluation process was concrete and straightforward, and if there was anything they did not understand, they had the principal's help with tangible and solid ideas which could be implemented, thus aiming at their improvement. In other words, there was always a coaching and mentoring section accompanying feedback, as well as the development of a goal or action plan that followed feedback.

Receiving Feedback from Teachers

Teachers provided feedback to their principal in an informally manner. Opportunities for them to do so were created in the grade-level meetings. One teacher also mentioned that there were specific meetings in which teachers can speak up and discuss any issue that might be bothering them.

Although there was not a formal 360-degree feedback process, teachers reported that some of the 360-degree characteristics were actually being applied. Teachers revealed that when the principal identified a need or a problem they might have, she never hesitated to help them improve. Furthermore, if the principal perceived certain instructional strengths, teachers possessed, she would commend them, and have them share such strengths with their peers, in order to provide them with ideas for improvement. The 360-degree feedback activity was not a stand-alone event. An outcome of any 360-degree feedback process is developing a plan of action. This should be more than an exercise in goal setting, it should be a blueprint for achieving and sustaining behavioral change. Some actions involve identifying a developmental need and are thus built upon as a method of identifying a previously unrecognized strength which can be capitalized upon (Chappelow, 1998).

Communication Strategies Utilized by the Principal to Provide and Receive Feedback from Parents.

Providing Feedback to Parents

Parents explained that the principal provided feedback to them through letters and notes sent to their children by their teachers. Parents seemed very appreciative of the fact that the principal encouraged teachers to provide this type of feedback to them. In addition, parents commended the daily reports teachers sent to them. It is important for a principal to facilitate communication between classroom teachers and parents (The Survival Guide for School Administrators, 2008).

Data collected from parents and principal suggested that the manner in which the principal provided feedback to them, made them aware of their importance relative to student achievement. According to & Wikelund (2008), principal feedback to parents should focus on communicating to parents that their involvement and support makes a great deal of difference in their children's school performance.

Parents explained that the principal provided suggestions on what they can do to improve their children's standardized test scores. Although the principal's suggestions were simple recommendations, such as "feed you child well" or "make him go to bed early," parents appreciated these suggestions, because, "it shows that the principal cares."

Through the constant feedback messages the principal sent to parents through the teachers, parents felt that they belonged to the school without necessarily having to be present. However, when parents did need to be at school to discuss matters involving their children, they felt welcomed, due to the manner in which the principal

interacted with them while they were on campus. For parents, being involved does not have to mean being at school every day. In fact, it does not necessarily mean going to the school at all. Parents can have a positive effect on student achievement by promoting learning at home and by reinforcing what is taught in school (Henderson & Berla, 1994).

Although the literature suggests that principals should also provide parents with concrete and practical suggestions as to how they can support their child's education at home, even if they rarely come to the school building, data gathered did not indicate that these procedures were followed by Mary. The following list based on suggestions from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (2002) provides a starting point. It suggests that parents do the following: 1) Read with, to, and in the presence of their children; 2) Reinforce the value of a family routine involving homework; 3) Monitor the use of television; and 4) Offer praise and encouragement to their children.

Parents also reported that the constant and immediate feedback the principal provided them kept them well informed about their children's education. A study conducted by Reynolds, Mavrogenes, Hagemann, & Bezruczko (1993) states that informed parents attain their expectations for the level of education of their children. Additionally, parents' satisfaction with their children's school is a consistent predictor of both academic achievement and social adjustment.

Receiving Feedback from Parents

There was an open channel of communication for parents to provide feedback to the principal at the rural school studied. According to the parent participants, the

manner in which the principal provided them feedback inspired them to provide feedback to the principal. The principal's openness and respect for parents made parents feel comfortable when reporting to the principal any dissatisfaction they might have experienced in relation to the school.

The fact that parents could be understood in their own language was also appreciated. This helped connect parents with the principal, and consequently, with the teachers.

Communication Strategies Utilized by the Principal to Provide and Receive Feedback from the Students

Providing Feedback to Students

The principal provided feedback to students through the teachers and through her own interactions with the students. The teachers informed the students of their performance on a weekly basis. In addition, the principal encouraged teachers to motivate students, and involve them in active learning. Furthermore, students are provided with tools for self-assessment.

The principal also provided feedback to the students through the reading lessons conducted. This was a manner in which the principal could be in contact with the students, and thus exchange academic and disciplinary information with their respective teachers. As a result, there was a flow of information and knowledge from principal to teacher and from teacher to student.

The principal also made use of discipline problems to provide feedback to students. When a student had lunch detention or was referred to the principal, the

principal took time to talk to the student and further clarified discipline rules and pointed out where the student needed improvement.

Receiving Feedback from Students

When parents were asked about the manner in which their children communicate with the principal, the data revealed that the students utilized an informal type of communication. When observing a conversation between the principal and a student who had been referred to the office for disciplinary reasons, the principal not only provided feedback to the student, but also requested feedback from the student. Through simple questions, the principal obtained information relative to the student's opinion in relation not only to the disciplinary referral and subsequent consequences, but to the school operations in general.

Nevertheless, the study did not indicate that specific feedback relative to the principal's work was provided by the students. The study suggested that student feedback is relative to the students' perceived learning and performance. In other words, if student achievement increased, it meant that the principal was doing a good job.

Communications Strategies Utilized by the Principal When Providing and Receiving Feedback from Other Community Members

Although research indicates that the development of communication strategies as related to providing and receiving feedback from external publics or other community members is imperative for principals, this did not seem to be the case insofar as this study was concerned. Mary revealed that she did not place a great amount of

importance in communicating with other community members as she does with the school's faculty and staff members, students, and parents.

Providing Feedback to Other Community Members

According to Mary, faculty, students, parents, and staff members were the most important stakeholders. If a principal cultivates a relationship with stakeholders and keeps them well informed and feeling a part of the team, communication within the organization will flow naturally and effectively (Sharp and Walker, 2003). Nevertheless, Mary found it relatively important to maintain an informal relationship with other community members, with feedback following the same procedures. For example, if the "pizza guy" delayed the pizza delivery when requested, Mary pointed that problem out to him and tried to order pizza from another pizza establishment. If this happened, the "other pizza place" would have to be in a nearby town, since the community had only one pizza delivery establishment. Fortunately, this never occurred.

Mary also explained that these informal methods of providing feedback to other community members were due to the size and location of the school campus. Mary believed that if she were to work at an urban campus, the contingencies of her job would force her to develop more sophisticated strategies to provide feedback to other community members. These more sophisticated strategies would include formal meetings with these publics to brief them about their performance, as well as the provision of cost analyses, if pertinent.

Receiving Feedback from Other Community Members

Mary believed that when other community members wished to provide her with feedback insofar as her relationship with them was concerned, they felt free to do so. As

relations were very informal, community members could simply make a telephone call and inform Mary when something was not happening according to their expectations, or vice-versa. In other words, due to the informality of the community, external publics or other community members did not feel the need to schedule formal meetings with Mary to provide her with feedback.

The positive aspect of this type of relationship was that time was saved, and as a consequence, issues were resolved in a much faster period of time. Nevertheless, the negative aspect of such was that if or when feedback and the intertwined relationships did not flow as expected, it was difficult to replace those publics (especially in the case of local businessmen), due to the lack of options because of the limited size of the community and the businesses within the community.

Summary

When providing feedback to her stakeholders, Mary utilized positive feedback. As Toth & Erwin (2001) reveal, positive feedback stresses strengths and positive aspects of a group member's behavior. Positive feedback can also be used to reinforce productive behaviors. Mary did not provide negative feedback, because she believed that it would prejudice relationships on campus. Research also indicates that negative feedback provides information about a group's member's behaviors that interfere with his or her interpersonal relations that have other negative consequences (Morran, Stockton & Bond, 1991).

Positive feedback also implies having open relationships, which lead to direct, straightforward and detailed feedback. According to participants' responses, the feedback they received from their principal served to indicate to them where they stood,

and where improvement was needed. Moreover, due to the details and suggestions provided by the principal, they knew the procedures that had to be taken in order to improve their performance where needed. According to MacNamara (1997-2006), people struggle with issues when there is a lack of some specific piece of information. Often, the best help is assisting the person to come to a better understanding of the issue at hand, how it can be developed, and how participants involved can identify actions to address the issue more appropriately and effectively.

The procedure followed by the principal when providing feedback involved constant informal and immediate pieces of feedback. According to Imperato (1998), feedback can involve a natural and helpful conversation about performance. Imperato also reveals that feedback should be immediate. In other words, feedback delayed is feedback denied. This study suggested that the success in the approach of providing feedback utilized by Mary was due to clarity when delivering feedback, emphasis on the positive, specificity, targeting behavior rather than the person, and being descriptive rather than evaluative.

As far as receiving feedback from her publics, Mary utilized the same methods she employed when providing feedback to them. She was open and receptive to their recommendations and suggestions. Mary indicated to her publics that she was accessible to their feedback by revealing in actions and deeds that she liked and respected them. She faced them when interacting, and her body orientation played an important role in her interactions with her publics. Amundson (1993) states that one study found 93 percent of all messages are sent non-verbally, and only 7 percent thought what is orally stated.

As a consequence, feedback was provided to Mary through informal interactions. Her publics felt comfortable to provide suggestions to her. In terms of 360-degree feedback, some strategies were utilized. However, these strategies did not follow the pertinent theory. They simply were part of the principal's beliefs and personality traits. Although Mary did not have knowledge of 360-degree feedback, she did receive feedback from her publics, yet in a more informal manner.

Discussions of Other Themes that Emerged During the Study

Trust and its Relation to Communication to Improve School Climate and Obtain Student Achievement

Effective communication is one of the critical elements as related to trust (Vodicka, 2006). Research indicates that teacher trust of a principal is a strong predictor of the level of trust that teachers will have with students, parents, and colleagues (Brewster & Railsback, 2003). Data collected from the participant interviews revealed that the participants indicated trust was a tremendously appreciated value when interacting with their principal. Findings also suggested that trust enabled the principal's different publics to positively impact student achievement. Trust, according to the study participants, was created through the principals' interactions with her publics.

Principal's care, consistency, and communication were also words used by participants when describing trust. Trust was most certainly a probable reason for the success of the school as a whole, including a positive campus climate and an increase in student achievement.

According to Vodicka, consistency means that messages to different audiences, such as parents, faculty, staff members, students, and the community have the same

meaning. Through the data triangulated in this study, it was clear that perceptions correlated with the methods in which messages were conveyed by the principal. One of the parents revealed that on campus everyone spoke the same language, thus a consistency in message was absolute. As for care, the literature indicates that it is associated with compassion. Vodicka (2006) states that “compassion can be established by showing confidence in the abilities of others and recognizing their contributions” (p. 29). This was an exact behavior of Mary, the school principal.

As for communication, participants detailed that the manner in which feedback was provided to them made them feel secure. An expression commonly used by the participants was: “I know where I stand.” According to Gimbell (2003), feedback provided on personal and organizational performance builds trust by creating a sense of susceptibility and presupposing that this exposure will not be subjugated to abuse from others.

When describing the trust they had in their principal, teachers also mentioned the principal’s competence as a quality that allowed them rely on her. According to Bryk & Schneider (2002), competence is defined as the “execution of an individual’s role responsibilities” (p. 24). Thus, it is imperative for trust development, to exist in the principal-follower role/relationship.

Summary

This study suggested that developing trust was imperative for a positive school climate and for organizational improvement, as well as increased student achievement. The level of a teacher trust for a principal is predictive of other relationships in the

school environment. Improving those relationships improves teaching, learning, and student achievement (Vodicka, 2006).

Motivation and its Relation to Communication to Improve School Climate and Obtain Student Achievement

Data collected from the interviews indicated that students, teachers and parents felt motivated relative to standardized tests. This meant that students did their best to achieve good scores, and parents helped them by following some of the principal's suggestions as such concerned nutrition, for example. Teachers also felt encouraged to seek new ideas and suggestions, both from colleagues and the principal.

Teachers indicated that the principal motivated them through effective communication, especially through positive feedback. In addition, they also pointed out that the principal showed them how to use motivation with students to achieve goals. Renchler (1992) reveals that school leaders have a number of channels through which they can shape a school's culture, or climate. Effective communication is central to successfully achieving goals. However, actions must demonstrate what the words convey.

Mary was able (through her effective communication skills and leadership styles) to transfer her own motivation to achieving goals to the other participants in the educational process. As Leithwood and Montgomery (1984) state "highly effective principals seek out opportunities to clarify goals with staff, students, parents, and other relevant members of the school community. They strive toward consensus about these goals and actively encourage the use of such goals in departmental and divisional

planning. Such behavior can be explained by the principal's knowledge of human functioning and the cautions consistent with such knowledge" (p. 31).

As a consequence, Mary influenced her stakeholders positively by transferring to them her beliefs and values and her motivation techniques – all of which created a positive campus climate and served to increase student achievement. By shaping the school's instructional climate, thereby influencing the attitudes of teachers, students, parents, and the community at large toward education, school leaders increase both student and teacher motivation and indirectly impact learning gains (Klug, 1989, p.253).

Motivation is also exhibited through the manner in which a principal establishes evaluation and assessment procedures for the students. Goals regarding the nature and use of evaluation and assessment procedures include increasing students' sense of competence and self-efficacy, increasing their awareness of their unique sets of talents, and encouraging them to understand failure as a natural part of learning and life (Renchler, 1992).

Summary

Mary motivated her stakeholders by developing a clear method of communicating her beliefs to teachers, students, staff members, and parents. Furthermore, she worked with students, teachers, parents, and others to establish goals that led to academic achievement and a positive campus climate.

The principal also offered teachers instructional programs that include alternatives to traditional educational practices with the idea that they might be more effective in motivating students and thus improving academic scores. Finally, Mary

expressed through her own actions that learning is a lifelong process that can be rewarding.

Rural Schools versus Urban Schools

As described in Chapter 4, Mary revealed that if she were to work at a larger school, she would have more personnel and as a result, could delegate more. Nevertheless, communication strategies are always important. It would be fair to state that if Mary were to work at an urban campus, her leadership style and her communication techniques would be an essential part of her job performance, and would consequently help improve campus climate and increase student achievement.

A fact that can be examined is that before Mary was the principal at the rural school, student achievement was low, and campus climate quite negative, according to the data collected from the interviews with participants. Participants pointed out that the positive change was directly influenced by Mary's personality traits and communication style, along with her motivation techniques and the development of trust, she instilled.

Although there is not much pertinent literature about the differences in communication styles between rural principals and urban principals, this study has indicated that effective communication strategies are essential for increased student achievement and a positive campus climate in rural schools. In addition, the study has also revealed that messages must be clearly and effectively communicated by a principal to stakeholders as an effective method of imparting leaders knowledge of instruction, as well as the availability and accessibility of the principal to the stakeholders.

The above characteristics, as revealed in the study can significantly enhance the development of trust and motivation. Trust and motivation will then translate into a positive campus climate, organizational improvement and increased student achievement.

Conclusions

When developing and establishing communication strategies with publics, Mary enhanced interpersonal relationships through vision, humor, accessibility, team-building skills, and genuine praise, all of which helped to create a positive school climate. Principals earn faculty and staff respect by articulating a clear vision of their school's mission, and moreover, must work collegially to accomplish agreed-on goals and objectives (Vann, 1994).

Mary removed communication barriers by being accessible and scheduling constant meetings with teachers, and by ensuring a constant, yet informal, exchange of feedback. According to Irmsher (1996), meetings and in-house communiqués, combined with private negotiations, can eliminate interpersonal obstacles before they become difficult problems that are difficult to resolve.

A sense of team-work can be nurtured through an effort to help each staff member achieve his or her potential. When creating opportunities for informal relationships, such as having lunch with her teachers, Mary utilized a sense of humor when interacting with her publics. A study by Pierson and Bredeson (1993) reveals that principals use humor for four major purposes: 1) Creating and improving school climate; 2) Relating to teachers the principal's understanding of the complexities and demands of their professional work; 3) Breaking down the rigidity of bureaucratic structures by

humanizing and personalizing interpersonal communications; and 4) When appropriate, delivering sanctions and other necessary unpleasanties.

In summary, all of the above noted communication strategies were utilized by Mary. Furthermore, as principal, she developed trust and motivation, which resulted in a positive school climate, where effective feedback and increased student achievement became the norm.

CHAPTER VI

IMPLICATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

This chapter is an opportunity for personal reflection relative to the scholastic journey as produced by this study. I will begin with a summary of the study, discuss implications for practitioners, and follow with recommendations for further research. This chapter concludes with a personal reflection, describing my enthusiasm for immersing myself into the world of effective communication as exemplified at one rural school in far West Texas.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe the subjective experiences of a rural school principal relative to the manner in which the principal utilized communication skills, including feedback, to ensure organizational improvement and student success. Particular areas of interest included: 1) Communication strategies established between the principal and her different publics, such as, assistant principal, teachers, parents, students, and other community members; 2) How these strategies translated into a positive school climate and increased student achievement; and 3) Which communication strategies, as utilized by the rural school principal, served as effective approaches to receiving and providing feedback to differing publics, such as, assistant principal, teachers, parents, students, and other community members. This study also sought to determine if the campus location and size had any affect and/or influence on the communication strategies incorporated and utilized.

A qualitative research methodology known as descriptive case study was used to analyze the data collected from interviews and observations with the principal and with

the principal's different publics. In order to strengthen the validity of the study, interviews were conducted with professionals and community members who interacted with the principal, specifically, the assistant principal, the secretary, three teachers, three parents, one custodian, the school librarian, and the cafeteria manager, were interviewed. Data related to the students were collected through the interviews with their parents. All information collected was used to triangulate the principal data. A model of principal's written communication, formal evaluation forms conducted with teachers, and numerical data relative to standardized tests were also used to validate the study.

Implications for Practitioners

Several implications can be obtained from the findings of this study.

Communication is one of the most fundamental processes of effective school management, and effective communication is most essential for any organization. Not only is communication essential for information sharing and decision making, it is also vital for leveraging productive relationships with internal and external publics (Gale Group, 2006). Each of the participants interviewed relative to this study considered communication as the main reason for the success of the rural West Texas school.

Feedback was another essential aspect of the communicative process. The active participants reported that feedback was non-judgmental, straightforward and positive. As a consequence, it promoted personal and organizational improvement, along with individual self-confidence. Furthermore, participants suggested that both motivation and trust were essential factors for the good relationships on campus. Data collected indicated that trust originated from the fact that stakeholders view the principal as someone who does right by all the parties involved. Trust in organizations depends

on the reasonable assumption by followers that leaders can be dependent to do the right thing (Christenson, 2007). The study also indicated that accountability is directly related to trust. Christenson, moreover, reveals that the building of trust in organizations requires leaders to hold groups accountable. Both the principal and teachers pointed out to me that they believe in accountability as a means of improving student achievement.

Participants in this study described motivation as part of the principal's communication strategies to improve school climate and thus increase student achievement. Klug (1989) states that school leaders can influence levels of motivation by shaping the school's instructional climate, which in turn shapes the attitudes of teachers, students, parents, and the community at large.

The principal explained that her desire to succeed influences other stakeholders' desire to succeed. The principal cited as an example, her competitiveness, which makes her want to achieve even the impossible. Leithwood and Montgomery (1984) note that personal motivation, on the part of the principal, translates into motivation among students and staff through the functioning of goals. Establishing, communicating, and creating consensus around goals related to motivation and educational achievement can be a central feature of a school leader's own value system, as is the case relative to the principal in this study.

Findings of this study also suggest that motivation, through communication strategies, is an ongoing process that requires creativity and energy. The research literature reveals that it is impossible to devise a single, programmatic approach that will

automatically make poorly motivated become students into motivated and thus academically turn into good students (Renchler, 1992).

Mary, the principal in this study, developed two-way communication strategies involving her faculty and staff members, as well as faculty and students through a direct style of language. In addition, her non-verbal communication skills revealed to the receiver of the message that she is receptive, nurturing and concerned about her students' improvement. Mary's personality traits also influenced the manner in which she communicated with her publics. According to Grossnicke (1989), principals should analyze the ways that motivation operates in their own lives and thus develop a clear method of communicating motivation to teachers and students. Furthermore, principals should demonstrate through their own actions that learning is a lifelong process that can be pleasurable for its own sake.

Among the themes which emerged, as the result of this study, is one in particular - the fact that the school is small and rural plays an important role in organizational improvement, student achievement, and principal success. Although the majority of the literature about communication in schools relates to urban schools, this study indicates that effective communication strategies are equally important in rural schools. This study also reveals that the rural school's improved performance and subsequent enhancement of student achievement were only possible because of effective principal/follower communication.

Teachers were constantly informed about curriculum goals, appropriate pedagogical and assessment practices. In other words, through the principal's communication strategies, a message was conveyed that the establishment and

maintenance of professional learning communities are essential, along with a distributed leadership approach. Expertise became a shared resource among teachers, which reduced reliance on individual personalities.

Relationships became the focal point of the change in school climate and student achievement. Relationships are considered crucial by the principal and have been fostered by all stakeholders, including staff members, teachers, students, parents, administrators and other community members. Furthermore, this study also revealed that due to the size and location of the school, formal methods of communications with businessmen and other community members are not necessarily essential for the success of the school. In sum, this study reveals that effective relationships and communication at all levels is essential for facilitating academic achievement outcomes in a rural school.

Implications for Future Research

There are many possibilities for further research based on this study. Each of the themes that emerged from the study could be a separate research project – for example, examining policies affecting rural schools when hiring principals or staff members. It would be interesting to study why this rural campus had to change principals three times in such short period of time to necessitate appropriate and effective change. Is Mary a fluke or are most principals in rural schools like Mary?

Another possible topic that emerged is the role families play in their children's academic success. Through my interviews, parents told of how they felt comfortable and confident when invited to become active participants in the education of their

children. For a future study, fathers could also be interviewed, as I only had the opportunity to interview mothers.

Another future study could look into a life of an urban school student who relocates to a rural school. The perceptions of this child, as relates to the communication strategies developed by his/her principal, would be interesting to investigate.

Furthermore, the study should be conducted in different settings, in larger urban schools with strong unions, in places such as Chicago, Philadelphia, and New York. Moreover, this research could also be developed in other countries. Developing the same research in different countries could help determine the role culture plays in communication.

Another relevant topic that could be examined is the role gender plays insofar as principal communication strategies are utilized. This study focused on a female principal. However, findings might be different if the main participant were a male.

In addition, the topic of conflict and its associated implications could be explored for further research. This is mainly due to the fact that not much information was obtained through the observations and interviews relative to this study insofar as conflict is concerned.

Finally, it would be interesting to seek research findings in a study portraying the manners in which a principal utilizes his/her communication skills in a context where accountability is not present.

In terms of this study, I deeply enjoyed using the case study approach as a methodology. Inquiring into the life of a principal and being able to add to my experience

and expertise was gratifying. However, if I were to do the same study again, I would probably shadow the custodians and the cafeteria manager to try to obtain more information from them. Of course other methods could have been used, such as ethnography or quantitative surveys. However, in-depth analysis through interviews and observations seemed more enriching to me.

I chose the public relations theory to frame my study, but as I researched more in depth into the study, I could perceive that other theories might have been incorporated as well. The many theories on motivation and trust would have been appealing to research. In addition, approaching the same type of study using sociological methods and theories could possibly have found different results.

A Personal Reflection

Writing this dissertation culminates a journey that began 13 years ago when I became an assistant principal. As I began my transition from teacher to administrator, I began to realize how important communication is as a leadership approach skill within a school. In my associations and comparisons, I noticed that although teachers must have the capability to convey their messages while teaching, it is much easier to communicate to only two groups of people (in this case, the students, and to their parents), than it is to communicate to faculty, staff members, students, parents, and other external publics, as an administrator must do on a daily basis.

A frustration developed as I tried to do my best, but was impeded from more actively participating in certain tasks as related to my job as an assistant principal. This was due to the fact that my principal dominated the “arena” and almost never delegated any tasks to the assistant. Reflecting back in time, and trying to understand why she

exhibited such a behavior, possible answers may include the fact that trust was missing. After having conducted this research and observed the manner in which Mary, the principal of this study, interacted with her assistant principal and teachers, I can now understand how trust is developed and maintained. Mary allows her staff members to know and understand what is expected of them. As it relates to the assistant principal, he is the leader when Mary is not present. Such actions were observable by the way staff members, students, teachers and parents, approached him, in the absence of the principal.

I remember requesting from my principal what my tasks as an assistant principal would entail. I also remember her answer to me, "It depends". As a consequence, I did not have the necessary autonomy to develop in my work. I remember once when some parents came to talk to me about their children's tuition. I had no idea as how to respond to these parents. This was not because I was ignorant; rather, I had not been previously informed or involved in such situations.

This study revealed to me that when autonomy is provided and professionals know where they stand, staff develops self-confidence in the performance of their jobs, and trust and motivation are created. Again, when I compare my career as an assistant principal with Peter, the assistant principal in this study, I see that as a consequence, a lack of communication existed as related to my job. As a result, I became insecure in my position simply because I did not know where I stood. Furthermore, my communication with my principal, teachers and other community members, including parents, was compromised.

From a teacher's perspective, I remember one teacher saying to me during a meeting that she was tired of the top-down approach at the school where I served as assistant principal. She noted that her opinions were never taken into consideration. I also remember her mentioning that she did not understand how someone who had not taught for so long a time was capable of telling teachers what to do. When I remember these dialogues, I immediately compare them to the ones I observed while conducting this case study. Mary's teachers have a voice and everyone's opinion is considered. Furthermore, Mary sets the example, when she gives reading lessons to the students. Through these lessons, she is able to acquire knowledge of the students' academic skills, and thus exchange information with teachers and be more helpful in suggesting and recommending different activities, approaches, and teaching methods.

Additionally, the topic of feedback was one that led me to this study. As an assistant principal, I struggled with my insecurity which originated during the time of the lack of communication and autonomy from the principal. However, as time went by I seemed to overcome this insecurity as I started treating teachers differently than the manner utilized by my principal. As a result, I was able to gain the trust of the teachers with whom I worked. With the greater level of trust developed between the teachers and me, the assistant principal, the more I gave to these teachers and to my professional role. Naturally, I desired feedback relative to my work and sought feedback from my principal. I remember one day requesting certain feedback and my principal replied with another question: "What do you think?" I answered that I felt I still had a long way to go, but I also felt that I had improved in certain areas and needed more concrete feedback to know exactly where improvement was most needed.

Unfortunately, there was no answer. I was an assistant principal for more than four years and never had any informal or formal evaluation. This study served to reveal to me that when feedback is constantly provided, either formally or informally, through a direct manner, it promotes self-confidence in employees, and consequently, the employees have improved job performances.

In terms of my experience as an assistant principal in providing feedback to teachers, a formal evaluation form was provided when I observed a class. I remember completing the observation of a teacher and discussing what was right and wrong relative to the teaching observed. Unfortunately, there was no place on the form for any practical suggestions or recommendations. I provided those suggestions, when needed, in an informal manner. I remember suggesting to my principal that a different evaluation form be developed, but again, there was no response.

Comparing to all the opportunities Mary's teachers have to receive feedback, I can see how uncomplicated it is for them to know where they stand in terms of their performance, and in what areas they need to improve. Feedback is a natural process on Mary's campus. In terms of providing feedback to the principal, Mary's stakeholders are very fortunate, as this study has already revealed, as they are provided with an open-door policy by which they can approach the principal at any time, about any topic, without any fear of reprisal.

When comparing the feedback Mary's stakeholders provide her with the opportunities I had to provide feedback to my principal, both as a teacher and as an assistant principal, the difference is quite stark-as night is to day. There was simply no feedback, and to be honest, at that time, I had never heard the expression 360-degree

feedback. The principal was seen as someone who knew it all and thus, any opinions, feedback, or suggestions made by staff members were not considered.

I remember being engaged in a project to attract students to our school. Although I was placed in charge of the project, I was not permitted to speak of the project during meetings. Meetings with other assistant principals within the district were held and I was the only assistant principal who had the principal by my side. All the assistant principals reported about updates relative to their projects. When it was my turn to speak, my principal abruptly spoke about the project of which I was in charge. After some time, I found out that my project was considered the most successful of all district campuses, and yet I was never permitted to report on the project and its subsequent success.

I also compare my experience as a parent with the parents interviewed in this study. As a parent I had the opportunity to have a principal of my child whose communication style was open and constant and another principal who never seemed to converse with parents. I remember discussing with this second principal an issue concerning my son. After leaving her office, I realized that the principal offered very little in terms of a satisfactory answer. The answer provided to me was: "I'll see what I can do." Subsequently, nothing was done. I felt my son's education was not considered, and my input as a parent, was completely disregarded.

When interviewing Mary's assistant principal, I was informed that no parents leave Mary's office without an appropriate and adequate answer. This information was also obtained through interviews with parents. Parents reported to me that the principal makes them feel proud of the school and of themselves, and she regularly invites them to participate. Mary's posture also helps. She is always cordial and affectionate with

parents. Each issue a parent brings to her equates to a great amount of attention. In addition, parents' opinions are requested and considered, by the principal.

This study also made me reflect about what I would do if I were provided the opportunity to becoming a school administrator again. With the experience of this study, I would regularly and effectively communicate with teachers and parents, always having the needs of the students in mind. Additionally, I would utilize my instructional base to influence teachers in a positive manner. Moreover, I would be receptive of their suggestions and ideas. Furthermore, I would develop strategies to be constantly communicating with parents and other community members.

Finally, as I come to the final part of my dissertation, I find myself thinking about Mary and the manner in which her leadership style influenced the way in which she communicated with her stakeholders. I also think about these differing communication strategies she incorporated which flowed in a way that allowed campus climate to improve and student achievement to increase. Through this study, I have found that a principal can make a positive difference in lives of students by the manner in which a principal establishes professionals relations and interactions with his/her publics. I also found the importance of all the stakeholders being heard, in order for trust and motivation to be developed. I would be most interested in seeing the replication of this study in other rural schools, and in a different country as well, as a method of learning how differing cultural aspects within Texas, the United States and abroad could influence communication. My journey continues.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A
Letters of Informed Consent

Principal – Informed Consent

University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) Institutional Review Board

Informed Consent Form for Research Involving Human Subjects

Protocol Title: Communicative feedback and its influence on leadership in schools.

Principal Investigator: Debora Zamorano

UTEP Educational Leadership and Foundations:

Introduction

You are being asked to take part voluntarily in the research project described below. Please take your time making a decision and feel free to discuss it with your friends and family. Before agreeing to take part in this research study, it is important that you read the consent form that describes the study. Please ask the study researcher or the study staff to explain any words or information that you do not clearly understand.

In this consent form, “you” always means the study subject.

Why is this study being done?

- I. You have been asked to take part in a research study to describe the ways in which you, the principal of a small, rural intermediate school utilizes effective communication skills to promote organizational improvement and student success.

Approximately, 16 participants will be enrolling in this study at a rural school in West Texas. You are being asked to be in the study because you are the main subject of this study. If you decide to enroll in this study, you will be interviewed three times. Each interview will take no longer than thirty minutes. You will also be observed interacting with teachers, parents, and staff members four times. Each observation will take no longer than thirty minutes. The identity of the principal and school will remain completely anonymous.

What is involved in the study?

The interviews will be audio-taped and the audio recordings will be kept in a locked file cabinet during the study. The audio recordings will not be used for any commercial purposes nor will they be released to the media. Summative findings will be presented at conferences and published in educational journals.

What are the risks and discomforts of the study?

There are no known risks associated with this research.

What will happen if I am injured in this study?

The University of Texas at El Paso and its affiliates do not offer to pay for or cover the cost of medical treatment for research related illness or injury. No funds have been set aside to pay or reimburse you in the event of such injury or illness. You will not give up any of your legal rights by signing this consent form. You should report any such injury to [\(Debora Zamorano at \(915\) 5811278\)](#) and to Lola Norton of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at UTEP at (915-747-8841) or irb.orsp@utep.edu.

Are there benefits to taking part in this study?

There will be no direct benefits to you for taking part in this study. This research may help school leaders to become more aware of the importance of effective communication skills for their jobs, including how communicative feedback can develop a positive school climate and ultimately, improve student achievement.

What other options are there?

You have the option not to take part in this study. There will be no penalties involved if you choose not to take part in this study.

Who is paying for this study?

There are no internal or external funding sources for this project.

What are my costs?

There are no direct costs. You will be responsible for travel to and from the research site and any other incidental expenses.

Will I be paid to participate in this study?

You will not be paid for taking part in this research study

What if I want to withdraw, or am asked to withdraw from this study?

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You have the right to choose not to take part in this study. If you do not take part in the study, there will be no penalty.

If you choose to take part, you have the right to stop at any time. However, we encourage you to talk to Debora Zamorano so that she knows why you are leaving the study. If there are any new findings during the study that may affect whether you want to continue to take part, you will be told about them.

The researcher may decide to stop your participation without your permission, if he or she thinks that being in the study may cause you harm, or discomfort.

Who do I call if I have questions or problems?

You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may call [Debora Zamorano at \(915\) 581 1278](tel:9155811278).

If you have questions or concerns about your participation as a research subject, please contact Lola Norton of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at UTEP at (915-747-8841) or by email at irb.orsp@utep.edu

What about confidentiality?

Your part in this study is confidential. None of the information will identify you by name.

Your interview will be digitally audio-taped and transcribed by the investigator. All records will be kept in a locked file cabinet.

Authorization Statement

I have read each page of this paper about the study (or it was read to me). I know that being in this study is voluntary and I choose to be in this study. I know I can stop being in this study without penalty. I will get a copy of this consent form now and can get information on results of the study later if I wish.

Participant Name: _____ Date: _____

Participant Signature: _____ Time: _____

Participant Signature: _____

Consent form explained/witnessed by: _____

Signature

Printed name: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

Campus Director (Assistant Principal) – Informed Consent

University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) Institutional Review Board

Informed Consent Form for Research Involving Human Subjects

Protocol Title: Communicative feedback and its influence on leadership in schools.

Principal Investigator: Debora Zamorano

UTEP Educational Leadership and Foundations:

Introduction

You are being asked to take part voluntarily in the research project described below. Please take your time making a decision and feel free to discuss it with your friends and family. Before agreeing to take part in this research study, it is important that you read the consent form that describes the study. Please ask the study researcher or the study staff to explain any words or information that you do not clearly understand.

In this consent form, “you” always means the study subject

Why is this study being done?

- II. You have been asked to take part in a research study to describe the ways in which the principal of a small, rural elementary school utilizes effective communication skills to promote organizational improvement and student success.

Approximately, 16 participants will be enrolling in this study at a rural school in West Texas. You are being asked to be in the study because you are the campus director of the school. If you decide to enroll in this study, you will be interviewed once. The interview should take no longer than thirty minutes.

What is involved in the study?

The interview will be audio-taped and the audio recordings will be kept in a locked file cabinet during the study. The audio recordings will not be used for any commercial purposes nor will they be released to the media. Summative findings will be presented at conferences and published in educational journals.

What are the risks and discomforts of the study?

There are no known risks associated with this research. What will happen if I am injured in this study?

The University of Texas at El Paso and its affiliates do not offer to pay for or cover the cost of medical treatment for research related illness or injury. No funds have been set aside to pay or reimburse you in the event of such injury or illness. You will not give up any of your legal rights by signing this consent form. You should report any such injury to [\(Debora Zamorano at \(915\) 5811278\)](#) and to Lola Norton of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at UTEP at (915-747-8841) or irb.orsp@utep.edu

Are there benefits to taking part in this study?

There will be no direct benefits to you for taking part in this study. This research may help school leaders to become more aware of the importance of effective communication skills for their jobs, including how communicative feedback can develop a positive school climate and ultimately, improve student achievement.

What other options are there?

You have the option not to take part in this study. There will be no penalties involved if you choose not to take part in this study.

Who is paying for this study?

There are no internal or external funding sources for this project.

What are my costs?

There are no direct costs. You will be responsible for travel to and from the research site and any other incidental expenses.

Will I be paid to participate in this study?

You will not be paid for taking part in this research study.

What if I want to withdraw, or am asked to withdraw from this study?

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You have the right to choose not to take part in this study.

If you do not take part in the study, there will be no penalty.

If you choose to take part, you have the right to stop at any time. However, we encourage you to talk to Debora Zamorano so that she knows why you are leaving the study. If there are any new findings during the study that may affect whether you want to continue to take part, you will be told about them.

The researcher may decide to stop your participation without your permission, if he or she thinks that being in the study may cause you harm, or discomfort.

Who do I call if I have questions or problems?

You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may call [Debora Zamorano at \(915\) 581 1278](tel:9155811278).

If you have questions or concerns about your participation as a research subject, please contact Lola Norton of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at UTEP at (915-747-8841) or by email at irb.orsp@utep.edu

What about confidentiality?

Your part in this study is confidential. None of the information will identify you by name. Your interview will be digitally audio-taped and transcribed by the investigator. All records will be kept in a locked file cabinet.

Authorization Statement

I have read each page of this paper about the study (or it was read to me). I know that being in this study is voluntary and I choose to be in this study. I know I can stop being in this study without penalty. I will get a copy of this consent form now and can get information on results of the study later if I wish.

Participant Name: _____

Date: _____

Participant Signature: _____

Time: _____

Participant Signature: _____

Consent form explained/witnessed by: _____

Signature

Printed name: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

Secretary – Informed Consent

University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) Institutional Review Board

Informed Consent Form for Research Involving Human Subjects

Protocol Title: Communicative feedback and its influence on leadership in schools.

Principal Investigator: Debora Zamorano

UTEP Educational Leadership and Foundations:

Introduction

You are being asked to take part voluntarily in the research project described below. Please take your time making a decision and feel free to discuss it with your friends and family. Before agreeing to take part in this research study, it is important that you read the consent form that describes the study. Please ask the study researcher or the study staff to explain any words or information that you do not clearly understand.

In this consent form, “you” always means the study subject

Why is this study being done?

- III. You have been asked to take part in a research study to describe the ways in which the principal of a small, rural elementary school utilizes effective communication skills to promote organizational improvement and student success.

Approximately, 16 participants will be enrolling in this study at a rural school in West Texas.

You are being asked to be in the study because you are a secretary of the school. If you decide to enroll in this study, you will be interviewed once. The interview should take no longer than thirty minutes.

What is involved in the study?

The interview will be audio-taped and the audio recordings will be kept in a locked file cabinet during the study. The audio recordings will not be used for any commercial purposes nor will they be released to the media. Summative findings will be presented at conferences and published in educational journals.

What are the risks and discomforts of the study?

There are no known risks associated with this research.

What will happen if I am injured in this study?

The University of Texas at El Paso and its affiliates do not offer to pay for or cover the cost of medical treatment for research related illness or injury. No funds have been set aside to pay or reimburse you in the event of such injury or illness. You will not give up any of your legal rights by signing this consent form. You should report any such injury to ([Debora Zamorano at \(915\) 5811278](#)) and to Lola Norton of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at UTEP at (915-747-8841) or irb.orsp@utep.edu.

Are there benefits to taking part in this study?

There will be no direct benefits to you for taking part in this study. This research may help school leaders to become more aware of the importance of effective communication skills for their jobs, including how communicative feedback can develop a positive school climate and ultimately, improve student achievement.

What other options are there?

You have the option not to take part in this study. There will be no penalties involved if you choose not to take part in this study.

Who is paying for this study?

There are no internal or external funding sources for this project.

What are my costs?

There are no direct costs. You will be responsible for travel to and from the research site and any other incidental expenses.

Will I be paid to participate in this study?

You will not be paid for taking part in this research study.

What if I want to withdraw, or am asked to withdraw from this study?

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You have the right to choose not to take part in this study.

If you do not take part in the study, there will be no penalty.

If you choose to take part, you have the right to stop at any time. However, we encourage you to talk to Debora Zamorano so that she knows why you are leaving the study. If there are any new findings during the study that may affect whether you want to continue to take part, you will be told about them.

The researcher may decide to stop your participation without your permission, if he or she thinks that being in the study may cause you harm, or discomfort.

Who do I call if I have questions or problems?

You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may call [Debora Zamorano at \(915\) 581 1278](#).

If you have questions or concerns about your participation as a research subject, please contact Lola Norton of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at UTEP at (915-747-8841) or by email at irb.orsp@utep.edu.

What about confidentiality?

Your part in this study is confidential. None of the information will identify you by name. Your interview will be digitally audio-taped and transcribed by the investigator. All records will be kept in a locked file cabinet.

Authorization Statement

I have read each page of this paper about the study (or it was read to me). I know that being in this study is voluntary and I choose to be in this study. I know I can stop being in this study without penalty. I will get a copy of this consent form now and can get information on results of the study later if I wish.

Participant Name: _____ Date: _____

Participant Signature: _____ Time: _____

Participant Signature: _____

Consent form explained/witnessed by: _____

Signature

Printed name: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

Librarian – Informed Consent

University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) Institutional Review Board

Informed Consent Form for Research Involving Human Subjects

Protocol Title: Communicative feedback and its influence on leadership in schools.

Principal Investigator: Debora Zamorano

UTEP Educational Leadership and Foundations:

Introduction

You are being asked to take part voluntarily in the research project described below. Please take your time making a decision and feel free to discuss it with your friends and family. Before agreeing to take part in this research study, it is important that you read the consent form that describes the study. Please ask the study researcher or the study staff to explain any words or information that you do not clearly understand.

In this consent form, “you” always means the study subject.

Why is this study being done?

- IV.** You have been asked to take part in a research study to describe the ways in which the principal of a small, rural elementary school utilizes effective communication skills to promote organizational improvement and student success.

Approximately, 16 participants will be enrolling in this study at a rural school in West Texas. You are being asked to be in the study because you are a librarian of the school. If you decide to enroll in this study, you will be interviewed once. The interview should take no longer than thirty minutes.

What is involved in the study?

The interview will be audio-taped and the audio recordings will be kept in a locked file cabinet during the study. The audio recordings will not be used for any commercial purposes nor will they be released to the media. Summative findings will be presented at conferences and published in educational journals.

What are the risks and discomforts of the study?

There are no known risks associated with this research.

What will happen if I am injured in this study?

The University of Texas at El Paso and its affiliates do not offer to pay for or cover the cost of medical treatment for research related illness or injury. No funds have been set aside to pay or reimburse you in the event of such injury or illness. You will not give up any of your legal rights by signing this consent form. You should report any such injury to ([Debora Zamorano at \(915\) 5811278](#)) and to Lola Norton of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at UTEP at (915-747-8841) or irb.orsp@utep.edu.

Are there benefits to taking part in this study?

There will be no direct benefits to you for taking part in this study. This research may help school leaders to become more aware of the importance of effective communication skills for their jobs, including how communicative feedback can develop a positive school climate and ultimately, improve student achievement.

What other options are there?

You have the option not to take part in this study. There will be no penalties involved if you choose not to take part in this study.

Who is paying for this study?

There are no internal or external funding sources for this project.

What are my costs?

There are no direct costs. You will be responsible for travel to and from the research site and any other incidental expenses.

Will I be paid to participate in this study?

You will not be paid for taking part in this research study.

What if I want to withdraw, or am asked to withdraw from this study?

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You have the right to choose not to take part in this study.

If you do not take part in the study, there will be no penalty.

If you choose to take part, you have the right to stop at any time. However, we encourage you to talk to Debora Zamorano so that she knows why you are leaving the study. If there are any new findings during the study that may affect whether you want to continue to take part, you will be told about them.

The researcher may decide to stop your participation without your permission, if he or she thinks that being in the study may cause you harm, or discomfort.

Who do I call if I have questions or problems?

You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may call [Debora Zamorano at \(915\) 581 1278](tel:9155811278).

If you have questions or concerns about your participation as a research subject, please contact Lola Norton of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at UTEP at (915-747-8841) or by email at irb.orsp@utep.edu

What about confidentiality?

Your part in this study is confidential. None of the information will identify you by name. Your interview will be digitally audio-taped and transcribed by the investigator. All records will be kept in a locked file cabinet.

Authorization Statement

I have read each page of this paper about the study (or it was read to me). I know that being in this study is voluntary and I choose to be in this study. I know I can stop being in this study without penalty. I will get a copy of this consent form now and can get information on results of the study later if I wish.

Participant Name: _____ Date: _____

Participant Signature: _____ Time: _____

Participant Signature: _____

Consent form explained/witnessed by: _____

Signature

Printed name: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

Cafeteria Manager – Informed Consent

University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) Institutional Review Board Informed Consent Form for Research Involving Human Subjects

Protocol Title: Communicative feedback and its influence on leadership in schools.

Principal Investigator: Debora Zamorano

UTEP Educational Leadership and Foundations:

Introduction

You are being asked to take part voluntarily in the research project described below. Please take your time making a decision and feel free to discuss it with your friends and family. Before agreeing to take part in this research study, it is important that you read the consent form that describes the study. Please ask the study researcher or the study staff to explain any words or information that you do not clearly understand.

In this consent form, “you” always means the study subject. If you are a legally authorized representative (such as a parent or guardian), please remember that “you” refers to the study subject.

Why is this study being done?

- V.** You have been asked to take part in a research study to describe the ways in which the principal of a small, rural elementary school utilizes effective communication skills to promote organizational improvement and student success.

Approximately, 16 participants will be enrolling in this study at a rural school in West Texas. You are being asked to be in the study because you are the cafeteria manager of the school. If you decide to enroll in this study, you will be interviewed once. The interview should take no longer than thirty minutes.

What is involved in the study?

The interview will be audio-taped and the audio recordings will be kept in a locked file cabinet during the study. The audio recordings will not be used for any commercial purposes nor will they be released to the media. Summative findings will be presented at conferences and published in educational journals.

What are the risks and discomforts of the study?

There are no known risks associated with this research.

What will happen if I am injured in this study?

The University of Texas at El Paso and its affiliates do not offer to pay for or cover the cost of medical treatment for research related illness or injury. No funds have been set aside to pay or reimburse you in the event of such injury or illness. You will not give up any of your legal rights by signing this consent form. You should report any such injury to ([Debora Zamorano at \(915\) 5811278](#)) and to Lola Norton of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at UTEP at (915-747-8841) or irb.orsp@utep.edu

Are there benefits to taking part in this study?

There will be no direct benefits to you for taking part in this study. This research may help school leaders to become more aware of the importance of effective communication skills for their jobs, including how communicative feedback can develop a positive school climate and ultimately, improve student achievement.

What other options are there?

You have the option not to take part in this study. There will be no penalties involved if you choose not to take part in this study.

Who is paying for this study?

There are no internal or external funding sources for this project.

What are my costs?

There are no direct costs. You will be responsible for travel to and from the research site and any other incidental expenses.

Will I be paid to participate in this study?

You will not be paid for taking part in this research study.

What if I want to withdraw, or am asked to withdraw from this study?

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You have the right to choose not to take part in this study.

If you do not take part in the study, there will be no penalty.

If you choose to take part, you have the right to stop at any time. However, we encourage you to talk to Debora Zamorano so that she knows why you are leaving the study. If there are any new findings during the study that may affect whether you want to continue to take part, you will be told about them.

The researcher may decide to stop your participation without your permission, if he or she thinks that being in the study may cause you harm, or discomfort.

Who do I call if I have questions or problems?

You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may call [Debora Zamorano at \(915\) 5811278](tel:9155811278).

If you have questions or concerns about your participation as a research subject, please contact Lola Norton of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at UTEP at (915-747-8841) or by email at irb.orsp@utep.edu.

What about confidentiality?

Your part in this study is confidential. None of the information will identify you by name. Your interview will be digitally audio-taped and transcribed by the investigator. All records will be kept in a locked file cabinet.

Authorization Statement

I have read each page of this paper about the study (or it was read to me). I know that being in this study is voluntary and I choose to be in this study. I know I can stop being in this study without penalty. I will get a copy of this consent form now and can get information on results of the study later if I wish.

Participant Name: _____ Date: _____

Participant Signature: _____ Time: _____

Participant Signature: _____

Consent form explained/witnessed by: _____

Signature

Printed name: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

Custodian – Informed Consent

University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) Institutional Review Board

Informed Consent Form for Research Involving Human Subjects

Protocol Title: Communicative feedback and its influence on leadership in schools.

Principal Investigator: Debora Zamorano

UTEP Educational Leadership and Foundations:

Introduction

You are being asked to take part voluntarily in the research project described below. Please take your time making a decision and feel free to discuss it with your friends and family. Before agreeing to take part in this research study, it is important that you read the consent form that describes the study. Please ask the study researcher or the study staff to explain any words or information that you do not clearly understand.

In this consent form, “you” always means the study subject.

Why is this study being done?

- VI.** You have been asked to take part in a research study to describe the ways in which the principal of a small, rural elementary school utilizes effective communication skills to promote organizational improvement and student success.

Approximately, 16 participants will be enrolling in this study at a rural school in West Texas.

You are being asked to be in the study because you are a custodian of the school. If you decide to enroll in this study, you will be interviewed once. The interview should take no longer than thirty minutes.

What is involved in the study?

The interview will be audio-taped and the audio recordings will be kept in a locked file cabinet during the study. The audio recordings will not be used for any commercial purposes nor will they be released to the media. Summative findings will be presented at conferences and published in educational journals.

What are the risks and discomforts of the study?

There are no known risks associated with this research.

What will happen if I am injured in this study?

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Are there benefits to taking part in this study?

There will be no direct benefits to you for taking part in this study. This research may help school leaders to become more aware of the importance of effective communication skills for their jobs, including how communicative feedback can develop a positive school climate and ultimately, improve student achievement.

What other options are there?

You have the option not to take part in this study. There will be no penalties involved if you choose not to take part in this study.

Who is paying for this study?

There are no internal or external funding sources for this project.

What are my costs?

There are no direct costs. You will be responsible for travel to and from the research site and any other incidental expenses.

Will I be paid to participate in this study?

You will not be paid for taking part in this research study.

What if I want to withdraw, or am asked to withdraw from this study?

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You have the right to choose not to take part in this study.

If you do not take part in the study, there will be no penalty.

If you choose to take part, you have the right to stop at any time. However, we encourage you to talk to Debora Zamorano so that she knows why you are leaving the study. If there are any new findings during the study that may affect whether you want to continue to take part, you will be told about them.

The researcher may decide to stop your participation without your permission, if he or she thinks that being in the study may cause you harm, or discomfort.

Who do I call if I have questions or problems?

You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may call [Debora Zamorano at \(915\) 5811278](tel:9155811278).

If you have questions or concerns about your participation as a research subject, please contact Lola Norton of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at UTEP at (915-747-8841) or by email at irb.orsp@utep.edu.

What about confidentiality?

Your part in this study is confidential. None of the information will identify you by name. Your interview will be digitally audio-taped and transcribed by the investigator. All records will be kept in a locked file cabinet.

Authorization Statement

I have read each page of this paper about the study (or it was read to me). I know that being in this study is voluntary and I choose to be in this study. I know I can stop being in this study without penalty. I will get a copy of this consent form now and can get information on results of the study later if I wish.

Participant Name: _____ Date: _____

Participant Signature: _____ Time: _____

Participant Signature: _____

Consent form explained/witnessed by: _____

Signature

Printed name: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

Teachers – Informed Consent

University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) Institutional Review Board

Informed Consent Form for Research Involving Human Subjects

Protocol Title: Communicative feedback and its influence on leadership in schools.

Principal Investigator: Debora Zamorano

UTEP Educational Leadership and Foundations:

Introduction

You are being asked to take part voluntarily in the research project described below. Please take your time making a decision and feel free to discuss it with your friends and family. Before agreeing to take part in this research study, it is important that you read the consent form that describes the study. Please ask the study researcher or the study staff to explain any words or information that you do not clearly understand.

In this consent form, “you” always means the study subject.

Why is this study being done?

- VII.** You have been asked to take part in a research study to describe the ways in which the principal of a small, rural elementary school utilizes effective communication skills to promote organizational improvement and student success.

Approximately, 16 participants will be enrolling in this study at a rural school in West Texas.

You are being asked to be in the study because you are a teacher of the school.

If you decide to enroll in this study, you will be interviewed once. The interview should take no longer than thirty minutes.

What is involved in the study?

The interview will be audio-taped and the audio recordings will be kept in a locked file cabinet during the study. The audio recordings will not be used for any commercial purposes nor will they be released to the media. Summative findings will be presented at conferences and published in educational journals.

What are the risks and discomforts of the study?

There are no known risks associated with this research.

What will happen if I am injured in this study?

The University of Texas at El Paso and its affiliates do not offer to pay for or cover the cost of medical treatment for research related illness or injury. No funds have been set aside to pay or reimburse you in the event of such injury or illness. You will not give up any of your legal rights by signing this consent form. You should report any such injury to [\(Debora Zamorano at \(915\) 5811278\)](#) and to Lola Norton of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at UTEP at (915-747-8841) or irb.orsp@utep.edu.

Are there benefits to taking part in this study?

There will be no direct benefits to you for taking part in this study. This research may help school leaders to become more aware of the importance of effective communication skills for their jobs, including how communicative feedback can develop a positive school climate and ultimately, improve student achievement.

What other options are there?

You have the option not to take part in this study. There will be no penalties involved if you choose not to take part in this study.

Who is paying for this study?

There are no internal or external funding sources for this project.

What are my costs?

There are no direct costs. You will be responsible for travel to and from the research site and any other incidental expenses.

Will I be paid to participate in this study?

You will not be paid for taking part in this research study.

What if I want to withdraw, or am asked to withdraw from this study?

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You have the right to choose not to take part in this study.

If you do not take part in the study, there will be no penalty.

If you choose to take part, you have the right to stop at any time. However, we encourage you to talk to Debora Zamorano so that she knows why you are leaving the study. If there are any new findings during the study that may affect whether you want to continue to take part, you will be told about them.

The researcher may decide to stop your participation without your permission, if he or she thinks that being in the study may cause you harm, or discomfort.

Who do I call if I have questions or problems?

You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may call [Debora Zamorano at \(915\) 5811278](tel:9155811278).

If you have questions or concerns about your participation as a research subject, please contact Lola Norton of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at UTEP at (915-747-8841) or by email at irb.orsp@utep.edu.

What about confidentiality?

Your part in this study is confidential. None of the information will identify you by name. Your interview will be digitally audio-taped and transcribed by the investigator. All records will be kept in a locked file cabinet.

Authorization Statement

I have read each page of this paper about the study (or it was read to me). I know that being in this study is voluntary and I choose to be in this study. I know I can stop being in this study without penalty. I will get a copy of this consent form now and can get information on results of the study later if I wish.

Participant Name: _____ Date: _____

Participant Signature: _____ Time: _____

Participant Signature: _____

Consent form explained/witnessed by: _____

Signature

Printed name: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

Parents – Informed Consent

University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) Institutional Review Board Informed Consent Form for Research Involving Human Subjects

Protocol Title: Communicative feedback and its influence on leadership in schools.

Principal Investigator: Debora Zamorano

UTEP Educational Leadership and Foundations:

Introduction

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In this consent form, “you” always means the study subject.

Why is this study being done?

- VIII.** You have been asked to take part in a research study to describe the ways in which the principal of a small, rural elementary school utilizes effective communication skills to promote organizational improvement and student success.

Approximately, 16 participants will be enrolling in this study at a rural school in West Texas. You are being asked to be in the study because you are a parent at the school. If you decide to enroll in this study, you will be interviewed once and the interview will take no longer than thirty minutes.

What is involved in the study?

The interview will be audio-taped and the audio recordings will be kept in a locked file cabinet during the study. The audio recordings will not be used for any commercial purposes nor will they be released to the media. Summative findings will be presented at conferences and published in educational journals.

What are the risks and discomforts of the study?

There are no known risks associated with this research.

What will happen if I am injured in this study?

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Are there benefits to taking part in this study?

There will be no direct benefits to you for taking part in this study. This research may help school leaders to become more aware of the importance of effective communication skills for their jobs, including how communicative feedback can develop a positive school climate and ultimately, improve student achievement.

What other options are there?

You have the option not to take part in this study. There will be no penalties involved if you choose not to take part in this study.

Who is paying for this study?

There are no internal or external funding sources for this project.

What are my costs?

There are no direct costs. You will be responsible for travel to and from the research site and any other incidental expenses.

Will I be paid to participate in this study?

You will not be paid for taking part in this research study.

What if I want to withdraw, or am asked to withdraw from this study?

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You have the right to choose not to take part in this study. If you do not take part in the study, there will be no penalty.

If you choose to take part, you have the right to stop at any time. However, we encourage you to talk to Debora Zamorano so that she knows why you are leaving the study. If there are any new findings during the study that may affect whether you want to continue to take part, you will be told about them.

The researcher may decide to stop your participation without your permission, if he or she thinks that being in the study may cause you harm, or discomfort.

Who do I call if I have questions or problems?

You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may call [Debora Zamorano at \(915\) 5811278](tel:9155811278).

If you have questions or concerns about your participation as a research subject, please contact Lola Norton of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at UTEP at (915-747-8841) or by email at irb.orsp@utep.edu.

What about confidentiality?

Your part in this study is confidential. None of the information will identify you by name. Your interview will be digitally audio-taped and transcribed by the investigator. All records will be kept in a locked file cabinet.

Authorization Statement

I have read each page of this paper about the study (or it was read to me). I know that being in this study is voluntary and I choose to be in this study. I know I can stop being in this study without penalty. I will get a copy of this consent form now and can get information on results of the study later if I wish.

Participant Name: _____ Date: _____

Participant Signature: _____ Time: _____

Participant Signature: _____

Consent form explained/witnessed by: _____

Signature

Printed name: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

Informed Consent to be Audio-taped

As a participant in a research study for the University of Texas at El Paso, I authorize that my voice be recorded. I understand that the audio-recordings will be used for presentations at educational conferences. The audio-recordings will be kept in a locked storage throughout the duration of the study.

I have been given a detailed description of all procedures verbally and in writing.

I understand that participation is entirely voluntary and choosing not to participate, or to withdrawn from the study, is at my discretion.

I have read all the information provided and understand what I am being asked to do. For further information, I can contact Debora Zamorano at (915) 3092820.

Signature

Date

Appendix B
Guiding Interview Questions

Attachment for Question # 5

Principal: Guiding Interview Questions

First Interview

1. Tell me about yourself
2. Why did you go into education?
3. What is your philosophy of education?
4. How long have you been in education?
5. How long have you been a principal?
6. Have you earned any awards?
7. Have you worked with a different level of students?

Second Interview

1. Describe the role of communication in your position.
2. How do you establish collaboration with your staff, parents, students, teachers and the assistant principal?
3. Describe the role of relationships in your campus.
4. What strategies do you use when communicating with families and other community members in varied educational contexts?
5. Are there any particular skills you use to build consensus and manage conflict?

6. How do you develop and implement strategies for effective internal and external communications?
7. How do you provide varied and meaningful opportunities for parents/caregivers to be engaged in the education of their children?
8. What strategies do you use to establish partnerships with parents/caregivers, businesses and others in the community to strengthen programs and support campus goals.
9. Tell me about feedback.
10. How do you deal with providing and receiving feedback from your teachers; parents; students; assistant principal and staff members?

Third Interview

The third interview will be used to clarify any questions as related to the first two interviews.

Attachment for Question #5

Campus Director: Guiding Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself
2. Tell me about your principal.
3. Describe the role of communication in your position.
4. Describe the role of relationships in your campus.
5. What strategies does your principal use when communicating with families and other community members in varied educational contexts?
6. Are there any particular skills she uses to build consensus and manage conflict?
7. How does she develop and implement strategies for effective internal and external communications?
8. How does she provide varied and meaningful opportunities for parents/caregivers to be engaged in the education of their children?
9. What strategies does she use to establish partnerships with parents/caregivers, businesses, and others in the community to strengthen programs and support campus goals?
10. Tell me about feedback.
11. How feedback is provided to you by your principal?
12. How do you provide feedback to your principal?

Third Interview

The third interview will be used to clarify any questions as related to the first two interviews.

Attachment for Question # 5

Teachers: Guiding Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Why did you decide to become a teacher?
3. What is the role of communication in school settings?
4. Tell me about communication in your campus.
5. Tell me about channels of communication between the principal and you and vice-versa.
6. Tell me about feedback in your campus.
7. Tell me about the way feedback is provided by the principal to you.
8. Tell me how feedback is provided by the teachers to the principal.
9. How do you feel when having to talk to you principal about different issues, such as a problem with a student; problems with parents; conflicts among colleagues or even personal problems?

Attachment to Question #5

Parents: Guiding Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Tell me what you like about the principal.
3. How does the principal communicate with you?
4. How do you communicate with the principal?
5. Tell me about the school campus; is it an inviting campus? How so?
6. How do you feel when having to talk to the principal about your child or any other issues?

Attachment to Question # 5

Cafeteria Manager: Guiding Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself and your job. What do you do in your job?
2. Tell me about your principal.
3. Tell me about your relation to the principal.
4. How do you feel when you need to talk to the principal? Is she accessible? Is it easy to talk to her?
5. How do you know the tasks you have to do?
6. How do you know you are doing them well?

Attachment to Question #5

Secretary and librarian: Guiding Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Tell me about your job and what you are expected to do.
3. Tell me about your principal.
4. Tell me about your relations with the principal.
5. How do you feel when you have to talk to the principal about different issues; such as problems at the kind of work you do; problems with students; problems with parents; problems with teachers; or even problems you may have?
6. How is feedback provided to you by the principal? How do you know you're performing your job well?
7. How is feedback provided by you to the principal?

Staff Members: Guiding Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself
2. Tell me about your principal.
3. Describe the role of communication in your position.
4. Describe the role of relationships in your campus.
5. What strategies does your principal use when communicating with families and other community members in varied educational contexts?
6. Are there any particular skills she uses to build consensus and manage conflict?

7. How does she develop and implement strategies for effective internal and external communications?
8. How does she provide varied and meaningful opportunities for parents/caregivers to be engaged in the education of their children?
9. What strategies does she use to establish partnerships with parents/caregivers, businesses and others in the community to strengthen programs and support campus goals?
10. Tell me about feedback.
11. How is feedback provided to you by your principal?
12. How do you provide feedback to your principal?

Third Interview

The third interview will be used to clarify any questions as related to the first two interviews.

Appendix C
Research Protocol

Topics to Address in the Research Proposal

Use this template to provide a description of your research proposal. All applications for review should contain the following information, presented in paragraphs prefaced by the number of the item and the underlined descriptive phrase. When not applicable, DO list the heading and then indicate N/A.

Please note that if this study is part of an NIH funded grant proposal, you will need to attach ONE copy of the complete grant proposal, in addition to the information requested below.

IX. Title: Communicative Feedback and its influence on leadership in schools

X. Investigator: Debora B. R. Zamorano

XI. Goals of the project: The purpose of this research study is to describe the ways in which the principal of a small, rural elementary school utilizes effective communication skills to promote organizational improvement and student success.

XII. Background and Significance: Ineffective communication can have a negative impact on an organization, in terms of interpersonal relationship problems, such as trust building. Nevertheless, when effective communication occurs, interpersonal relationships are enhanced, goals and objectives are met and effective teamwork occurs as a result. Therefore, the school is more successful and student achievement increases.

This study will help school leaders become more aware of the importance of effective communication skills for their jobs, including how communicative feedback can develop a positive campus climate and ultimately, improve student achievement. This awareness will enable principals to use the effective communication strategies described both in the theory of the study and in the findings and results. By employing such strategies principals will certainly become better school leaders. As Cooke (2007) points out, "communication is one of the many key behaviors leaders must use to carry out the responsibility they are charged with. Failure to communicate is frequently the stated reason for schools to lose well-funded and well-staffed business partners. Partners' expectations and benefits should be clear to everyone involved, which is essential to promote understanding and the level of trust" (p. 80). In other words, the art of giving and receiving feedback is an essential part of effective communication; and effective communication is an essential part of skilled principal leadership.

XIII. Research Method, Design, and Proposed Statistical Analysis:

This study will utilize a qualitative methodological approach. The methodological aim of this study is to identify and describe the experiences or perceptions of respondents. The researcher will study the everyday experience from the point of view of the subjects. Therefore, the investigation will be conducted from the perspective of a neutral viewer, without any preconceived ideas. Shultz (1973) argued that to effectively study the everyday world, the social inquirer must bracket or suspend one's taken-for-granted attitude toward its existence; the inquirer must assume the attitude of a disinterested observer. As a consequence, the study will consider leadership attributes that leaders may have, such as effective communications skills and relative to communication skills, the manner and method in which leaders handle feedback.

A case study will be the method of this research. Case studies seek to discern and pursue the understanding of issues fundamental to the case. Therefore, cases are useful in furthering the understanding of a particular problem, an issue, or a concept (Stake, 1995). In addition, case study research as a method of inquiry allows the researcher to capture and describe the complexity of real-life events (Stake, 1995). This case study will examine the relationship between a well operated school campus and the communication strategies utilized by its principal, in relation to both the internal and the external publics. The focus will be the development of an in-depth analysis of how communication strategies are established and utilized by the subject (principal) at the principal's natural environment for better organizational improvement and increased student campus.

Multiple sources of data collection will be used when conducting these investigations, such as interviews with subject and her differing publics, documents, observations, and records.

XIV. Human Subject Interactions

The primary focus of this study will be a female principal. Other participants will be faculty, staff, and parents of which some may be female. No children will be interviewed.

B. Describe the procedures for the recruitment of the participants.

Participants will be invited to participate through telephone calls via in-person interviews.

C. Describe the procedure for obtaining informed consent.

Consent forms will be collected before each interview. Each participant will be given an explanation of the legal and ethical procedures involving his/her participation.

Samples of informed consent for the principal and other participants are attached.

D. Research Protocol.

The case study will focus on one subject who will be the principal from a rural school district in West Texas. Other subjects will include three campus staff, being one cafeteria manager, one custodian, one secretary, and one librarian. Nine faculty members, three parents and the campus director will also be included as subjects of the study.

Fieldwork will consist of conducting 3 interviews with the principal and extensive observations of the principal interacting with parents, the assistant principal, staff members and teachers. Parents, teachers, and the assistant principal will also be interviewed one time each. Interviews should not take longer than thirty minutes. All interviews and observations will take place at the school campus.

The objective of the observations and interviews is to obtain information relative to the principal's leadership style, through the utilization of her communication strategies. Both interviews and observations will enable the researcher to triangulate the information collected.

Copies of interview questions will be submitted with the research proposal.

E. How will you protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants?

The names of the interviewees and school districts will be changed to secure confidentiality. Each participant will be required to sign 2 separate consent forms allowing her to be interviewed and another form seeking permission to be audio-taped. The copies these consent forms are attached to this form.

All university policies and procedures related to human subjects research will be followed. At no time will an interviewee be asked to answer any questions that may incriminate the participant to a crime. If the interviewee feels uncomfortable with any question, he/she can ask that the interview be stopped or that the question not be answered. If, at any time, the interviewee feels uncomfortable she can ask that the interviewer stop the interview.

F. Discuss the procedures that will be used to maintain the confidentiality of the research data.

Each interview will be digitally audio-taped and transcribed by the primary investigator. The audio tapes will be kept in a locked file cabinet and then

destroyed after information has been transcribed.

- XV.** Describe any **potential risks** (physical, psychological, social, legal, or other) and assess their likelihood and seriousness.
There are no potential risks involved in this study.
- XVI.** Describe and assess the **potential benefits** to be gained by participants (if any) and the benefits that may accrue to society in general as a result of the planned work.
The findings of this study will be available for participants upon request.
- XVII.** Indicate the specific **sites or agencies involved in the research project** besides The University of Texas at El Paso.
Tornillo Intermediate School located in West Texas will be involved in this research project.
- X.** If the project has had or will receive **review by another IRB**, indicate this.
The project will not receive review by another IRB.

IRBNet Board Action

From: **Annabelle Casas-Mendoza** (no-reply@irbnet.org)



You may not know this sender. [Mark as safe](#) | [Mark as unsafe](#)

Sent:

Fri 3/21/08 2:33 PM

Reply-to:

Annabelle Casas-Mendoza (acasas3@utep.edu)

To:

acasas3@utep.edu; dbzamorano@miners.utep.edu

Please note that University of Texas at El Paso IRB has taken the following action on IRBNet:

Submission: [84169-3] Investigations into communicative feedback and its influence on the leadership role in schools.

Action: Approved

Effective Date: 03/21/2008

Additional information is available in IRBNet.

Should you have any questions you may contact Annabelle Casas-Mendoza at acasas3@utep.edu.

Thank You,
The IRBNet Support Team

www.irbnet.org

District's Approval

West Texas ISD

Post Office Box 189
West, Texas 79899

March 15, 2008

APPROVAL DOCUMENT

I, John Smith, Superintendent of West Texas Independent School District approve the doctoral dissertation research being conducted by Debora Zamorano, doctoral student, at the University of Texas at El Paso.

I understand that the research conducted will be in form of interviews with Ms. Mary Jones, principal at West Texas Intermediate School, and other members of the learning community to include teachers and parents relative to the dissertation topic: Communicative Feedback and its Influence on Leadership in Schools. The research will be conducted at West Texas Intermediate School.

The purpose of this research is to identify and describe the subjective experiences of a principal relative to the manner in which she utilizes communication skills, including feedback, to ensure organizational improvement and student success. ..

The investigative process will involve:

- Determining how patterns of communication with different publics are established.
- Determining how established patterns of communication flow in the organization and thus impact the climate and culture of the school; and
- Determining how patterns of communication can improve the organization and thus increase student achievement.

I, John Smith, Superintendent of West Texas Independent School District, do here by approve the doctoral dissertation research and data collection of Debora Zamorano, doctoral student at the University of Texas at El Paso.



John Smith, Superintendent of Schools

John Smith -Superintendent (915) 877-5357 -Phone Email: JSmith@wtisd.state.tx.us (915) 877 -5357

APPENDIX D

TAKS Scores Comparison 2005 - 2007

TAKS Scores Comparison 2005 to 2007

Charts indicating improvement in TAKS scores from 2005 to 2007

TAKS Grade 4 English		State	District	Campus Group	Campus
Reading	2007	84%	66%	80%	66%
	2006	83%	54%	76%	54%
	2005	80%	44%	68%	44%
Mathematics	2007	86%	80%	88%	80%
	2006	84%	67%	80%	67%
	2005	82%	48%	68%	48%
Writing	2007	91%	89%	93%	89%
	2006	92%	88%	90%	88%
	2005	91%	68%	89%	68%
All tests	2007	92%	88%	90%	88%
	2006	75%	60%	75%	60%
	2005	70%	31%	54%	31%

Note: * Fewer than five students tested.

TAKS Grade 4 Spanish		State	District	Campus Group	Campus
Reading	2007	77%	40%	76%	40%
	2006	76%	*	83%	*
	2005	69%	*	63%	*
Mathematics	2007	73%	*	72%	*
	2006	70%	*	59%	*
	2005	65%	*	55%	*
Writing	2007	90%	99%	94%	99%
	2006	90%	*	99%	*
	2005	88%	*	89%	*
All tests	2007	66%	33%	60%	33%
	2006	63%	*	57%	*
	2005	56%	20%	45%	20%

Note: * Fewer than five students tested.

TAKS Grade 5 English		State	District	Campus Group	Campus
Reading	2007	83%	67%	75%	67%
	2006	81%	45%	69%	45%
	2005	75%	38%	60%	38%
Mathematics	2007	86%	89%	81%	89%
	2006	82%	61%	77%	61%
	2005	80%	57%	73%	57%
Science	2007	78%	81%	70%	81%
	2006	76%	49%	66%	49%
	2005	64%	27%	53%	27%
All tests	2007	69%	64%	57%	57%
	2006	66%	33%	52%	52%
	2005	56%	24%	41%	24%

Note: * Fewer than five students tested.

TAKS Grade 5 Spanish		State	District	Campus Group	Campus
Reading	2007	79%	*	79%	*
	2006	65%	*	69%	*
	2005	60%	*	67%	*
Mathematics	2007	50%	*	50%	*
	2006	49%	*	49%	*
	2005	45%	*	52%	*
Science	2007				
	2006				
	2005	64%	27%	53%	27%
All tests	2007	44%	*	33%	*
	2006	33%	*	24%	*
	2005	26%	*	26%	*

Note: * Fewer than five students tested.

TAKS Grade 6 English		State	District	Campus Group	Campus
Reading	2007	92%	94%	*	94%
	2006	92%	79%	*	79%
	2005	86%	68%	*	68%
Mathematics	2007	80%	90%*	*	90%
	2006	81%	75%	*	75%
	2005	73%	64%	74%	64%
Science	2007	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	2006	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	2005	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
All tests	2007	78%	89%	*	89%
	2006	78%	68%	*	68%
	2005	69%	59%	*	59%

Note: * Fewer than five students tested.

TAKS Grade 6 Spanish		State	District	Campus Group	Campus
Reading	2007	76%	*	*	*
	2006	67%	*	*	*
	2005				
Mathematics	2007	59%	*	*	*
	2006	54%	*	*	*
	2005				
Science	2007				
	2006				
	2005				
All tests	2007	59%	*	*	*
	2006	51%	*	*	*
	2005				

Note: * Fewer than five students tested.

Appendix E

Model of daily communication made by the principal

Model of Daily Written Communication Made by the Principal

From: Principal

Sent: Tuesday, March 25, 2008 9:49 PM

To: 02 Intermediate Staff; 02 Intermediate Teachers

Subject: Daily Mail 03-26-08

Today's Announcements:

- 1) Spring Pictures: Teachers-students have until Friday morning to submit their money if they choose to purchase a picture.
- 2) Common Assessment – 4th reading; 5th Math; 6th Math
- 3) Grade level meeting – 4th grade
- 4) Library is closed

Coming Up:

- 1) Saturday School Continues for all-grades – remember to send new permission slips to inform parents...
- 2) Thursday: Grade level meeting – 4th & 5th grade
- 3) Thursday: Common Assessment 6th grade reading
- 4) Thursday: Safety Committee meeting – after school (room 307) 3:30 to 4:30
- 5) Teachers please begin collecting your Writing Samples – we will pick them up Friday (also turn in a Spreadsheet with their ratings for Listening, Speaking, and Writing)
- 6) Friday: Common Assessment 5th grade Science
- 7) Grades are due at 4:00pm – Progress reports will go out Monday

Appendix F

Professional Development and Appraisal System Utilized by the Principal

APPENDIX F

Name: _____ Appraiser: _____ Campus: _____ Grade/Assign: _____ Ending Time: _____
 Beginning Time: _____ Teacher ID: _____

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND APPRAISAL SYSTEM

2007 - 2008

Observation Date _____

Summative Date _____

Domain I: Active, Successful Student Participation in the Learning Process

Rating Domain I	Exceeds (X5)	Proficient (X 3)	Below (x 1)	Unsatis- factory (x 0)
1. Engaged in learning				
2. Successful in learning				
3. Critical thinking/ problem solving				
4. Self-directed				
5. Connects learning				
Subtotal				0

Total: 20 to 25 Exceeds Expectations
 12 to 19 Proficient
 4 to 11 Below Expectations
 0 to 3 Unsatisfactory

Comments: _____

Domain II: Learner-Centered Instruction

Rating Domain II	Exceeds (X5)	Proficient (X 3)	Below (x 1)	Unsatis- factory (x 0)
1. Goals and Objectives				
2. Learner-Centered				
3. Critical thinking and problem solving				
4. Motivational strategies				
5. Alignment				
6. Pacing/sequencing				
7. Value and importance				
8. Appropriate question- ing and inquiry				
9. Use of technology				
Subtotal				0

Total: 37 to 45 Exceeds Expectations
 23 to 36 Proficient
 7 to 22 Below Expectations
 0 to 6 Unsatisfactory

Comments: _____

Strengths _____

Areas to Address _____

Name: _____ Appraiser: _____ Campus: _____ Grade/Assign: _____ Ending Time: _____
 Beginning Time: _____ 2007 - 2008 Teacher ID: _____
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND APPRAISAL SYSTEM
 Observation Date _____ Summative Date _____

Domain III: Evaluation and Feedback on Student Progress

Rating Domain III	Exceeds (X5)	Proficient (X 3)	Below (x 1)	Unsatisfactory (x 0)
1. Monitored and assessed				
2. Assessment and instruction are aligned				
3. Appropriate assessment				
4. Learning reinforced				
5. Constructive feedback				
6. Relearning and re-evaluation				
Subtotal				0

Total: 25 to 30 Exceeds Expectations
 15 to 24 Proficient
 5 to 14 Below Expectations
 0 to 4 Unsatisfactory

Comments: _____

Strengths _____ Areas to Address _____

Domain IV: Management of Student Discipline, Instructional Strategies, Time, and Materials

Rating Domain IV	Exceeds (X5)	Proficient (X 3)	Below (x 1)	Unsatisfactory (x 0)
1. Discipline procedures				
2. Self-discipline and self-directed learning				
3. Equitable teacher - student interaction				
4. Expectations for behavior				
5. Redirects disruptive behavior				
6. Reinforces desired behavior				
7. Equitable and varied characteristics				
8. Manages time and materials				
Subtotal				0

Total: 34 to 40 Exceeds Expectations
 20 to 33 Proficient
 6 to 19 Below Expectations
 0 to 5 Unsatisfactory

Comments: _____

Strengths _____ Areas to Address _____

Name: _____ Appraiser: _____ Campus: _____ Grade/Assign: _____
 Beginning Time: _____ Ending Time: _____
 Teacher ID: _____

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND APPRAISAL SYSTEM

2007 - 2008

Observation Date _____ Summative Date _____

Domain V: Professional Communication

Rating Domain V	Exceeds (X5)	Proficient (X 3)	Below (x 1)	Unsatisfactory (x 0)
1. Written with students				
2. Verbal/non verbal with students				
3. Reluctant students				
4. Written with parents, staff, community members, and other professionals				
5. Verbal/non verbal with parents, staff, community members, and other professionals				
6. Supportive, courteous				
Subtotal				0

Total: 25 to 30 Exceeds Expectations
 15 to 24 Proficient
 5 to 14 Below Expectations
 0 to 4 Unsatisfactory

Comments: _____

Strengths	Areas to Address

Domain VI: Professional Development

Rating Domain VI	Exceeds (X5)	Proficient (X 3)	Below (x 1)	Unsatisfactory (x 0)
1. Campus/district goals				
2. Student needs				
3. Prior performance appraisal				
4. Improvement of student performance				
Subtotal				0

Total: 16 to 20 Exceeds Expectations
 9 to 15 Proficient
 3 to 8 Below Expectations
 0 to 2 Unsatisfactory

Comments: _____

Strengths	Areas to Address

Name: _____ Appraiser: _____ Campus: _____ Grade/Assign: _____

Beginning Time: _____ Ending Time: _____

Observation Date: _____ Teacher ID: _____

Summative Date: _____

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND APPRAISAL SYSTEM

2007 - 2008

Domain VII: Compliance with Policies, Operating Procedures, and Requirements

Rating Domain VII	Exceeds (X5)	Proficient (X 3)	Below (x 1)	Unsatisfactory (x 0)
1. Policies, procedures, and legal requirements				
2. Verbal/written directives				
3. Environment				
Subtotal				0
Total				

Total: 13 to 15 Exceeds Expectations
 9 to 12 Proficient
 3 to 8 Below Expectations
 0 to 2 Unsatisfactory

Comments: _____

Strengths _____

Areas to Address _____

Name: _____ Appraiser: _____ Campus: _____ Grade/Assign: _____
 Beginning Time: _____ Ending Time: _____
 Teacher ID: _____
 Summative Date: _____

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND APPRAISAL SYSTEM

2007 - 2008

Observation Date _____

Domain VIII: Improvement of Academic Performance Of All Students on The Campus (Based on Indicators in the AEIS)

Rating Domain VIII	Exceeds (X5)	Proficient (X3)	Below (x1)	Unsatisfactory (x0)
1. Align instruction				
2. Analyzes TEKS/TAKS data				
3. Appropriate sequence				
4. Appropriate materials				
5. Monitors student performance				
6. Monitors attendance				
7. Students in at-risk situations				
8. Appropriate plans for intervention				
9. Modifies and adapts				
Subtotal				0

Sub
Total
1-9

Comments:

Strengths

Areas to Address

10. Campus Performance Rating:

A. _____

B. _____

☐ New Teacher
☐ New Campus

Total A + B _____

If needs improvement, indicate below. Additional information may be provided in Comments section.

Performance Participation Graduation Attendance Final Total Domain VIII

Reading ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Math ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

*Teachers' 1st Year on Campus

Total: 37 to 45 Exceeds Expectations
 23 to 36 Proficient
 7 to 22 Below Expectations
 0 to 6 Unsatisfactory

Teacher's Subsequent Years on Campus
 40 to 50 Exceeds Expectations
 24 to 39 Proficient
 8 to 23 Below Expectations
 0 to 7 Unsatisfactory

Signature of Appraiser: _____ Date: _____
 My appraiser has given me a copy of this Observation Summary Report.
 Signature of Teacher: _____ Date: _____

Observation Summary

Signature of Appraiser: _____ Date: _____
 My appraiser and I have discussed this Summative Annual Appraisal Report.
 Signature of Teacher: _____ Date: _____

Summative Annual Appraisal

CURRICULUM VITAE

Debora Buchaim Regos Zamorano was born in Sao Paulo, Brazil. The first daughter of Helcio Regos and Myrian Buchaim Regos, she graduated from Colegio Arquidiocesano de Sao Paulo High School, Sao Paulo, Brazil, in December of 1980 and entered the Pontificia Universidade Catolica in February 1981. After having received a bachelor's degree in Business Administration in 1995, she worked as a teacher of English as a second language and later became an assistant principal at the Sociedade Brasileira de Cultura Inglesa. In 2000 she came to El Paso, Texas, USA. In the fall of 2002 she entered the graduate school at The University of Texas at El Paso, and received her Master's degree in Educational Leadership in the spring of 2004. In the summer of 2005, she began her Doctorate. Debora is a proud mother of an eleven year old son, Guilherme Regos Zamorano, and the wife of Mauro Roberto Zamaorano.

Permanent Address:

#480 Cancioneiro Popular

Sao Paulo, Brazil zip code 04710-001

mrzamorano@att.net