PERCEPTIONS OF MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS OF THE ATTRIBUTES OF PRINCIPALS OF EFFECTIVE MIDDLE SCHOOLS

BY

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

During the decades of the 1980's and 1990's a great deal of literature was produced in the field of education about the abysmal state of American schools. The National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) took the position that if what had been done to American education had been the act of an unfriendly foreign government, we would have viewed it as an act of war. Since then much has been written about what makes schools effective.

Indeed, during the past two decades the school improvement movement has generated a significant amount of research identifying the common characteristics of effective schools. Edmonds (1979), Andrews (1985), Brewer (1986), Harris (1985), Teddie (1985) and Smith and Andrews (1989) all identified at least five characteristics of effective schools:

1. Principals who provide strong administrative and instructional leadership;

2. High expectations, including a conviction that all of the students can and will learn;
3. A school climate or environment that stimulates learning, beginning with a building that is orderly and quiet without being repressive;

4. A schoolwide feeling by students and staff alike that the acquisition of basic skills is urgently important; and

5. A system of continuous monitoring of student progress.

More recently McEwan (1998) noted, “Researchers have long been fascinated with the differences between effective and ineffective schools. The possibility of fixing ‘broken’ schools or improving mediocre ones by manipulating key variables in the school environment is a tantalizing prospect for educational reformers. And while each researcher has generated a different set of descriptors that characterize effective or excellent schools, one variable always emerges as critically important: the leadership abilities of the building principal, particularly in the instructional arena” (p.2).

It would seem a matter of common sense that one of the most critical elements in an effective school would be effective leadership by the school principal. As Keller (1998) observed, “Some 20 years of research strongly suggest that [principals] make a big difference in shaping education that goes on in school. If a school is going to succeed academically, it needs someone whose potential can’t be summed up on a scoreboard” (p.25). Smith and Andrews (1989) agreed, and noted that “What principals and teachers do collectively on a day-to-day basis has a powerful influence over the
behavior of individual teachers as they interact with children in their classrooms. And the role that principals play as they interact with teachers makes a profound impact on teacher behavior and student learning” (p. viii). Keller (1998), referring to an argument put forward by the late Ronald Edmonds, added, “Strong leadership from the principal is the single most important factor in schools that work” (p.25).

When asked for the one thing that could be done to improve schools, Chester E. Finn, Jr., Assistant Secretary of Education, responded that he “would hire the best principal I could find and then give that person ample authority and heavy responsibility. . . . Leadership is among the crucial elements in educational success” (Miller, 1987, p. 2). Miller (1987) surveyed a number of national reports from various commissions and politicians, and concluded that these groups all concentrated on the school principal as the key to excellence in education.

While the principalship is a complex job comprised of many roles, some of these roles play a greater part in the creation of an effective school than others. However, a review of the literature indicates a broad and varied vocabulary in the identification and descriptions of the tasks of principals. These behavioral descriptors are grouped with others in a series of categories. Yet there is little to distinguish the relative importance between and among the categories to indicate how principals should allocate their time.

In an article entitled, “Going Back to School as Principal” Kathryn S. Whitaker (1999),
a university professor, described her experience in returning to the school principalship for a year. While she had looked forward to her role as instructional leader, she in fact found herself attending to innumerable tasks and demands on her time having little to do with instructional leadership.

Lyons (1999) reviewed a study conducted by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration in 1993. This study recommended 21 knowledge and skill bases for principals in four domains: functional, programmatic, interpersonal and contextual.

Stronge (1988), in analyzing the position of principal, asked the subjects [principals] of his study to classify their activities under ten different headings: telephone conversation, scheduled meeting, unscheduled meeting, monitoring activity, formal correspondence, business management/financial planning, curriculum planning, instructional supervision, and other.

Gorton and McIntyre (1978) established nine categories of activities for principals which were: program development, personnel, school management, student activities, district office responsibilities, community responsibilities, planning, professional development and student behavior. To these nine categories Stronge (1988) added a tenth, “other” and then analyzed the percentage of time spent by principals in each category. He found that principals spent 62.2% of their time focused on school
management and only 6.2% of their time on program development, the category most closely related to instructional leadership.

Yet, if the business of schools is teaching and learning—in short, the instructional process—then it would seem to follow that one of the most important roles of the principal is that of instructional leader. In Lyons’ (1999) research, “fostering good teaching and learning” was high on the list of those duties considered most important, second only to “providing a safe school environment.”

Smith and Andrews (1989), in reviewing research perspectives in the last decade, noted, “These stances have centered on the principal as instructional leader, accountable for the academic achievement of students. Taken collectively, the ‘effective schools’ studies reflect the view that the direct responsibility for improving instruction and learning rests in the hands of the school principal” (p. 1).

In considering the importance of the school principal as an effective educational leader, attention must also be paid to the duration of this leadership. According to Doud (1989) nearly 65% of principals plan to retire by the year 2000. McAdams (1998) warned, “ Principals and superintendents are getting harder to find. Education publications report a growing national concern over the apparent lack of qualified new school administrators. Regions as diverse as Washington State, New England, Nebraska, and New York State all report a precipitous decline in administrative
candidates." This researcher can attest to this from empirical data, as a practicing school superintendent faced with replacing two thirds of the principal staff within a three-year period, due to retirements.

As replacements are sought, it is crucial to identify the professional attributes that would be required of prospective principal candidates.

Certainly it is in the best interests of schools to hire qualified and effective teachers and administrators if the goal is to produce a well-educated and competitive citizenry. It is a simple matter to determine who is qualified to be a school principal here in the State of New Jersey. If one has obtained certification as a principal, then that person is qualified to be a principal. To obtain such certification the following is required:

1. Hold a master’s degree in administration, leadership or management. The master’s program must include study in: (a) Leadership and human resource management; (b) quantitative decision-making; (c) communication; (d) finance; and (e) law.

2. Pass a State-administered examination of knowledge in the areas of leadership and human management, communication, quantitative decision-making, finance and law;
3. Undergo an assessment of performance, conducted by State-approved assessors through structured exercises which simulate the duties of school principals; and

4. Be employed provisionally in a position required the principal endorsement, in a program of continued training and mentor supervision (New Jersey Administrative Code 6:11-9.5).

However, meeting state-mandated certification requirements may not necessarily be an indicator that principal candidates have the actual qualities local education agencies need and desire. For example, the skills assessed at New Jersey's assessment centers are based on the assessment model as developed by the National Association of Secondary School Principals. That model identifies 12 skills to be assessed: (a) problem analysis, (b) sensitivity, (c) educational values, (d) range of interest, (e) decisiveness, (f) oral and written communications, (g) organizational ability, (h) stress tolerance, (i) judgement, (k) leadership and (m) personal motivation (McCall, 1986). Yet, Brockel (1989) found that a number of these attributes assessed in centers were not deemed as important as other factors not identified in the assessment center model.

Brockel (1989) surveyed nearly half of the superintendents in the State of New Jersey to determine the attributes they held as important to the function of principal. A rank order list of 36 qualities superintendents identified as important included: integrity,
decision-making, leadership, coaching/evaluating, motivating, listening, adaptability, and others.

Brockel (1989) focused on the judgement of superintendents because of their superordinate position, having the greatest responsibility for hiring and evaluating school principals. However, there are other groups of professional educators whose perceptions of the attributes of principals of effective schools are worthy of consideration. One of these groups is a constituency of practicing principals. This group wrestles with the reality of fulfilling the principal’s role on a daily basis. If leadership theory and ‘effective schools’ research get translated into practice at the school building level it is because the principal, as the chief administrator and most prominent supervisor at the building level, plays a critical role in that translation.

Effective Schools

The numerous school variables that influence student achievement have been debated in the literature for over 30 years. Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Weinfeld and York (1966) set the stage for the discussion with their claim that “schools bring little influence to bear upon a child’s achievement that is independent of his background and general social context” (p.325). Other researchers identified additional factors that play important roles in student achievement, such as class size (Glass, Cahen, Smith, & Filby, 1982; Mosteller, 1995) teacher qualifications (Ferguson,
1991); and teacher effectiveness (Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997). One model of effective schools that was provided by Edmonds (1979) was based on a school climate that consisted of strong administrative leadership, high performance expectations, a safe and orderly environment, an emphasis on basic skills, and a system of monitoring student progress that promoted high academic achievement. Hoy and Sabo (1998) found that organizational climate was important for student achievement. Teacher empowerment was also found to be a significant independent predictor of student achievement in reading and mathematics, even when controlling for socioeconomic status (Sweetland & Hoy, 2000). Interestingly, in recent years, trust has been called the “foundation of school effectiveness” (Cunningham & Gresso, 1993), and faculty trust in both colleagues and the principal has been linked to school effectiveness (Hoy, Tarter, & Witkoskie, 1992; Tarter, Sabo, & Hoy, 1995).

Theoretical Rationale

The underlying rationale for assessment centers and in fact for this study is that effective schools have effective principals, that these principals have some common effective behaviors, and that there is a likelihood that the existence of these behaviors or traits in principal candidates can somehow be identified.

This researcher was interested in identifying the attributes of principals of effective schools; specifically, those attributes as they pertain to the middle school
principalship. Although passing through an assessment center may indicate that a person has met the certification requirements to become a principal, this does not necessarily mean that the holder of the certificate has the qualities to be a principal of an effective school.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the attributes the principals of effective middle schools. More specifically, this study focused on these principals’ attributes as perceived by middle school principals in the New Jersey Department of Education’s District Factor Grouping (DFG) designation of I and J. These districts were selected because their resident students consistently achieve the highest average scores on the New Jersey State Department of Education’s Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA), when compared to students from other DFG’s in New Jersey. High student achievement would logically be at least one indicator of effective schools.

Research Questions

The design of this study used qualitative research methods to answer the following questions:

1. What do middle school principals perceive to be the attributes of principals of effective middle schools?
2. To what extent do these perceptions agree with what the literature identifies as the attributes of effective school principals?

3. Do the middle school principals perceive the effective middle school principalship to be differentiated from the effective non-middle school principalship?

Significance of the Study

Citations in this paper highlight the importance of the role of the principal in the creation of effective schools. The identification of specific attributes can contribute to important information in public education in at least three ways:

1. The attributes of effective middle school principals can be confirmed for current principal practitioners, and can be added to the literature for professional development purposes;

2. This study can provide information to aspiring principals regarding expectations prospective employers may have; as well as at least some of the expectations they would want to have of themselves; and

3. Finally, as more and more administrators, including principals retire or leave the field, boards of education and superintendents are under increasing pressure to hire effective principals. This study can inform those groups as to the attributes they ought to be looking for in the candidates for their vacancies. While the selection process can
begin with candidates based on the certificates they hold, most school districts would search for the "quality" of the candidate beyond his or her certification.

Limitations of the Study

The subject of this study was limited to the perceptions of middle school principals in New Jersey in the DFG's of I and J. Therefore, the results could be generalized to districts with similar characteristics, as opposed to the entire state.

There are 32 middle schools in the I and J DFG in the State of New Jersey that meet the requirements of this study. Therefore, the sample size (N=15) represents 47% of the total population. Of the 32 principals in the total population, 7 are females and 25 are males. In comparison, of the 15 principals in the sample population, three (or 20%) were females and 12 (or 80%) were males. Therefore, the sample population was representative of the total population with regard to gender. However, this was a low number of female respondents and could be considered a limitation to this study.

These limitations indicate the findings may not be reflective of (a) principals in other District Factor Groups, (b) principals at different levels (e.g. elementary and high school principals), or (c) principals of non-public schools.

Data were collected from the subjects through in-depth confidential interviews. This qualitative design allowed the researcher to gain a deeper, more intimate and more accurate understanding of the perceptions of the sample population.
Definition of Terms

For the purpose of developing a common understanding of the terms used in this study the following definitions are provided:

Assessment center is the process identified here in the state of New Jersey through which potential principal candidates must pass to now obtain certification as a principal. Multiple assesses participate in group and individual exercises, which display skills that are components of the principalship. Multiple assessors rate each assesse on the skills displayed in consensus (Brockel, 1989).

District factor group (DFG) is a measure of socioeconomic status (SES) of people living in public school districts. The information used to classify public school districts in one of eight categories is taken from the United States Census, which is conducted every ten years. There are seven constituent elements in determining the DFG. They are: (a) percent of population with no high school diploma, (b) percent with some college, (c) occupation, (d) population density, (e) income, (f) unemployment and (g) poverty. The eight DFG categories are A, B, CD, DE, FG, GH, I and J. These categories range from the poorest ‘A’ in successive levels to the most affluent ‘J’ public school districts.

Instructional leadership refers to actions taken by the principal which provide direction and support for the educational program (Lewis, 1984). This includes, but is
not limited to, behaviors that directly affect teacher instructional behavior in such a way as to facilitate and promote the growth of student learning (Stevenson, 1987).

Perception is the understanding that the principal has as he or she observes principals in their roles. The perception of the behavior is that which will determine the behavior of the group members (Halpin, 1966).

The principal is the single person employed and charged with the responsibility of supervising the overall operations of a school building and its relations to the community and being properly certified to do so. People serving simultaneously in the capacity of chief school administrator or in an “acting principal” capacity are not included, nor are head teachers.

School management is the organization and control of daily school operations but is distinguished from and exclusive of those functions identified under instructional leadership. Thus, the selection of a science textbook with which to implement the curriculum might be an outcome of instructional leadership, but the purchase ordering process to obtain the book is a management function.

The superintendent is the chief school administration officer of a school district.

Teachers are the certificated employees of a school district having direct instructional responsibilities for students.
Assumptions

There were certain underlying assumptions basic to this study:

1. Principals that respond to interview questions will do so honestly, giving their perceptions of the school principal as accurately as they are able to do so.

2. Principals have perceptions of their own and of other principals' behaviors. These perceptions are indicators of principals' behaviors (Halpin, 1966).

3. The school behaviors of principals can be categorized and described. Attributes can be grouped in a way that makes sense.

Organization of the Study

This study was organized in five chapters. The first chapter introduced the problem to be studied, and provided an historical perspective. Included in this chapter was the theoretical rationale, the purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, definition of terms, limitations of the study, assumptions and a description of the organization of the study.

Chapter Two provides a more thorough review of the literature. It looks at the attributes that pertain to the principals of effective schools, and more particularly to the principals of effective middle schools.

Chapter Three describes the sample, the interview questions, the method of data collection, and the data analysis employed in the study.
Chapter Four provides the findings, as well as an analysis of the data.

Chapter Five summarizes the study and details the conclusions formed, based on the in-depth analysis of the data. Discussion of the results and implications for further research concludes the study.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify the attributes of the principals of effective middle schools. More specifically, this qualitative study focused on these principals' attributes as perceived by middle school principals.

In Chapter I, five characteristics common to effective schools were identified:

1. Principals who provide strong administrative and instructional leadership;

2. High expectations, including a conviction that all students can and will learn;

3. A school climate or environment that stimulates learning, beginning with a building that is orderly and quiet without being oppressive;

4. A schoolwide feeling by students and staff alike that the acquisition of basic skills is urgently important; and

5. A system of continuous monitoring of student progress.

In the aforementioned list, characteristics 1 and 3 have elements that pertain to both management (administration) and instructional leadership; whereas items 2, 4, and 5 are more clearly tied to elements of instructional leadership.
The preponderance of the literature pertaining to characteristics of effective schools is tied to instructional leadership, although there is certainly a need for effective management or administration of the schools. Therefore, this chapter was organized to conduct this review under these categories: Management and Instructional Leadership; Descriptions of Instructional Leadership; Perceptions of Instructional Leadership; Factors Influencing Instructional Leadership; Instructional Leadership Attributes; and Components of Effective Middle Level Schools and Middle Level School Leadership.

Management and Instructional Leadership

"Today's schools demand new kinds of skills and knowledge from leaders, including skills that many current education leaders have not mastered. Chief among these is instructional leadership - the ability to recognize and foster good teaching and high level learning. Management skills are another area of change; today's complex school environments and diverse communities require greater skills in communication, collaboration, and community building" (U.S. Department of Education, 1999, p. 26).

Stronge (1993) observed, "Unfortunately, a disturbing theme has emerged from instructional leadership theory: That a managerial role for the principal is antithetical to high-quality instructional leadership. Thus according to the instructional leadership argument, the generalist-managerial role of the principal must give way to one oriented
toward curriculum and instruction, and building level administration should return to its roots of principal-teacher” (p. 2).

Evans (1996) indicated that in recent years it had become popular to distinguish between the roles of principal as instructional leader and as manager, venerating the former at the expense of the latter.

Smith and Andrews (1989) wrote, “The role of the principal as building manager versus instructional leader is related to the way principals perceive their time commitments and the way they actually spend their time. Building management are those activities that the principal engages in to maintain the current operations of the school. Instructional leadership activities are those things that the principal must do to improve the learning environment for children. Building management functions are the foundation for the operation of the instructional program” (p. 29).

In an examination of the research pertaining to effective schools, it can be seen that both good managerial skills and instructional leadership skills are necessary to be the effective principal. This can be easily seen by drawing a microcosmic parallel to a teacher’s performance in a classroom with a group of students. The teacher who has mastery of subject content but little knowledge or ability in the management of students’ behavior, has very little likelihood of engaging students in successful instructional
processes. Effective instruction that results in students achieving the desired objectives has far greater likelihood of occurring in the well-managed classroom.

In a similar fashion, principals who have a mastery of knowledge of the most current, effective pedagogical strategies, but who cannot coordinate the ordering of instructional materials, the scheduling of assessment programs, the movement of teachers and so forth, will find that the resulting conflicts will make it nearly impossible to engage in effective instructional leadership. When a building is well managed, resources are effectively distributed, schedules are well coordinated, and opportunities for instructional leadership greatly increase. Principals find more time for classroom observations and ensuing discussions about instruction.

Stronge (1993) wrote, "The dichotomized viewpoint of instructional leadership versus middle management tends to support the premise that instructional leadership is more worthy of the time and attention of the principal, and that managerial responsibilities are relatively unimportant, demeaning and generally to be avoided. However, this conception of the principal's role runs contrary to reality. An examination of virtually any principalship task analysis study reveals that principals invest significant amounts of time in general administrative duties that can hardly be construed as instructional leadership" (p. 4).
In an examination of several studies, Smith and Andrews (1989) found that principals regarded program and instructional improvement as the most important aspect of their job, yet they spent the greatest amount of their time on management and operations, which they valued least.

In the Policy Forum on Educational Leadership held in 1999, it was found that “Most participants agreed that the number one characteristic of an effective leader is the ability to provide instructional leadership. Yet, this is also the role for which principals and superintendents are least well prepared; some studies suggest that as many as three-quarters of current principals are not skilled instructional leaders” (U.S. Department of Education, 1999, p. 24).

In Lashway’s (1996b) review of *School Leadership: Handbook for Excellence*, he stated, “Much of what passes for leadership in schools is really management. This should come as no surprise, because school administrators are trained primarily as managers, not leaders” (p. 2).

The U.S. Department of Education (1999), in its Policy Forum on Educational Leadership, noted that, “Forum participants had different opinions about how much emphasis educational leaders should place on instructional leadership, relative to management skills and other critical competencies. Some very good leaders could not truly be called instructional leaders, but they are effective because they know how to
'run interference' – how to nurture good teaching and learning amid external pressures. (But this does not apply to leaders who hide behind their heavy management load as an excuse for their lack of instructional involvement.) At the same time, some leaders who have excellent instructional leadership skills have run aground because they are not competent managers” (p. 5).

It may seem contradictory that the Policy Forum on Educational Leadership found that some very good leaders could know how to nurture good teaching and learning amid external pressures yet not truly be instructional leaders. However, this finding was congruent with this researcher’s observations of the past decade. As a participant in several workshops in which superintendents and principals were asked to write formal observations of teachers’ videotaped professional performances, this researcher found that there were a number of inconsistencies as well as a single commonality in the observations. The commonality was a consensus on the observers’ part as to the overall quality of the performance of the teachers, ranging from a “poor” performance on the low end to an “excellent” performance on the high end.

However, the descriptors used by the observers in reaching their overall conclusions about the quality of teacher performance varied widely. Attention was paid to: rapport with students, rationale of the lesson, motivational performance, goal/objective setting, selection of instructional strategies and materials, time on task,
monitoring student performance, adjusting instruction, assessing student learning, organization of the classroom, atmosphere of the classroom/student/classroom management and personality of the teacher. Yet, the observers did not use a common vocabulary in describing these areas; nor was consistent weight given to any one area as compared to any other area. Most observers focused only on a few of these components of instruction while ignoring others, and there was little consistency in the selection of components to be observed.

Under such conditions, it would appear that the observers, principals and superintendent, while recognizing good instruction, have developed neither a common vocabulary nor a common understanding of instructional principles to offer specific recommendations for the improvement of instruction. This is just one systemic inhibition to instructional leadership that principals and superintendents share.

Joel Shawn of the California Center for School Restructuring participated in The Policy Forum on Educational Leadership, and said that many aspects of our educational system “are almost toxic to teaching and learning” (U. S. Department of Education, 1999, p. 6). He went on to say that in this environment, it takes more than just instructional leadership to keep good teaching alive and well.

The U. S. Department of Education (1999), in its Policy Forum on Educational Leadership, noted that “Running a district or a school today is an enormously
demanding job. Good leaders must be good managers and knowledgeable about finance. To be successful, administrators must be able to negotiate their way through an overload of sometimes conflicting demands of local, state and federal bureaucracies, parents, politicians and constituent groups. . . . Many superintendents and principals feel more comfortable with management than instruction because that is how they were trained. But the management skills required today are not the same ones taught in most traditional administration preparation programs” (p. 6).

As Paul Houston, Executive Director of the American Association of School Administrators observed, “Today’s leaders must shift their focus from the B’s (budgets, books, buses, bonds and buildings), to the C’s (communication, collaboration and community building)” (U. S. Department of Education, 1999, p. 6).

Stronge (1990) argued that, “there is little evidence to suggest that learning would be enhanced if principals were to ignore their broad-based managerial responsibilities in favor of a more narrowly focused orientation toward instruction” (p. 5).

In his study of school principals, Brederson (1985) characterized the fundamental role of contemporary school principals with the metaphor of maintenance: “Without a doubt, the major activities in which each of the principals was involved and their individual senses of administrative priorities and responsibilities supported the
metaphorical theme of maintenance. In response to questions about what they saw as their major responsibilities as a principal, maintenance was clearly the intended purpose. Regardless of personal leadership style, 89% of the principals’ total number of daily activities were intended to ‘keep the doors open and the process going’” (p. 38).

Snyder and Johnson (1985) suggested that, rather than dichotomize the maintenance and instructional leadership emphasis, the proper role of the principals is one in which the multifaceted duties and responsibilities are coordinated toward the accomplishment of productive school management. It is this integration of management and leadership that leads to an alternative and unifying conceptualization of the principal’s role – that of “educational leadership.”

Stronge (1993) noted that, “Management and instructional leadership need not be construed as competing interests for the principal. Rather, a unifying view of the principal’s primary role as one of educational leadership – a role that can be characterized by the salient features of both managerial and instructional leadership responsibilities – provides a much healthier paradigm for understanding the principalship. Whereas the dichotomous view suggests two distinctly separate domains, a unified view draws a rational relationship between managerial efficiency and instructionally effective schools” (p. 5). In his conclusion, Stronge (1993) wrote,
While this unifying concept of educational leadership holds promise for bridging the chasm between what instructional leadership definitions suggest principals should be doing and what they are actually doing, the concept is not without peril. Equating broad-based managerial responsibilities (e.g. resource allocation, student discipline) to educational leadership does not suggest that anything and everything that principals do can be construed as contributing to effective schooling. The opposite holds true: unless specific principal behaviors can be justified as contributing to a robust learning environment, those behaviors must be viewed as superfluous and should be eliminated. Thus, a broadened definition of educational leadership is not a license for indiscriminate enactment of the job; rather, it serves the purpose of focusing the job on intended outcomes (p. 6).

**Descriptions of Instructional Leadership**

In response to the question "What is instructional leadership?" case studies examined at the Forum on Educational Leadership (National Institute on Educational Governance, Policymaking and Management; Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, 1999) indicated that "Principals devoted the bulk of their time, energy and talents to improving the quality of teaching and learning. Leaders in these districts have a deep understanding of teacher and learning
including new teaching methods that emphasize problem solving and student construction of knowledge. Good instructional leaders have a strong commitment to success for all students, and are especially committed to improving instruction for groups of students who are not learning now” (p. 4). The Forum went on to describe successful districts as places where principals know how to evaluate instruction and give frank powerful feedback that encourages teachers to teach better and students to learn more. These principals engage the whole school in continuous dialogue about what good teaching looks like and whether students are doing quality work.

Parker and Day (1997) described five dimensions of instructional leadership as it pertains to a particular initiative; in their case, to the initiative of inclusion. The five dimensions they described would be applicable to any initiative:

1. Defining and communicating the mission is one of the most essential functions of an instructional leader. The principal must gather opinions and data regarding the conflicts, issues, and challenges voiced by school personnel relating to the current mission. The extent of a match between the current mission of the school, individual beliefs and values and the promotion of an [instructional initiative] must be determined. As a group, educators within the school, must come to a new understanding of where the [instructional leadership] should lead and how it may reshape the school’s mission. Goals that are widely shared and
personally meaningful encourage educators toward a cohesive effort to achieve
the school’s mission (p. 85).

2. Effective principals engage in efforts to manage curriculum and instruction,
managing with a focus on education-related rather than administrative–related
issues. This causes the principal to clarify the match between the curriculum,
current instructional practices, student needs and legal mandates; provide
materials and supplies needed by faculty; and to discuss flexibility and teacher
decision make regarding curriculum and instruction (p. 87).

3. For the principal as instructional leader, this means one must be aware of the
current instructional approaches being used in the school. On a daily basis,
teachers are the ones who enact the mission through engaging in activities with
students. Instructional leadership therefore includes supervising or reflecting on
teaching as one of the five dimensions. This concept includes working with
teachers over time and across different situations regarding teaching skills.
Many principals develop opportunities that allow teachers to reflect on recent
experiences and share those with others (p. 86).

4. Principals as instructional leaders also concentrate on improvement and
renewal of their students by monitoring student progress. How can teachers,
students, parents and administrators know if the curriculum and the instruction
are effective, that they are satisfying the goals and purposes of the school?

What are students learning? What progress are students making in their understanding and achievement? How often are assessment results shared through assemblies, newsletters or other means? Monitoring student progress includes evaluating student learning regularly and systematically and using the results to assess the usefulness of the school’s goals in achieving the mission. Results are also used to modify and improve the curriculum design and instructional delivery (p. 88).

5. Effective principals promote an instructional climate that strongly values and reinforces learning and achievement. The school climate is established as interest, concern and support for all students, including those with disabilities are shared. It is most important that principals articulate goals, timelines and procedures to promote change and foster a climate of unity (p. 88).

Parker and Day (1997) concluded that instructional leadership is framed by these five dimensions and that attempting to be an instructional leader using only one or two of these dimensions is not useful and, in fact, may be counterproductive. “The effective principal as instructional leader uses them to emphasize and reinforce each other” (p. 89).
LeMahieu, Roy and Foss (1997) noted that with onset of the effective schools movement in the 1980's there emerged the image of the principal as strong instructional leader.

The effective schools movement sought to inculcate the knowledge, dispositions and skills needed to articulate an instructional vision, secure widespread engagement in that vision, and promote its successful fulfillment. Not only were principals prepared in these skills, their capacity for instructional leadership was served further by widespread adoption of a model of teaching (Hunter, 1984, 1988a, 1988b) that captured the contemporary view of effective lesson design and delivery. So equipped, they were asked to explicitly engage in the observation and shaping of instructional practice. Thus an approach to instructional supervision was widely adopted and practiced (p. 583).

Through reform efforts the instructional leadership focus gave way to teacher empowerment. There emerged a new School governance model of site-based management and shared decision-making. The principals' new role became that of organizational leader: developing consensus, facilitating collaborative problem solving, and managing collective action. Through it all, curricular and instructional concerns gave way to organizational and cultural ones. For many, the principal's powerful role in promoting teaching and learning was greatly diminished (LeMahieu, et al., 1997).
Others, however, found that collegial principal leadership can empower teachers (Sweetland & Hoy, 2000).

In fact, members of the leadership team for Delaware’s Statewide Systemic Initiative for Mathematics and Science Education (National Science Foundation, 1995) recognized the critical role that the principal as instructional leader could play in advocating for high quality practice. “The role of principal in promoting an instructional vision and challenging for quality in addressing that vision is no less important today than during the effective schools movement” (LeMahieu, et al., 1997, p. 585). These authors went on to identify four conditions that define the challenge facing principals as instructional leaders:

1. The first condition is the ‘ethos of professionalism’ that permeates current reform efforts. This ethos seeks to promote professional empowerment of all who work in schools. This means that the principal’s role must be to challenge for quality in professional practice without dictating or prescribing that practice.

A useful tool for examining teaching and learning must raise questions that inspire practice without resorting to checklists that seek to prescribe it. The answer lies in equipping instructional leaders to understand the most profound and fundamental concepts underlying practice and the reform of practice, equipping principals to guide reflection asking appropriate and challenging
questions relevant to those concepts and empowering them with the knowledge to detect powerful and appropriate answers.

2. A second condition to challenge principals as instructional leaders is the growing complexity of current visions of teaching and learning. The shift from pedagogical approaches that are based in transfer technologies (e.g. lecture, drill and practice, worksheets) to approaches that are more constructivist in approach (e.g. hands-on approaches, problem-based learning, and inquiry approaches) has profound implications for the nature of practice. These instructional approaches seek to promote a more active learning process and require greater content knowledge and subtlety in instructional practice than do more passive approaches to teaching and learning (Brown, 1994; DeStefano & Gordon, 1986). This complexity and subtlety permeates curricular expressions, instructional practices, and learning events, as well as newly developing forms of assessments.

3. The third condition that challenges instructional leadership is the standards-based reform movement. . . National standards have been translated into state and local expressions of standards. These, in turn, are intended to elevate both expectations and aspirations regarding student performance while simultaneously applying those expectations more consistently for all students. It does so by making common learning goals and aspirations for students that historically have
been varied across districts, schools and classrooms, while seeking to permit diversification – even individualization – of practice that has been for so long controlled centrally.

4. The fourth condition affecting instructional leadership... has to do with the environmental and contextual circumstances that impinge on educational efforts. ... They include the increasingly diverse student populations served by the schools, as well as the special needs and backgrounds that they bring with them. Environmental factors also pertain to institutional conditions, varying from organizational structures to physical plants, from resource allocation to professional support. Such factors determine instructional direction and possibilities as well.

Effective instructional leadership requires the application of an educational model appropriate to current conceptions of teaching and learning. It also asks the principal to help the faculty reflect upon and examine their teaching practices in light of what is now known about teaching and learning practices (LeMahieu, et al, 1997). Much work has shown that students learn in a variety of ways that go beyond the learner as a passive recipient of knowledge (Armstrong, 1994; Cohen, 1994; Gardner, 1993; Marzano, 1992). Listening to lectures, reading from a text and answering questions on a worksheet are no longer thought to be appropriate instructional models.
Teachers need to use a wide variety of instructional methods to meet the diverse needs of students. Teachers may require many forms of professional development to learn new instructional strategies that have been developed since their final professional preparation (LeMahieu, Foss & Roy, 1995). Current research in professional development has found that evaluation and critique alone does not provide adequate support to promote desired growth and development of teachers when they are learning new instructional practices (Joyce & Weil, 1986).

Even the most conservative estimates suggest that it takes two or three years to competently learn and use new instructional methods (Joyce & Showers, 1988). After first implementing a new instructional practice, the teacher often goes through an “implementation dip.” Performance gets worse before it gets better (Fullan, 1991). What do teachers need during this dip? They need support, problem solving, and assistance to help them know they are moving in the right direction (Joyce and Showers, 1988). The principal as instructional leader needs to develop coaching skills to provide the needed assistance to teachers.

One way a coaching conference differs from the more familiar evaluation conference is that the observer often describes what he or she sees and hears from the lesson rather than what he or she determined to be good or bad about the lesson. The observer asks clarifying questions and asks the teacher to think about the lesson rather
than to defend it. The teacher is an active participant in the conference, asking her or his own questions and eliciting information from the principal to gain insight into the teaching performance and build alternative strategies for future use.

Niece (1993) found three major themes in his qualitative research on effective instructional leaders. First, he found effective instructional leaders "are people oriented and interactional" (p. 16). These principals did not let themselves become isolated from the day to day operations of the school. They interacted regularly with all people in the school and remained visible and accessible.

Second, effective instructional leaders "function within a network of other principals" (p. 16). The principals made sure they kept in close contact with their peers, on both a formal and informal level. These networks were on local, state and national levels.

Third, effective instructional leaders were found to have had administrative practitioners who had acted as mentors to them.

Whitaker (1997) drew upon the earlier work of Smith and Andrews (1989) in the identification of four areas of strategic interaction conducted by instructional leaders that lead to higher student achievement:
1. Being a resource provider. The teachers in the schools are its greatest resource, and they must be acknowledged for exemplary teaching and be encouraged to share with others. The principal must know the strengths and weaknesses of the teachers and show genuine concern for their health, welfare and professional growth. This caring approach creates a faculty willing to take risks and approach change positively.

2. Being an instructional resource. The principal identifies good teaching and provides feedback that promotes professional growth.

3. Being a communicator. The principal must communicate to the staff essential beliefs that (a) all children can learn and experience success; (b) success builds upon success; (c) schools can enhance student success; and (d) learner outcomes must be clearly defined to guide instructional programs and decisions.

4. Being a visible presence. To create a visible presence in day-to-day activities, principals must model behaviors consistent with the school’s vision; live and breathe their beliefs in education; organize resources to accomplish building and district goals; informally drop in on classrooms; make staff development activities a priority; and most of all, help people do the right things and reinforce those activities (p. 155).
Lezotte (1994) wrote that "All effective schools research studies on elementary, middle and secondary levels repeatedly have identified instructional leadership as critical" (p. 20). He went on to say that when researchers find a school where all students master the intended curriculum, they soon realize they are in the presence of an anomaly — a school where the normal flow has been altered by a powerful force.

In the individual school, that search for the source of this powerful force leads in most cases, to the principal’s office. When one asks who decides how resources such as time and limited money get allocated, the answer in most schools is ‘the principal.’ When someone asks who places students in different classroom settings, sets priorities for the future, creates the climate and expectations for the school, and recruits and socializes new teachers, again the answer is ‘the principal.’ Taken together, these elements constitute a force powerful enough to alter what has been the normal flow of the school.

Leadership and effectiveness seem inextricably linked. Yet superintendents and principals proven to be instructional leaders in effective schools and districts seem to depend heavily on commitment, not authority, to achieve learning-for-all results.

The study of leadership in these effective settings suggests two conclusions: First, effective schools and districts are led by individuals who have the vision that learning in a democracy must be inclusive — learning for all. Second these
individuals have the ability to communicate this vision to the others in the district and in the school so they share the vision and accept the mission of making it happen (pp. 21, 22).

Lezotte concluded, “People follow effective leaders because they share the leader’s dreams, not because they are afraid of what would happen to them if they did not follow them” (p. 23).

In describing the principal as instructional leader, Smith and Andrews (1989) stated that the principal is perceived as:

1. Providing the necessary resources so that the schools academic goals can be achieved;

2. Possessing knowledge and skill in curriculum and instructional matters so that the teachers perceive that their interaction with the principal leads to improved instructional practice;

3. Being a skilled communicator in one-on-one, small group, and large group settings; and

4. Being a visionary who is out and around creating a visible presence for the staff, students and parents at both the physical and philosophical levels concerning what the school is all about (p. 23).
Perceptions of Instructional Leadership

That the principal should be the instructional leader in the school is quite evident in the literature cited thus far. But do educational practitioners, superintendents, principals and teachers perceive the principal to actually function in this role?

In a discussion of the role of principal as instructional leader, Smith and Andrews (1989) noted:

The role of principal is by no means a simple one. Thus, identifying factors that influence how principals perform their professional roles is equally complex. To gain insights into how and why principals perform as they do, we need to know what parts of the job principals typically consider to be most important and how they perceive they ideally should spend their time as they perform that role. Then we need to contrast this with how the average principal actually spends time and how this differs from principals who perform the role with a focus on instructional leadership activities. Understanding these issues will allow us to design training activities to help school principals improve their instructional leadership skills (p. 23).

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While Smith and Andrews (1989) described the aforementioned perceptions, McIntyre and Grant (1980) studied how teachers, principals, and superintendents viewed the principalship. On groupings of 32 instructional leadership competencies, principals rated themselves most highly on both importance of their skills and the level of their performance. Principals saw the least amount of discrepancy between their values and achievement, while superintendents saw the most discrepancy.

A Tennessee study indicated that central office supervisors and consultants engaged in behaviors related and limited to instructional improvement or teacher
improvement only 41% of the time. Further, these persons were rarely held accountable for student success or failure (Burch & Danley, 1980). In fact, if anyone were held accountable, it was usually the school principal. People perceived that the principal should be involved with instruction and its improvement (Stevenson, 1987).

Roesner and Sloan (1987), in a study of the perceptions of principal leadership style, showed that there was a lack of congruence in the findings; principals' perceptions of leadership style were not in accord with their subordinates' perceptions.

There are a number of studies of teachers' perceptions of the principalship. Meyer and Van Hoose (1981) cited one study of principal and teacher perceptions of the role of the principal. Of those studied, 81% of the principals saw instructional leadership as their most important responsibility, while only 31% of the teachers in the same study thought that principals made instructional leadership their top priority.

Redwine and Dubrick (1978) conducted a study collecting data from 247 teachers and came to a similar conclusion: teachers do not perceive principals emphasizing instructional leadership. The teachers perceived that principals should spend more time on instructional leadership. The study further suggested that teachers believed that instructional leaders needed better human relations skills.
There can be some apparent contradictions in teachers’ perceptions. McNinch and Richmond (1977) looked at the principal’s role in reading instruction. On the one hand, teachers felt that the principal should be more active in the reading program. On the other hand, they perceived the role of the principal to be more administrative than supervisory, and they desired that the principal continue to be more administrative.

Teachers perceive principals as the most likely change agents, yet research indicated that only one in five acts that way (Brookover & Erickson, 1975). It appeared that principals would not initiate change unless there were a readiness for change on the part of teachers. The authors suggested that this readiness for change was related to school climate and interpersonal relationships.

Other studies indicated that teachers can perceive the principal as a negative factor in the school setting. Mackie (1977) reported that some teachers saw the principal as interference when the principal tried to help teachers but was not skilled in the area of instruction. Shanker (1982) pointed out that teachers thought that principals ought to be active participants in staff development. Teachers had negative feelings about principals who avoided their responsibility in this area.

A study of 400 elementary teachers in Texas found that they seldom saw the principal as significantly involved in instructional leadership (Stoker, 1975). The teachers were specific about what they would like to see their principals doing: being
available to confer with teachers, obtaining materials and supplies, working with severe behavior problems, and conferring with parents and students. Since these behaviors all seem to fall within areas of support, rather than leadership, it would seem that those surveyed, at least, did not have a desire to a principal to act as instructional leader.

This perception, however, may be balanced by a review of a study of Teachers of the Year from 1978 through 1982, as indicated in the article, "Are the Best and Rest Different?" (Education USA, 1985). These teachers liked to see strong instructional leadership in schools. Seventy-five percent said morale would be better if principals were cooperative and helpful. An equal number blamed lack of administrative support for low teacher morale. These Teachers of the Year felt that higher salaries, increased prestige and more competent administrators would aid in retraining outstanding teachers.

Heichberger and Young (1975) reviewed a survey done in western New York related to teacher opinions of principals, and found that 56% of the teachers felt that the building principal should spend at least 35% of his or her time supervising instruction. Sixty-two percent desired a helping relationship with their principal. Seventy-five percent believed that the best way to improve instruction would be for the principal to study the school to identify needs and then to work with the faculty in solving
instructional problems. However, only 2% stated that the main role of principal was that of instructional leader.

With the wide variety of perceptions about what the principal’s role is and ought to be, Stoker (1975) suggested that “Principals need to take a closer look at the teachers’ attitudes toward them and their administrative roles. There were also many indications that these elementary school principals failed to communicate to the teachers what they are doing” (p. 10).

Pharis (1975) examined the ambiguities of self-perceptions of principals for their roles. Principals have been found to have difficulty defining their role. They recognize a need for both managerial and educational functions; however, they spend more time doing the former when they would prefer doing more of the latter.

From the descriptions and perceptions of instructional leadership offered thus far, it is evident that the concept of instructional leadership is considered highly important to many educators at all levels. What are the factors that encourage or discourage its development in the principalship?

**Factors Influencing Instructional Leadership**

A review of the literature identified the factors that inhibit or enhance the leadership function of effective principals.
A college professor for ten years, Whitaker (1999) returned to public administration as an elementary principal of a school with 400 pupils. She found it to be a “chaotic new world” (p. 50) for several reasons that “ate away the time that could have been devoted to curriculum and instruction,” and “that did not necessarily allow thoughtful and engaging dialogue about teaching and learning.” (p. 51). These reasons were:

Expanded workload. I felt much greater pressure to be accountable for everything in my building while the need to involve others in many decisions that once would have been made by the principal alone meant it took longer to get things done. The sheer number of personal interactions during the day on a wide array of issues created an enormous workload.

Complexity of information. Today’s principals are supposed to serve as knowledgeable resources for their staff members, parents and community. I found I was constantly experiencing information overload, attempting to sift through the mounds of information that arrived via e-mail, telephones, memos and reports or meetings. Discerning what information to circulate to parents and community members was an added expectation in the arena of shared decision making. I found it impossible to share everything with every group or to obtain input on every pending decision.
Emotional highs and lows. I found the chaotic work environment placed me on an emotional roller coaster. Sometimes multiple expectations seemed to be at odds. The experience of being spread too thin contributed to a feeling of loss of control.

Leading from the center. Many sources of stress for principals are associated with site-based management and shared decision-making. Involving others in decisions is a wonderful idea. The major obstacle is finding the time to sit down with representatives of various groups to explain the issues and solicit their ideas while simultaneously trying to work through the everyday crises (pp. 50, 51).

Hoerr (1996) agreed:

During the last several decades, the role of principal has become increasingly complex as society has made ever greater demands on the schools. Today there are breakfasts to provide and after school programs to oversee. There are special programs to coordinate for students at both ends of the academic spectrum. There are anti-gang and drug-awareness efforts, employee unions and neighborhood groups whose needs and interests must be attended to, I.E.P.'s and SAT's - along with O.B.E., T.Q.M. and the A.D.A. Indeed, the list is almost endless. It is simply not realistic to expect an administrator to serve as an
intellectual resource or catalyst for all these (and endless other) efforts. . . [As Roland Barth in his 1980 book Run School Run noted,] "The obstacles to the job are the job" (p.380).

When principals exercised their instructional leadership capacity to bring about improvement in their schools, a number of studies looked at factors that contributed to their success.

In the portion of his study in which he interviewed secondary school principals, Niece (1993) found that "Other administrators provided the major influence on the secondary principals as they were emerging into instructional leaders. Each principal cited this as the first and most important influence. Graduate-level administrative programs, coursework, or professors were not identified by the principals as being an influence" (p. 15).

In developing a roadmap for school improvement, the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (1999) emphasized the importance of using data during both planning and implementation. Participants in the school improvement process should use data and information to discuss progress on a regular basis, and should make changes to the original plan as needed.
In its report "Turning Around Low Performing Schools," the U.S. Department of Education (1998) talked about the importance of using data to support school improvement efforts. Specifically, it was noted that "Measuring progress and setting standards and analyzing the information to identify patterns of failure and their causes, enable schools and districts to diagnose low performance and attack specific problems with concrete solutions" (p. 30).

Slavin (undated, on-line) identified the readiness of the staff for change as an important factor in effective school reform. While some schools may have teachers who are ready and willing to embrace change and would require little extra support; others may not be ready for change and would require far greater levels of support.

Herman and Stringfield (1997), noted that "The context in which the program was implemented had a great deal of power to facilitate or impede its implementation" (p. 128). The researchers went on to identify several factors that were key in most successful school improvement efforts:

1. A realistic perception of local strengths and areas in need of improvement, combined with clear goals that were understood and embraced by staff;

2. Inclusion of persons who would be affected by the decision in selecting the program and throughout the whole process of implementation;
3. Willingness of members of the school, district and community to undertake the reforms;

4. Ongoing access to long-term, program-specific technical assistance and support from beyond the district (that is, from external program developers or university collaborators);

5. District and state commitment to ongoing staff development supporting the school improvement effort;

6. The school’s and district’s ability to obtain and maintain sufficient fiscal support; and

7. A commitment by district and school administrators to maintain the program through a sometimes turbulent implementation stage and to give the program time to have an impact.

This last point was especially critical. The researchers concluded that, while it was important to consider accountability, the focus on outcomes must be balanced with patience for the process. When a school or system discontinued one program and substituted another without providing strong evidence of cost savings or program effectiveness, teachers tended to become cynical about investing their energy in new programs (Herman & Stringfield 1997).
Other researchers have cited similar conditions as factors that contribute to school improvement success. In a study reporting his observations of six schools that were demonstrating success with school improvement efforts, Cawelti (1999) found that "Each of the six schools followed a different path; their educational programs and approaches varied greatly. But all focus on student achievement as an end goal" (p. 3). Cawelti identified six additional factors that could provide valuable insights to school leaders involved with school improvement processes:

1. There is a clear focus on standards and improving results;

2. Teamwork is a way of life and helps ensure accountability. People in these teams meet regularly to examine assessment results, to plan cooperative instructional activities, and to communicate and solve problems;

3. The principal is a strong educational leader. These six schools are led by principals who know they must focus on the whole system, that they must facilitate the work of others, and that they must solve many problems everyday;

4. Staff members are committed to helping all students achieve. These teachers spend extra time working with students and planning to make the school better;

5. Multiple changes are made to improve the instructional life of students and these changes are sustained over time; and
6. These six schools have not raised achievement by changing just one factor, such as schedules, teaching methods or technology. Substantial improvement comes when a school is able to undertake several changes in an organized fashion, and sustain and perfect them over a period of at least three to five years (pp. 63-65).

Pechman and Fiester (1994) identified six factors that need to be confronted as education leaders move schools through improvement processes:

1. Adequate time to learn new roles. The transition to a schoolwide project involves introducing new and expanded roles, academic expectations and management structures. Even new resources require that long standing practices be adjusted. These changes can be disconcerting or overwhelming to some members of the school community. Even with broad support, new initiatives can be tricky to coordinate smoothly.

2. Communication and involvement. Without exception, schoolwide project planners said that project success is directly related to the quality of communication among planners and the degree to which teachers are partners in planning and implementation.
3. Including parents and the community. Organizers of schoolwide projects find that it is not enough to improve instruction, curricula, or materials. Success for the project depends on support from parents, businesses, special interest groups and fraternal organizations.

4. Awareness of achievement variability. Despite the strong academic programs and comprehensive assistance that schoolwide projects offer children, student performance on standardized tests can fluctuate from year to year. When teachers anticipate student performance below their goals, it is significant that schools have structures that allow teachers to adjust the program as needed.

5. Stabilizing change. The most consistent threat to schoolwide project success is the change in leadership that occurs all too often and too early in the life of many projects. It is not uncommon for enthusiastic district managers, seeing the success of a creative leader in initiating a schoolwide project, to move that leader to a new administrative slot well before the new initiatives stabilize sometimes as soon as only one or two years after a project gets under way.

In the current climate of change and reform, schools and districts across the nation are engaged in school improvement efforts. These efforts may be comprehensive and schoolwide, or they may be more narrowly aimed at specific areas. It is important to recognize that school improvement is a complex process, and that even a well-
designed approach can fail unless school leaders consider a variety of significant factors and put in place conditions that support its success.

**Instructional Leadership Attributes of Effective Principals**

As the literature pertaining to effective schools is reviewed (i.e., schools that promote high or improving student achievement), attention turns time and again to the effectiveness of the principal. An examination of the descriptions or characteristics of effective principals indicates that some importance is attached to their ability to manage the daily operations of a school building. However, the overwhelming abundance of the literature about effective principals' characteristics describes instructional leadership behavioral attributes. This section of the chapter identifies those instructional leadership attributes of effective principals.

In her discussion of leadership characteristics that facilitate school change, Mendez-Morse (1999) identified six characteristics of successful educational leaders:

1. Vision; specifically, that students' learning is of primary importance;

2. Believing schools are for learning;

3. Valuing the professional contributions of staff, relating well to people, and being able to foster collaborative relationships;
4. Being a skilled communicator and listener, someone who can articulate a vision and communicate that shared vision to all in the school community;

5. Acting proactively, initiating action as well as anticipating and recognizing aspects of the environment that might interfere with efforts to carry out the mission; and

6. Taking risks but not carelessly or thoughtlessly, encouraging others to be risk takers by providing a safe environment.

Keller (1998) listed a number of important instructional leadership behaviors. According to Keller, the principal:

1. Recognizes teaching and learning as the main business of the school;

2. Communicates the school’s mission clearly and consistently to staff members, parents and students;

3. Fosters standards for teaching and learning that are high and attainable;

4. Provides clear goals and monitors the progress of students toward meeting them;

5. Spends time in classrooms and listening to teachers;
6. Promotes an atmosphere of trust and sharing;

7. Builds a good staff and makes professional development a top concern;


Participants in several U.S. Department of Education focus groups agreed with the importance of vision and values, and identified the school leader as key to maintaining the vision during the often difficult process of school change: “These leaders seldom claim to have invented the vision or underlying values and beliefs; instead, they perceive themselves to be keepers of the dream. They embrace it wholeheartedly and make sure that everyone else does too. . . . Developing and maintaining the vision challenges a leader’s ability to determine how well what is happening matches reasonable expectations at a given stage of implementation. In addition, when faced with problems, effective leaders see multiple solutions that preserve the spirit of the vision” (U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

In their examination of “How Principals Can Build Self-Renewing Schools,” Reitzug and Burrello (1995) identified a number of strategies and behaviors used by effective principals. “Outstanding principals practice three types of behaviors that help teachers become more reflective practitioners. Specifically, they: (a) provide a supportive environment that encourages teachers to examine and reflect upon their
teaching and on school practice; (b) use specific behaviors to facilitate reflective practice; and (c) make it possible for teachers to implement ideas and programs that result from reflective practice.

Reitzug and Burrello (1995) also identified four strategies that principals use when providing a supportive environment that encourages teacher self-reflection:

1. They encourage justification of practice. While teachers are free to select instructional strategies, they must be able to justify selection of a particular methodology.

2. Principals provide alternative instructional frameworks. They help teachers develop other perspectives through use of creative staff development opportunities, sharing current research on professional practice and through suggestions that identify other instructional strategies.

3. They encourage risk taking. Many principals in the study encouraged teachers to start making more decisions for themselves. “Outstanding principals viewed unsuccessful tries as learning opportunities” (p.48).

4. They create teaming structures for collective responsibility. “Many of the principals create organizational structures that reduce isolation and increase teaming. Teaming
leads to a sense of collective responsibility for one another and for students and provides an emotional and instructional support network” (p. 49).

In addition, the same authors identified three strategies principals employ to encourage reflective practice: (a) principals ask challenging questions that prompt teachers to reflect on their practice; (b) they critique by wandering around. If principals are to ask questions that facilitate reflective practice, they need to know what is occurring in teachers’ classroom. “Wandering around” helps principals stay informed (p. 49); and (c) principals challenge program regularities. For example, remedial instruction may be offered to students in “pull out” classes. Principals can challenge this structure and work with teachers to identify more effective instructional strategies (p. 50).

In enhancing possibilities, the authors indicated that principals give teachers the opportunity to implement new ideas and programs by providing them with money, materials and time.

Foriska (1994) in “The Principal as Instructional Leader” felt that principals persuade others to utilize the best knowledge or instructional practice:

Principals, as leaders, encourage teachers to focus on student learning to ensure that teaching decisions are based on appropriate data or research and to enable
teachers to teach and students to learn... Principals may not create new instructional strategies themselves. However, the behavior and policy of the principal can significantly affect the capacity of other staff members to create or find strategies, or to experiment with new approaches. Principals provide individuals with the resources and incentives to pursue new ideas and create new options. . . . The role of instructional leader became one of informing the teachers about educational tools and developments that were available and critiquing those tools for their applicability to instruction and the classroom. The role also involved educating the teachers about how these tools could be integrated into teaching the curriculum and monitoring how the teachers were using them in the classroom (p. 33).

Heck and Marcoulides (1993) conducted research to determine the relationship between principalship leadership behaviors and school achievement. They also sought to determine whether the effects of that leadership were similar in secondary and elementary schools. They examined 21 specific instructional leadership behaviors within three domains influenced by the role of the principal: governing the school, developing school climate and monitoring the school's instructional program. Governing the school consisted of: (a) involving the staff in critical instructional
decisions; (b) involving parents in the school program; (c) protecting faculty from outside pressures so their focus is on instruction; and (d) leaving teaches alone to teach.

Developing school climate focused on the principal’s ability to:

1. Communicate instructional goals;

2. Set high expectations for performance;

3. Encourage discussion of instructional issues;

4. Recognize the accomplishments of students;

5. Report academic progress to the community;

6. Keep faculty morale high; and

7. Establish an orderly environment for learning with a clear discipline code.

Organizing the school’s instructional program focused on how well the principal:

1. Develops School goals:

2. Coordinates the instructional program across grade levels with teachers;

3. Holds formal and informal discussions about instruction as it affects student achievement;

4. Ensures systematic monitoring of student progress;

5. Emphasizes test results for program improvement;
6. Evaluates curricular programs;

7. Identifies in-service needs;

8. Secures program resources;

9. Systematically observes teachers' instructional methods in the classroom; and,

10. After observation, helps staff members improve their instructional effectiveness (p. 22).

The authors found a positive correlation between school achievement and the aforementioned instructional leadership behaviors. They also found the effects of the leadership behaviors to be similar in secondary and elementary schools.

One of the purposes of a study conducted by Niece (1993) was to generate categories of instructional leadership descriptors. To accomplish this objective, Niece identified 15 nationwide instructional leadership authorities, selected because of their extensive research and publications on the topic. Niece's survey of these authorities generated five categories of instructional leadership for secondary principals. "The authorities responded, in rank order, that effective instructional leadership involves the secondary principal: possessing a substantial knowledge base in curriculum, instruction and evaluation; providing vision and direction for the school; promoting positive
teaching and learning environments; establishing patterns of effective communication and motivation; and maintaining high expectations for self, staff and students” (p. 15).

Niece (1993) interviewed four principals of award winning secondary schools in northeastern Ohio and four other secondary school principals, each having been nominated by one of the first four interviewed principals. He found that a 70% correlation existed between the principals’ and the authorities’ descriptors. However, he also found that each principal identified an instructional leadership descriptor differently from the authorities’ descriptors. The dissimilar characteristics were:

1. Link up to a nationwide network of practicing administrators and educational authorities;

2. Adapt administrative style to the unique characteristics and demands of the community;

3. Conduct research into current literature to attain specific information and solutions for school issues;

4. Match the right person with the right responsibility;

5. Understand each subject well enough to talk the teachers’ language;

6. Model instruction for staff members by demonstrating specific strategies in classroom situations;
7. Search out the areas' best models of teaching and arrange for teachers to visit and observe those classrooms; and

8. Facilitate and allow others to take the initiative (p. 15).

The National Association of Elementary School Principals published Proficiencies for Principals in 1991. In that publication, the Association listed what they believed to be the leadership proficiencies of effective principals:

1. Exercises vision and provides leadership that appropriately involves staff, parents, students and the community in the identification and accomplishment of the school's mission;

2. Recognizes the individual needs of all staff and students, including those who are at risk because of diverse cultures, backgrounds or abilities;

3. Applies effective human relations skills;

4. Encourages and develops the leadership of others;

5. Analyzes relevant information, makes decisions, delegates responsibility and provides appropriate support and follow-up;

6. Identifies and creatively coordinates the use of available human, material and financial resources to achieve the school's mission and goals;
7. Explores, assesses, develops and implements educational concepts that
enhance teaching and learning;

8. Bonds the school community through shared values and beliefs;

9. Initiates and manages constructive change; and

10. Advances the profession through participation as a member of local, state and
national professional groups.

An examination of the lists of descriptors of effective instructional leadership
behaviors and attributes indicates common themes, but they do not distinguish between
the effective elementary school principal and the secondary school principal. In the next
section, attention is turned to the middle school. Are the goals of the middle school
different than those of the elementary and/or secondary schools? Does middle school
principal educational leadership need to behave differently?

Effective Middle Level Schools and Middle Level School Leadership

"The middle school has become a dominant feature of the landscape of American
education" (Sweetland & Hoy, 2000, p.703). The uniqueness of the middle school has
recently been recognized in the literature, with acknowledgements of the characteristics
of interdisciplinary team structures, exploratory curriculum, and focus on the emerging
adolescent (Alexander & George, 1981; Dickinson & McEwin, 1998). The purpose and
functions of exemplary middle schools center on the intellectual, social, emotional, moral, and physical developmental needs of young adolescents (Clark & Clark, 1993; National Middle Schools Association, 1995). Within a few years, young adolescents undergo rapid physical growth, changes in moral reasoning, the onset of abstract thinking, and introduction to a range of social pressures, including sex, drugs and violence. Simultaneously, the lifelong developmental tasks of forming a personal identify or self-concept, acquiring social skills, gaining autonomy, and developing character and a set of values are begun (Irvin, 1995). “Exemplary middle level programs foster appropriate programs, policies and practices that foster the development of these tasks in positive ways” (National Middle Schools Association, 1995, p. 1).

Effective middle level schools address the distinctiveness of early adolescence with various instructional and organizational features. Five key components are generally recognized by educators, associations, and researchers:

1. Interdisciplinary teaming refers to the organizational structure of a core of teachers assigned to the same group of students. Teaming provides the structure to support two essential aspects of middle level education: (a) a positive psychosocial environment that allows flexibility and variety (Keefe, Clark, Nickerson, & Valentine, 1983), and heterogeneous grouping of students (MacIver & Epstein, 1993) and (b) a structure to plan and deliver a curriculum that balances academic and humane factors
(NMSA, 1995). Because teachers share the same students and have a common planning period, they are able to respond more quickly to the needs of individual students through collaboration, meeting jointly with parents, and designing thematic units which foster the transfer of ideas among disciplines and increase relevance.

2. Advisory programs consist of a small group of students (usually 20 or fewer) assigned to a teacher, administrator or other staff member for a regularly scheduled meeting to discuss topics of concern to students. The purpose of this program is the development of close, trusting relationships between students and adults and to increase engagement with learning and feelings of positive self-esteem and belonging. Social and academic support activities include "discussing problems with individual students, giving career information and guidance, developing student self-confidence and leadership, and discussing academic issues, personal or family problems, social relationships, peer groups, health issues, moral or ethical issues and multicultural/intergroup relations" (MacIver, 1990, p. 459).

3. Varied instruction includes (a) integrating learning experiences, addressing students' own questions, and focusing upon real life issues relevant to the student; (b) actively engaging the student in problem-solving and accommodating individual differences; (c) emphasizing collaboration, cooperation and community; and (d) seeking to develop good people, caring for others, democratic values and moral sensitivity (NMSA, 1995).
Some of the more common programs include multi-age grouping over longer periods of time, cross-age tutoring, cooperative learning, hands-on and student-centered activities; use of block time and flexible scheduling; and positive evaluations. Learning tasks are developmentally appropriate and adapted to individual differences (NMSA, 1995).

4. Exploratory programs capitalize on the innate curiosity of young adolescents, exposing them to a range of academic, vocational and recreational subjects for career options, community service, enrichment and enjoyment. Exploratory topics include foreign languages, intramural sports, health clubs, student government, home economics, technological arts, independent study projects, music, art, speech, drama, careers, consumer education, creative writing and other special areas (NMSA, 1995).

5. Transition programs focus on creating a smooth change of schools for the young adolescent. Eighty-eight percent of public school students begin middle School grades in a new school, a transition which may overwhelm the coping skills of some students and have pathogenic effects on their psychological adjustment, self-esteem and their motivation to learn (MacIver, 1990). A common approach is for elementary school students to visit the middle school they will be attending, and for middle school students to visit the high school they will be attending. The administrators and guidance
counselors meet to discuss ways to help students make smooth transitions from one
school to the next.

The National Middle Schools Association (1995) believed that developmentally
responsive middle schools are characterized by:

1. A shared vision;

2. Educators committed to young adolescents;

3. A positive school climate;

4. An adult advocate for every student;

5. Family and community partnerships; and

6. High expectations for all.

With these characteristics in place, developmentally responsive middle
schools provide:

1. A curriculum that is challenging, integrative and exploratory;

2. Varied teaching/learning approaches;

3. Assessment and evaluation that promote learning;

4. Flexible organizational structures;

5. Programs and policies that foster health, safety and wellness; and
6. Comprehensive guidance and support services.

Hoy and Sabo (1998) found that the organizational climate of middle schools was important, and that the climate profile of middle schools that facilitated student achievement included: environmental press, collegial leadership, teacher professionalism, and academic press. They noted:

Effective middle schools are open and healthy in their interpersonal relationships; they are places where teachers like and respect their colleagues and are committed to their work and students (high teacher professionalism). Teachers see the principal as their ally in the improvement of instruction; the principal is friendly, open, respectful, supportive, and yet establishes and is committed to high standards of teacher performance (pp.112-113).

A review of the above characteristics and provisions and their comparison to the literature indicates that, except for the chronological age of the student population, there appears to be a strong congruence with preferred characteristics for effective elementary, middle, and high schools.

In fact, the literature provides ample research about the effective principal. Some studies focused on the elementary school principal and others provided findings specific to secondary school principals. In addition, the literature indicated that there
was little to differentiate the essential skills needed for an effective elementary school principal from those needed for an effective secondary school principal. A study that specifically addressed effective middle school principal skills would add to the literature in the area of effective educational leadership.

Summary

In Chapters I and II, a decade of research findings pertaining to effective schools was reviewed and synthesized, to conclude that effective schools have the following common characteristics:

1. Principals who provide strong administrative and instructional leadership;

2. High expectations, including a conviction that all students can and will learn;

3. A school climate or environment that stimulates learning, beginning with a building that is orderly and quiet without being repressive;

4. A schoolwide feeling by students and staff alike that the acquisition of basic skills is urgently important; and

5. A system of continuous monitoring of student progress;

In order to develop these characteristics within their schools, effective principals engage in behaviors that could be characterized as managerial or instructional leadership behaviors.
Parker and Day (1997) identified five categories of instructional leadership behaviors of principals: (a) communicating the mission; (b) managing curriculum and instruction; (c) supervising teaching; (d) monitoring student progress; and (e) promoting an instructional climate.

Parker and Day (1997), as well as many other authors and researchers cited in this chapter identified specific behaviors in each of these categories which effective principals demonstrate. A summary of these behaviors is provided in Table 1.

If organizational management were added to the categories of instructional leadership behaviors developed by Parker and Day (1997), then six general categories would result in which a number of researchers have described specific behaviors of effective principals. Table 2 provides a summary of these behaviors in the six categories.

This qualitative research study consisted of in-depth interviews of middle school principals to determine: (a) whether their perceptions of the attributes of effective principals were congruent with the research cited in this chapter; (b) whether they would identify different behaviors of effective principals; and (c) whether they would distinguish among the effective principal behaviors of elementary, middle and high schools.
Table 1

Common Characteristics of Instructional Leadership in the Five Categories of Parker and Day (1997)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communicating the Mission</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotes a vision that teaching and learning are the main business of the school, and that student learning is of primary importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides vision and direction for the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintains the vision during process of school change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicates the school's mission clearly to all stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonds the school community through shared values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapts to the unique characteristics and demands of the community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2

Common Characteristics of Instructional Leadership and Organizational Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Leadership</th>
<th>Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communicating the Mission</strong></td>
<td><strong>Managing Curriculum and Instruction</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotes a vision that teaching and learning are the main business of the school, and that student learning is of primary importance</td>
<td>Knowledgeable of effective curricular and instructional trends, and evaluative methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides vision and direction for the school</td>
<td>Fosters high standards for teaching and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintains the vision during process of school change</td>
<td>Identifies inservice needs, and makes professional development a top concern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicates the school’s mission clearly to all stakeholders</td>
<td>Provides alternative instructional frameworks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonds the school community through shared values</td>
<td>Encourages justification of methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapts to the unique characteristics and demands of the community</td>
<td>Secures program resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER III

METHODODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify the attributes of the principals of effective middle schools as perceived by middle school principals.

A second question was to determine if these perceptions were congruent with what the literature, cited in Chapter II, had identified as the attributes of effective school principals in general.

A third question was, “Do the middle school principals perceive the effective middle school principalship to be differentiated from the non-middle school principalship?”

Design

This study utilized a qualitative research approach. Data were collected from the subjects through in-depth confidential interviews. Thirty-two middle school principals were sent letters inviting them to participate in the study (see Appendix A). A reply
form and a stamped, self-addressed envelope for each principal were also enclosed (see Appendix B). The sample size (N=15) was 47% of the total population.

**Qualitative Research Method**

Creswell (1994) described qualitative research as a process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting. Campbell (1996) noted that with qualitative research, the researcher acts as a key instrument, and the methodology itself “contains deep, rich description and is more concerned with process than specifying outcomes or products. Generally, the data are analyzed in an inductive process to provide meaning to the research consumer. . . Qualitative researchers assume reality is socially constructed and that variables are complex, interwoven, and difficult to measure. The researcher seeks the insider’s point of view and is personally involved in the process.”

Peshkin (1993) noted that a range of outcomes was generated from four categories of analysis in qualitative research studies: description, interpretation, verification, and evaluation. Campbell’s (1996) listing of the characteristics commonly associated with qualitative research included:
1. Descriptive analyses yield information on processes, relationships, systems, people, and the setting or situations;

2. More interpretive analyses provide explanations or even help to create some generalizations;

3. New concepts may be developed or extended; and

4. Interpretive studies help provide insights that have the power to change behavior, refine knowledge, or to identify problems.

The differences between qualitative research and the more traditional quantitative approaches have been thoroughly described in the literature (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Creswell, 1994; Firestone, 1987; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Although they have different approaches to inquiry, both strive for standards of quality and have techniques to establish the “trustworthiness” of the research. As Campbell (1996) noted, researchers in the more conventional paradigms strive for validity, generalizability, reliability, replicability, and objectivity; whereas researchers in the more naturalistic paradigms seek credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Despite their differences, the methodologies have a common objective in educational research; that is, to contribute to the knowledge about
education for the continual development and improvement of educational practice (Borg & Gall, 1983).

Patton (1990) believed that qualitative research credibility centered on three equally critical interrelated elements: rigorous techniques and methods, the credibility of the researcher, and the philosophical belief in the interpretive paradigm and qualitative methods. Techniques and methods and researcher credibility were also emphasized by Miles and Huberman (1984), and Guba and Lincoln (1981) were proponents of the philosophical belief in the paradigm and methods. Cantrell (1996) reinforced Patton's position, and noted, “Techniques and methods must be clearly described and delineated to enable others to envision the study and judge its worth. Perceptions of the researcher’s qualifications and experience lie at the heart of credibility since this individual serves as both the instrument of data collection and the tool for data analysis” (p. 19).

In order to meet the standards established in the field for overall “trustworthiness” in qualitative research, this study included a thorough description of the techniques and methods to be employed, to enable others to envision the study and judge its worth (Cantrell, 1996). In addition, the researcher’s own past and present administrative experiences as building principal and superintendent in the DFG districts of GH, I and J, added to the perception that the researcher is qualified to serve as both
the instrument of data collection and the tool for data analysis (Cantrell, 1996).

Questions used in the interviews were corroborated through a focus group review by non-sample middle school principals. The interview process itself minimized several potential threats to the "trustworthiness" of the method, including participants' reactive responses and response styles (Antonak & Livneh, 1988).

Qualitative research methodology was used to gather data through face-to-face, in-depth interviews. The face-to-face interview enables the interviewer to establish rapport with the respondent, allows the interviewer to observe as well as to listen, and permits more complex questions to be asked than in other types of data collection. The interview method has been recognized as an important source of qualitative data, and has a long history of success (Graves, 1997). Interviewing is a "purposeful conversation . . . that is directed by one in order to get information from another" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). For this study, the guidelines of Bogdan and Biklen (1992), Maxwell (1996), and Ely (1991) were followed, in developing an outline of questions, and strategies for eliciting more detailed informant responses.

The remainder of this chapter is organized in the following sections: research sample, research procedures and techniques for data collection, the interview instrument and interview questions, and treatment of data.
Research Sample

Middle school principals were selected as the subjects of this study. Middle school principals form the group of educators that are most likely to understand the dynamics of the middle school and the behaviors required to manage and lead a middle school effectively.

There are 32 middle schools in the I and J DFG public school districts in the State of New Jersey, that met the requirements of this study. Therefore the study had a sample size (N=15) which represented 47% of the total population. This sample size was based upon the purpose of the study, not on specific rules (Campbell, 1996). As Patton (1990) described it, the qualitative researcher seeks what he or she wants to know, what will be useful and credible, and what can be accomplished within the constraints of time and resources.

These limitations indicated that the findings may not be reflective of (a) principals in other District Factor Groups, (b) principals at different levels (e.g., elementary and high school principals), or (c) principals of non-public schools.

Data were collected from the subjects through in-depth confidential interviews. This qualitative design allowed the researcher to gain a deeper, more intimate and more accurate understanding of the perceptions of the sample population. Audio and written
records of the interviews were gathered, and data were annotated and referenced in the
discussion of patterns and/or trends in the participants’ thinking.

Additional criteria included in the selection of the research sample were: (a) the
selected middle school principals were principals of schools that have a grade 6, 7, and 8
configuration; (b) the schools had a minimum enrollment of 300 students; (c) the
middle school was part of a public, K-12 school district; and (d) the school district had a
designated 1 or J DFG, as determined by the New Jersey Department of Education
(NJDOE).

Since adolescence is an extraordinarily dynamic period in human development,
the research sample was limited to principals of schools with grades 6, 7, and 8
configurations, to assure that those in the sample were dealing with student populations
of approximately the same chronological age. Middle schools that contained grades
lower than 6 or higher than 8 might have increased the variability of issues with which
the principal must deal.

One of the concepts in creating a middle school is that teams of teachers work
with teams of students. There is usually a core team of four or five teachers assigned to
a student team of 75 – 100 students. Having a middle school with a minimum of 300
students will ensure that there are at least full teams of teachers and students at each
grade level.
Requiring the research subjects to be selected from a sample that work in K-12 school districts increased the likelihood that they would have knowledge as to the similarities or differences of their principalships with non-middle school principals (i.e., elementary and high school principals).

As stated earlier, the sample population was chosen from districts identified as I and J districts in the state's District Factor Grouping system. The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) introduced the district factor grouping (DFG) system in 1975, and continues to use it as a means of ranking school districts in the state by their socioeconomic status. According to the NJDOE, "The DFG was motivated by research conducted in the late 1960's and early 1970's that showed a strong relationship between socioeconomic status and educational outcomes. . . Because the research showed that students (i.e., what students bring to school, including socialization that takes place before they step inside the school building) are the most important determinant of educational outcomes, the effectiveness of school systems cannot be sensibly judged without reference to the socioeconomic background of their students" (New Jersey Department of Education, 2001). As Hoy and Sabo (1998) noted, "The socioeconomic status of the community is always a strong predictor of student achievement; in fact, it typically overwhelms other variables in predicting achievement" (p.115). These findings are confirmed in the I and J school districts, as they have the
highest average student performances in the state, as measured by the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment, a state required standardized test.

While the potential for rater errors is inherent in every research study, the literature offers different opinions as to the effects of this potential. As Thorndike (1920) noted over 80 years ago, a rater’s overall impressions about the ratee can influence ratings about specific aspects of the person. While this finding has been reinforced in the literature throughout the years, its effects have not been unanimously accepted. In the studies he reviewed, Cooper (1981) found little evidence to suggest that halo error has produced inaccurate ratings. He found that halo error was positively related to the accuracy of ratings, and he referred to this as a paradox in the rating process. For purposes of this study, the potential for bias or a ‘halo effect’ was minimized by the study design. By interviewing only principals of I and J districts, the study pooled raters with equal knowledge, which was one suggestion for coping with potential bias, as provided by Corsini (1984). In addition, the consistent confirmation in the literature over time, of the connection of socioeconomic status and student achievement, established a factual basis for the study design that would tend to override individual rater bias.

The decision to limit the sample of principals to those working in DFG I and J districts was not based on an assumption that those principals are effective or more
effective than some other group of principals. However, high student standardized test scores are one indicator of many for effective schools. Indeed, high test scores represent a common and valued objective for all district constituent groups: school personnel, boards of education, parents and the public. The researcher is superintendent of a K-12 public school district in the GH DFG. The constituencies of that district compare its student population performance to the I and J districts. It was also thought that while the principals from the I and J sample districts may or may not be effective, they were at least as likely as any group of principals to know the attributes of effective middle school principals.

Research Procedures and Techniques for Data Collection

The 1999 Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment Report as issued by the NJDOE indicated that there are 32 middle schools in the state that meet the sample criteria identified earlier in this chapter. All of those middle school principals (100%) were sent letters inviting them to participate in the study (see Appendix A). A reply form and a stamped, self-addressed envelope for each principal were enclosed (see Appendix B). All respondents who agreed to participate by signing a consent form (see Appendix C) were interviewed. The sample size (N=15) was 47% of the total eligible population.

The purpose of this study was to identify the perceptions of middle school principals about those attributes demonstrated by principals of effective middle schools.
This qualitative research was conducted by means of an open-ended interview. Patton (1989) stated that the purpose of an open-ended interview is not to put things into one’s mind but rather to access the perspective of the study subject being interviewed. We interview people to find out from them things we cannot directly observe.

**Interview Instrument**

In Chapters I and II, descriptors of effective schools were identified. Throughout the review of the literature in Chapter II, behaviors of principals were described and categorized as they related to leading and managing effective schools. In the Summary section of Chapter II, five broad categories were identified within which the many varied behaviors of principals could be included as they related to instructional leadership. According to Parker and Day (1997), those five categories were: (a) communicating the mission; (b) managing curriculum and instruction; (c) supervising teaching; (d) monitoring student progress; and (e) promoting an instructional climate. Based on the findings of Stronge (1990, 1993), Brederson (1985), Snyder and Johnson (1985), and Smith and Andrews (1989), a sixth area entitled organizational management is added, to provide a full set of categories relevant to educational leadership. As Snyder and Johnson (1985) noted, rather than dichotomize the maintenance and instructional leadership emphasis, the principal’s role is to accomplish productive school management through multifaceted duties and responsibilities. The literature reviewed
indicated that all of the attributes of principals of effective schools could be subsumed within these six categories.


Six of the open-ended questions developed for the interview were directly related to these six categories. A seventh question sought to identify any possible essential behaviors of a principal beyond the previously identified categories. An eighth question sought to determine if the middle school principal subjects perceive differences in attributes of principals of effective middle schools as distinguished from principals of effective elementary schools and high schools. A final summary question was structured to encourage the respondent in a free association situation to articulate a range of qualities that came to mind.
### Table 3
Common Characteristics of Educational Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Leadership</th>
<th>Educational Leadership</th>
<th>Management</th>
<th>Middle School Leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communicating the Mission</td>
<td>Managing Curriculum and Instruction</td>
<td>Supervising Teaching</td>
<td>Monitoring Student Progress &amp; Achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Promotes a vision that teaching and learning are the main business of the school, and that student learning is of primary importance</strong></td>
<td>Knowledgeable of effective curricular and instructional trends, and evaluative methods</td>
<td>Functions as an instructional resource</td>
<td>Puts a clear focus on standards and improving results for all students, including those not currently learning</td>
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<td><strong>Provides vision and direction for the school</strong></td>
<td>Fosters high standards for teaching and learning</td>
<td>Spends time in the classroom and listening to teachers</td>
<td>Provides clear goals for student achievement</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Maintains the vision during process of school change</strong></td>
<td>Identifies inservice needs, and makes professional development a top concern</td>
<td>Uses coaching skills; encourages risk-taking</td>
<td>Emphasizes test results for program improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communicates the school’s mission clearly to all stakeholders</strong></td>
<td>Provides alternative instructional frameworks</td>
<td>Encourages teacher leadership and initiative</td>
<td>The focus on outcomes is balanced with patience for the process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bonds the school community through shared values</strong></td>
<td>Encourages justification of methodology</td>
<td>Encourages teachers to reflect on their practice</td>
<td>Recognizes the accomplishments of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adapts to the unique characteristics and demands of the community</strong></td>
<td>Secures program resources</td>
<td>Builds a good staff, and does not tolerate bad teachers</td>
<td>Reports academic progress to the community</td>
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The nine questions were preceded by three questions intended to elicit background information about the subject being interviewed; these pertain to years of experience in education, and previous experience. Therefore, there were a total of twelve questions.

**Interview Questions**

1. **Background Information**
   
   1.1 How long have you been in your current assignment?
   
   1.2 How many years have you worked as an educator?
   
   1.3 What positions in education did you have prior to your current position?

2. **Perceptions**

   For the next set of questions the subject will be informed that he or she is being asked his or her perceptions as they pertain to the job of the principal of an effective middle school. Therefore, when the word principal is used in a question, it is to be understood that it means the principal of an effective middle school.

   2.1 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to communicating the mission of the school?
   
   2.2 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to managing curriculum and instruction?
2.3 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to supervising teaching?

2.4. In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to student progress?

2.5 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to promoting an instructional climate?

2.6 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to organizational management?

3. Other

3.1 Does the middle school principal have essential areas of responsibility and/or behaviors other than the ones you have already described?

3.2 Do principals of effective middle schools exercise different behaviors than principals of effective elementary schools or effective high schools?

4. Summary

4.1 If you were advising a committee searching for a candidate to become the new principal of their effective middle school, what would you tell them to look for?
These questions served as a focus to establish the boundaries of the study as well as inclusion-exclusion criteria (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Miles and Huberman (1984) noted, “Focusing and bounding data collection can be seen usefully as anticipatory data reduction; it is a form of pre-analysis, ruling out certain variables and relationships, and attending to others” (p. 28). Patton (1990) recognized both the inherent vagueness of inquiry as well as real world constraints, and noted, “There is no rule of thumb that tells a researcher how to focus a study. The extent to which a research question is broad or narrow depends on purpose, the resources available, the time available, and the interests of those involved. In brief, these are not choices between good and bad, but choices among alternatives, all of which have merit” (p. 166).

Focus Group

In order to further refine the study’s design, the interview questions were reviewed by a focus group of 5 middle school principals and vice-principals from the GH DFG public school districts. As defined by Powell and Single (1996), a focus group is “a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research” (p.499). The benefits of the focus group as a tool for researchers is provided in the literature (Flores & Alonso, 1995; Morgan, 1988; Morgan & Kreuger, 1993; and Powell & Single, 1996).
Morgan and Kreuger (1993) noted that focus groups were especially useful when, among other things, one wanted to explore the degree of consensus on a given topic. Although the focus group can be used as a research method in its own right (Morgan, 1988), its use for this study was intended as a complement to the interview. Middle school principals and vice-principals from DFG GH school districts were chosen for the focus group based on availability. The homogenous nature of this group was purposeful; as Gibbs (1997) noted, “If a [focus] group is too heterogeneous . . . the differences between participants can make a considerable impact on their contributions” (p.5). The focus group administrators remained independent from the sample group participants.

Treatment of Data

Transcriptions of tape-recorded interview provided the data for this study. Patterns and exceptions to patterns were examined for each question.

Each subject was assigned a number code so that both accuracy and anonymity could be maintained. Subjects and their responses were maintained in confidentiality.

While the practice of qualitative analysis contains several approaches to analysis, a common method is the development of a system for identifying categories or themes based upon patterns and ideas that emerge from the data from activities such as interviews and reflections (Graves, 1997). For purposes of this study, the data were
reviewed to identify patterns in the words and phrases recorded. Those that repeated and stood out were annotated. Patton (1990) described how a system for classification emerges after observed patterns are labeled, sorted, compared and contrasted. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) recommended the listing of families of responses, including that of perspectives held by subjects. Miles and Huberman (1984, 1988) refined data coding and analysis by proposing that “analysis consists of three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.”

For this study, data reduction involved the sample selection, question focusing and simplification, as well as the abstraction and transformation of the raw data. The design decisions focused the study at the outset; the utilization of a focus group review of the interview questions accomplished anticipatory data reduction.

The data display discussed by Miles and Huberman (1984) took the form of tables. They were designed “to assemble organized information in an immediately accessible, compact form, so that the analyst can see what is happening and either draw justified conclusions or move on to the next step analysis the display suggests may be useful” (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

It was expected that analysis of the data would reveal patterns and information that would not only lead to the resolution of the primary inquiry, but would also open new avenues for future exploration.
Chapter IV presents the findings, an analysis of the findings, and a summary.

Summary

This chapter re-stated the purpose of the study. The criteria used to identify the research sample were described. The subjects were self-selected for this qualitative study from the research sample. Research procedures and methods of data collection were described as interviewing selected subjects using open-ended questions. The questions were developed based on a summary of the review of the literature in Chapter II, and were directly related to Parker and Day's (1997) five instructional leadership dimensions, as well as Stronge's (1993) unified view of the principal's managerial and instructional responsibilities.

Chapter IV provides the findings, analysis, and summary of the data.
CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify the attributes of the principals of effective middle schools. More specifically, this study focused on these principals’ attributes as perceived by middle school principals. Qualitative research methodology was employed to gain insight about these perceptions.

This chapter presents and analyzes these findings. A summary of the findings is also provided in Table 4, relating research subjects’ perceptions to attributes identified in the literature that was cited in the first three chapters of this work.

Nature of the Study

The research subject population selected for study consisted of principals of middle schools with a grade six to eight configuration. These middle schools were in K-12 school districts with a District Factor Group (DFG) of I or J. There are 32 such schools in the State of New Jersey, and the principals of all 32 schools were invited to participate in this research. Twenty principals responded, and of the 20, 15 agreed to
<table>
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<th>Table 4</th>
<th>Middle School Principals’ Perceptions of the Educational Leadership Roles of Middle School Principals</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Educational Leadership</td>
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<td>Instructional Leadership</td>
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<td>Communicating the Mission</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provides leadership</td>
<td>Identifies curriculum issues and concerns</td>
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<td>Provides vision and direction for the school</td>
<td>Works with supervisors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintains and continually reinforces the vision; is a “keeper of the flame”</td>
<td>Acts as Instructional Leader; monitors instruction; gives feedback; causes teachers to reflect on their practices</td>
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<td>Communicates the school’s mission clearly to all stakeholders</td>
<td>Ensures the curriculum exceeds standards</td>
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<td>Ensures all members of the community are engaged and share the same goals</td>
<td>Understands the middle school curriculum</td>
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<td>Sets the tone and culture of the school</td>
<td>Focuses on professional development</td>
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schedule interviews. The 15 principals interviewed represented 47% of the total subject population.

Principals were asked a series of questions. A total of 12 questions were grouped into four sets. The first set of three questions was to gain basic information about the background educational experience of the study subjects. The second set of six questions asked the research subjects about their perceptions of the principal’s role as it pertained to five areas of instructional leadership and another area identified as organizational management. These six questions were related to the educational leadership categories. A third set of two other questions focused very specifically on the middle school principalship. A fourth set and final question was intended to summarize the interview by focusing on the attributes a search committee should look for in candidates for principals of effective middle schools.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

All 15 interviews took place at the middle schools of the principals interviewed, and were conducted in their offices.

Background Information

In this set of questions, principals were asked about the number of years they had served in their current assignment, the previous assignments they had held, and the
overall number of years they had served in education. Information is also provided about the respondents’ gender and the size of student enrollment in each middle school. These background data were employed in an analysis of principals’ responses to the research questions, to determine if patterns existed.

**Years in Current Assignment**

Principals’ responses to this question ranged from less than one year to 25 years in current assignment. Five principals were non-tenured; seven principals had from four to eight year’s experience and the remaining three principals had all been in their present positions for more than a decade. The average length of time that the principals had served in their current assignments was six and a half years.

**Years in Education**

The principals’ responses to this question ranged from as few as 16 years to as many as 41 years working as an educator. One principal had 16 years experience in education, while another had 41 years. Eight principals had between 31 and 39 years of experience in education, and five others fell within the range of 24 to 29 years of experience. Overall the research subjects had been working in education for an average of 30 years.

**Prior Positions**
All 15 principals reported previous experience as teachers. They also all had prior experience in a variety of supervisory and/or administrative roles. Ten of the respondents had been assistant principals; five had been elementary principals; three had guidance counseling experience; one had been a high school principal; and one had been a superintendent.

**Enrollment**

The student enrollment in the 15 middle schools involved in this study ranged from as few as 490 students to as many as 1800 students. Average student enrollment was 794. For comparison purposes, this researcher divided the schools into three groups: small (490-599 students); medium (600-899 students); and large (900-1800 students). There were five schools that fell into the small group, 7 schools in the medium group, and three schools in the large group.

**Gender**

Of the 15 research study subjects, twelve were male and three were female.

**Perceptions of Instructional Leadership and Organizational Management**

In this set of six questions, the research subjects were asked their perceptions with regard to the roles of the principal pertaining to instructional leadership and
organizational management. All six roles were identified in the literature cited in Chapter II as components of educational leadership.

A summary of the characteristics of educational leadership as noted in the literature is provided below, and it was expected that an analysis of responses would reveal congruency with these findings

**Communicating the Mission**

Parker and Day (1997) believed that one of the five dimensions of instructional leadership involved defining and communicating the mission of the school. As noted in Table 3, the literature had identified a number of activities associated with effective communication of the mission of the school. These included: (a) promoting a vision that teaching and learning are the main business of the school, and that student learning is of primary importance (Keller, 1998; Mendez-Morse 1999); (b) providing a vision and direction for the school (Lezotte, 1994); (c) maintaining the vision during the process of school change (Herman & Stringfield, 1997); (d) communicating the school’s mission clearly to all stakeholders (Mendez-Morse, 1999; Peckman & Fiester, 1994); (e) bonding the school community through shared values (Lezotte, 1994); and (f) adapting to the unique characteristics and demands of the community (Niece, 1993).

In describing the effective schools movement in 1997, LeMahieu, Roy and Foss identified the need to articulate a vision, securing widespread engagement in that vision,
and promoting its successful fulfillment. Twenty years later these same authors were still convinced of its importance: "The role of principal in promoting an instructional vision . . . is no less important today than during the effective schools movement (LeMahieu, et al., 1997, p. 585). Having and communicating a vision as it related to communicating the mission of the school was found to be important in this research. Seven of the research subjects articulated the importance of having a vision and three of these specified the importance of having a vision for the middle school. Five principals talked about the need to continually reinforce the mission and remind stakeholders of the mission. One principal summarized his role as being the “keeper of the flame.”

Mendez-Morse (1999) wrote of the need for educational leaders to have the vision that students’ learning is of primary importance. Keller (1998) also promoted this position, and stated that an important instructional leadership behavior was recognizing that teaching and learning are the main business of the school. This was reinforced during the interviews, as all research subjects spoke to the importance of monitoring and promoting teaching and learning. The respondents frequently used words and phrases such as “coaching,” “mentoring” and “teaching teachers to teach better.” They also talked about analyzing student performance data and using that analysis to provide feedback directly to teachers and students about their respective performances. As one principal stated, his role was “to provide the best instructional quality so that curriculum
can be taught effectively, and efficiently, and thoroughly and creatively, to ensure kids are critical thinkers and problem solvers.”

Herman and Stringfield (1997) felt that a key factor in successful schools was the commitment by the district and school administrators to maintain programs through sometimes turbulent implementation stages, in order to allow for their ultimate impact. The idea of keeping a vision and a sense of mission was confirmed in this research. Five respondents talked specifically about maintaining the mission, and one principal cited his own experience, which was directly on point. He had been the principal of his school when it was still a junior high school, and led the staff and the rest of the school community through the transition to a middle school. He indicated that some parents and teachers had wanted to return to the junior high school way of educating students (i.e., with subject-centered instruction rather than team-based, student-centered instruction). It became his role as principal to keep staff and parents focused on the mission of the school and the reasons for the change.

Another characteristic of a successful educational leader is that of being a skilled communicator and listener, someone who can articulate a vision and communicate that shared vision to all in the school community (Mendez-Morse, 1999). In this study, ten principals specifically indicated that their role required effective communication skills,
ensuring that all stakeholders had an understanding of the mission, including teachers, parents and community members.

Lezotte (1994) noted that one goal of communicating the mission of the school was to ensure that others shared the vision and accepted the mission. In this study, five of the respondent principals talked about the importance of engaging all members of the community, making sure that all constituencies shared the same goals.

One of Niece’s (1993) descriptors of instructional leadership was that of adapting administrative style to the unique characteristics and demands of the community. This descriptor was not specifically addressed by any of the study subjects. However, it was inferred from the responses of three research subjects that they supported this descriptor. They commented that it was important for the principal to understand everyone’s agenda, that it was important to work with all groups in data collection and implementing changes, and that the principal must be a liaison between the school and outside constituencies. Two other respondents noted how community-based committees were involved in the development of mission statements in their schools. One principal described it by saying, “The mission must be built through teachers and community, not just through the philosophy or thoughts of the principal alone.”
In an analysis of the responses provided regarding communicating the mission, it was noted that this area was consistently identified as an important role of the principalship. The responses were similar across size of the school, years experience in current position, years in education, previous positions held, and gender.

To summarize this section, literature findings were cited that identified the components involved in communicating the mission. The study subjects’ responses were clearly congruent with the literature, with the exception of adapting administrative style to meet the unique demands of the community. Although none of the principals specifically talked in the interviews about adapting their administrative style to meet the unique demands of the community, congruence was inferred from their other related statements.

In addition, the respondents noted other facets of the principal’s role in communicating the mission of the school that were specific to the middle school. Specifically, that the principal must lead in terms of the tone and the culture of the middle school, and must decide what is important to a middle school as well as the difficult choices that govern the decision-making; the principal needs to understand everyone’s agenda for the middle school student; the principal must provide leadership and a vision specifically for the middle school; and the principal consistently must advocate for the middle school and the middle school student.
Managing Curriculum and Instruction

The second dimension of instructional leadership identified by Parker and Day (1997) was that of managing curriculum and instruction. As noted in Table 3, the literature had identified certain behaviors of effective leaders within this area. These included: (a) being knowledgeable of effective curricular and instructional trends and evaluative methods (Foriska, 1994); (b) fostering high standards for teaching and learning (Heck & Marcoulides, 1993; Keller, 1998); (c) identifying in-service needs and making professional development a top concern (Heck & Marcoulides, 1993; Keller, 1998); (d) providing alternative instructional frameworks (Reitzug & Burrello, 1995); (e) encouraging justification of methodology (Reitzug & Burrello, 1995); and (f) securing program resources (Smith & Andrews, 1989; Foriska, 1994; Reitzug & Burrello, 1995).

As part of their responsibility in managing curriculum and instruction, principals must inform teachers of the educational tools and developments available, and evaluate their applicability to instruction and the classroom (Foriska, 1994). Eleven of the research subjects talked about staff development activities to keep teachers abreast of the latest professional practices. One principal felt that “the principal must be seen as being very current in his expectations of teachers,” and that therefore principals should attend
workshops, be aware of the latest research in instructional practices, and bring that knowledge to bear in classroom observations.

The principal’s ability to set high expectations for performance has been found to be one of the behaviors of instructional leadership that had a positive correlation to school achievement (Heck & Marcoulides, 1993). Keller’s (1998) list of important instructional leadership behaviors included that of fostering standards for teaching and learning that are high and attainable. These expectations were confirmed in the field research, as three respondents spoke of high expectations for performance. One principal expressed it as “ensuring that the curriculum exceeded the core curriculum content standards,” while another said the principal should be “establishing the highest standards and expectations for social responsibility and high expectations for academic achievement.”

Heck and Marcoulides (1993) found that the effectiveness of a school’s instructional program was dependent upon a number of principal skills, including the ability to identify inservice needs. Making professional development a top concern was also cited by Keller (1998) as an important behavior in instructional leadership. The research subjects also talked about the importance of staff development, as well as their various approaches to it. Two respondents indicated that they identified specific needs for staff development through an analysis of the observations and evaluations of
teachers. One principal said that he would use a site-based committee to determine staff development needs. Three respondents said that they encouraged teacher attendance at workshops, while one said he kept up with professional readings and shared articles with his staff. Four of the principals saw this role as integral to their ability to serve as instructional leaders.

As part of their role in arranging for a supportive instructional environment, principals need to provide alternative instructional frameworks to help teachers develop other perspectives (Reitzug & Burrello, 1995). This can be accomplished through creative staff development activities, the sharing of current research on professional practice, and through suggestions that identify other instructional strategies (Reitzug & Burrello, 1995). While the subjects of this study consistently referred to the need to provide for staff development, one principal also talked about encouraging teachers to be creative and to be risk takers. Two respondents described the observation/evaluation process as a mechanism to cause teachers to be reflective about their professional practice. One principal talked about designing an alternative teacher assessment process that would allow teachers to engage in special projects designed to improve aspects of instruction.

One of the strategies that principals use to foster teacher self-reflection is the act of encouraging them to justify their instructional methodology (Reitzug & Burrello,
1995). In this research study, three principals described their efforts to cause teachers
to engage in self-reflection about their professional performance. They also noted how
this activity drew upon the expertise and professionalism of teachers.

By providing teachers with resources such as money, materials and time, principals give teachers the opportunity to pursue and implement new ideas and create
new options and programs (Foriska, 1994; Reitzug & Burrello, 1995). In this study, one
of the research subjects indicated that the principal should be “active in planning
curriculum, selection of materials and the delivery of instruction in conjunction with
supervisors.” Two other principals stated that it was important for them not only to
know what resources were available, but also to ensure that those resources were
accessible to teachers.

In an analysis of the responses regarding management of curriculum and
instruction, some variation was noted. Six respondents cast the principal in a leadership
role, and four respondents identified the principal as a manager, giving up leadership to
district supervisors. Before analysis of these responses, it was expected that the
principals of schools with the largest enrollment would take on a more managerial role
in this area, and that principals of smaller schools would assume greater leadership
responsibilities. However, upon analysis, it was found that decisions to be leaders or
managers were made independent of the size of the school. Nor were these decisions related to years in current position, years in education, prior supervisory roles, or gender.

To summarize this section, literature findings were cited that identified the components involved in managing curriculum and instruction. As was expected, the study subjects’ responses were congruent with the literature. In addition, the respondents noted other facets of the principal’s role in managing curriculum and instruction that were specific to the middle school. Specifically, they stated that middle school instruction is different; that the curriculum should be exploratory, and learning strategies should include cooperative learning; the curriculum should address the social needs of the middle school student; and that the middle school principal must ensure that teachers are implementing the curriculum in an appropriate manner, taking into account learning styles and differentiated instruction. In addition, it was noted that the respondents reported different experiences concerning a management vs. leadership role, which was independent of the comparison factors.

**Supervising Teaching**

The third dimension of instructional leadership identified by Parker and Day (1997) was that of supervising teaching. As noted in Table 3, the literature had identified certain behaviors of effective leaders within this area. These included: (a) functioning as an instructional resource (Whitaker, 1997); (b) spending time in the
classroom and listening to teachers (Keller, 1998); (c) using coaching skills, encouraging risk taking (Joyce & Showers, 1988; Reitzug & Burrello, 1995); (d) encouraging teacher leadership and initiative (Reitzug & Burrello, 1995); (e) encouraging teachers to reflect on their practice (LeMahieu, et al., 1997); and (f) building a good staff and not tolerating bad teachers (Keller, 1998).

One of the strategies of an effective instructional leader is that of being an instructional resource; the principal should identify good teaching and provide feedback that promotes professional growth (Whitaker, 1997). While six of the respondents in this study addressed the importance of the role of instructional leadership for the principal, some provided more specific descriptors for this role. Six respondents said that the principal should be a “coach,” a “mentor,” and a “teacher of teachers,” in order to provide feedback to teachers to improve their professional performance.

As noted by Keller (1998) an important instructional leadership behavior involved spending time in the classroom and listening to teachers. The study subjects all agreed that principals need to spend time in classrooms if they are to supervise teaching appropriately. Comments included: “Education doesn’t happen in this office. It happens in those classrooms;” and, “You really can’t talk to teachers about instruction unless you’ve been in the classrooms watching.” Four respondents talked about
conferencing with teachers. The importance of this aspect of supervising teaching was confirmed in interview after interview.

The principal as instructional leader must often employ coaching skills to provide the support and assistance teachers need to improve performance (Joyce & Showers, 1988). Another strategy used to promote teacher improvement is that of encouraging risk taking (Reitzug & Burrello, 1995). As stated earlier in this section, six of the subjects in this study talked about the importance of coaching teachers, mentoring them and teaching teachers to teach better. One respondent also talked about encouraging teachers to be creative in their approaches to instructional strategies.

Reitzug and Burrello (1995) found that in order to encourage teacher improvement, principals encourage teachers to make more decisions for themselves. The importance of appropriate decision-making also has been studied and described by Tarter and Hoy (1998). Five research subjects made many statements that reflected their expectations that teachers would be decision-makers. They talked about scheduling common planning time for teams of teachers, and of working with team leaders. The whole idea of team leaders (who are teachers) working with teams of teachers to provide the most effective educational and social setting for teams of students assigned to them is based on the empowerment and professionalism of teachers as decision-makers.
Another aspect of effective instructional leadership is helping the faculty to reflect upon and examine their teaching practices in light of what is known about teaching and learning (LeMahieu, et al., 1997). The study respondents agreed with this aspect of supervising teaching. As one principal stated, “It’s important to observe instruction, give teachers feedback and cause them to reflect on their teaching practice.” Eleven respondents talked of a variety of ways to keep teachers up with the latest instructional practices such as providing staff development opportunities, both within and outside of the school setting, sharing journal articles and checking lesson plans to assure that these reflect that teachers are indeed employing the latest instructional practices.

As an instructional leader, the principal must build a good staff and not tolerate bad teachers (Keller, 1998). Three of the study respondents confirmed this finding, as they talked about hiring good teachers, mentoring them, and not retaining low performers.

In an analysis of the responses regarding supervising teaching, all respondents indicated that they thought that this was one of their most important roles. This finding was consistent across all comparison factors: school size, years in current position, years in education, prior supervisory roles, and gender. It was noted that four of the 15 respondents talked about the difficulty in implementing this role effectively, in terms of
either time or size of the school. These four principals came from small, medium and large schools.

To summarize this section, literature findings were cited that identified the components involved in supervising teaching. As was expected, the study subjects' responses were congruent with the literature. In addition, the respondents noted other facets of the principal's role in supervising teaching that were specific to the middle school. These included: sending the message to teachers "about what the middle school is;" recruiting and identifying good teachers who can work with students at this level; and ensuring that teachers understand the unique developmental needs of the middle school student.

**Monitoring Student Progress and Achievement**

The fourth dimension of instructional leadership identified by Parker and Day (1997) was that of monitoring student progress and achievement. As noted in Table 3, the literature had identified certain behaviors of effective leaders within this area. These included: (a) putting a clear focus on standards and improving results for all students, including those not currently learning (Lezotte, 1994); (b) providing clear goals for student achievement (Heck & Marcoulides, 1993; Whitaker, 1997); (c) emphasizing test results for program improvement (Heck & Marcoulides, 1993); (d) ensuring that the focus on outcomes is balanced with patience for the process (Herman & Stringfield,
recognizing the accomplishments of students (Heck & Marcoulides, 1993); and (f) reporting academic progress to the community (Heck & Marcoulides, 1993).

Effective schools are led by principals who believe that learning in a democracy must be inclusive, it must involve "learning for all." (Lezotte, 1994). This belief in accountability for all students was a recurring theme among the research respondents. One principal praised high student achievement as well as the students who had improved their performances from lower levels. Nine of the principals analyzed a wide variety of student achievement data to identify concerns and look for trends. Four principals stated that they reviewed every individual student’s report card. Four other respondents indicated a concern that no students fall through the cracks, and that the individual needs of every student be met. One principal said, "I’m always concerned with the kids who get the D’s. They’re not failing. They’re not staying back. They’re not a discipline problem. But, how many years can you go through school being a D student?"

Providing clear goals for student achievement is an instructional leadership behavior identified by Heck and Marcoulides (1993), and Whitaker (1997). This descriptor was not specifically addressed by any of the study subjects. However, it was inferred from the responses of the subjects that they supported this descriptor. As one principal said, "We spend a lot of time here talking about what kids know now, what
they'll know at the end of the year and how we're going to get them there.” Three respondents spoke of high expectations for performance. One principal expressed it as “ensuring that the curriculum exceeded the core curriculum content standards,” while another said the principal should be “establishing the highest standards and expectations for social responsibility and high expectations for academic achievement.” All of the respondents made references to this leadership behavior when they talked about monitoring the curriculum, its implementation, and the assessments that are indicators of students’ mastery of the curriculum.

Another activity of an effective principal is emphasizing test results for program improvement (Heck & Marcoulides, 1993). Nine of the respondents said that the principal must monitor student progress in a variety of ways and must analyze data, including test scores. One principal said that the principal “identifies needs and trends through test score analysis.” Another indicated that this is done with “emphasis on improving instruction.”

Herman and Stringfield (1997) found that one of the key factors involved in school improvement efforts was the need for the instructional leader to balance the focus on outcomes with patience for the process. It was noted that only one respondent addressed the need for patience, and this was in reference to making changes in the
organization. He said, “The principal gathers information, studies changes to be
made, talks with teachers and parents about the changes, and then makes changes
slowly.”

However, all 15 of the research subjects described the process itself. They
described it as: their involvement with the curriculum; their need to ensure that the
curriculum is appropriate to the middle school students; their responsibility to see that
the curriculum is being implemented; and their need to review assessments to be certain
that appropriate student learning is taking place. One principal described his
responsibility by saying, “The principal is part of the process and is held accountable for
student progress. The superintendent looks to the principal. The principal looks to the
supervisor. But, it all comes back to the principalship. The principal is looked to as the
primary motivator and provider with regard to test scores.” Another respondent said,
“The principal must take an active role in monitoring and maintaining student progress
and monitoring curriculum and its implementation. This involves assessment of
teaching and of student knowledge. [This is] primary for the principal.”

The principal’s ability to recognize the accomplishments of students is an
instructional leadership behavior identified by Heck and Maroulides (1993). This was
affirmed by four research subjects. In addition to reviewing student report cards, they
speak to individual students about their progress. As one respondent stated, “[The
principal should] “individualize with students, know what they’re doing, know their grades. [I] review every report card and speak individually with students about their progress and how they feel.” One principal specifically stated that it was important to “celebrate” student successes.

Another behavior identified by Heck and Marcoulides (1993) that is associated with effective instructional leadership is that of reporting academic progress to the community. However, none of the respondents addressed this behavior specifically; although they made references to parent and community involvement in general. Five principals talked about the involvement of the parents and the community in the development of the mission of the school, and then maintaining the involvement of these constituencies. One principal mentioned the high expectations of parents in I and J school districts for their children’s academic achievement. Four principals talked about reviewing individual student progress and meeting with parents about this. One principal said, “The principal must take an active role in monitoring and maintaining student progress… The principal has to have the vision…and maintain the aura of what [the middle school is] all about… It goes from the top down…all the way down to the kids, and filters out to the parents.”

In an analysis of the responses regarding monitoring student progress and achievement, it was noted that the importance of this role was emphasized by the
respondents across all comparison factors: school size, years in current position, years in education, prior supervisory roles, and gender. Four respondents identified the need to monitor social development in addition to academic development. Prior to an analysis of these responses, it was anticipated that one or more of the three principals with a background in guidance counseling would have identified the aspects of social development as important. However, this did not prove to be the case. None of the respondents with a guidance background emphasized social development as part of student progress. When an analysis was done according to the size of the school, it was found that three medium-sized and one small school principal emphasized social development as important. None of the principals of the large schools talked about this aspect of monitoring student progress and achievement.

To summarize this section, literature findings were cited that identified the components involved in monitoring student progress and achievement. The study subjects’ responses were congruent with the literature, with the exception of two areas: (a) none of the respondents specifically talked about reporting student progress to the community; and (b) with the exception of one principal who spoke of “making change slowly,” the study population did not address “patience for the process.”

Although public relations skills were identified by some as necessary to the job, the actual reporting of student progress was not specifically addressed. One reason for
this omission could be the fact that the State of New Jersey issues annual ‘School Report Cards’ for each district that are published in state and local newspapers.

While “the process” was described by all of the respondents, patience was not expressly connected with it.

It was noted that the respondents also spoke of other facets of the principal’s role in monitoring student progress and achievement that were specific to the middle school. These included: monitoring students’ social and emotional development at this age level; providing opportunities for students to grow socially; and working with team leaders to analyze test results.

**Promoting an Instructional Climate**

The fifth dimension of instructional leadership identified by Parker and Day (1997) was that of promoting an instructional climate. As noted in Table 3, the literature had identified certain behaviors of effective leaders within this area. These included: (a) communicating success; promoting positive teaching and learning environments; maintaining high faculty morale (Heck & Marcoulides, 1993; Reitzug & Burrello, 1995; Whitaker, 1997); (b) promoting professional empowerment and teamwork (Reitzug & Burrello, 1995; LeMahieu et al., 1997; Cawelti, 1999); (c) being people-oriented and interactional; having a visible presence; being accessible (Niece, 1993; Whitaker, 1997); (d) promoting a safe, supportive atmosphere of trust and sharing (Keller, 1998); (e)
maintaining high expectations for self, staff and students (Niece, 1993); and (f) nurturing good teaching and learning amid external pressures (Herman & Stringfield, 1997; U. S. Department of Education, 1999).

Effective leadership strategies for the principal include communicating success, promoting a positive teaching and learning environment, and maintaining high faculty morale (Heck & Marcoulides, 1993; Niece, 1993; Reitzug & Burrello, 1995; Whitaker, 1997). The importance of establishing an instructional climate that was nurturing, supportive and positive for teachers and students, was a common theme in the research subjects' responses during the interviews. Four respondents spoke of how the principal sets the tone in the school, and others talked about the need to provide a "social climate." Five principals felt it was important to promote a positive teaching and learning environment, noting that it was a critical role of the principal, and was accomplished through relationships established within the school community. Comments included: "It's nurturing in a caring environment, and it provides a very positive type of climate which is conducive to learning;" and, "The principal needs to send a message that there's a balance between the need to relax, to celebrate and to teach the curriculum." One principal said concisely, "The principal needs to convey to staff a concern with how they're doing."
Promoting professional empowerment and teamwork is a necessary activity for the effective principal (Reitzug & Burrello, 1995; LeMahieu et al., 1997; Cawelti, 1999). This finding was confirmed by eight research subjects. These principals articulated their support for their teachers as well as their empowerment. Their comments included: “Principals should support teachers efforts to improve;” “Principals should do professional readings and disseminate articles and research to help teachers;” “Principals must handle discipline in such a way that teachers feel supported in their efforts to create [an appropriate] classroom atmosphere;” and, “The principal needs to understand the pulse of the building and know who the formal and informal leaders are.

Climate is established by consensus -- site-based management. Committees determine the school’s needs and teachers carry out the work.” One principal summarized many of these thoughts by saying, “Principals should share leadership with others.”

In addition, the respondents frequently used the terms, ‘teamwork’ and ‘working with teams,’ as their middle schools were organized by teams of teachers working with teams of students.

The principal who is an effective instructional leader is a person who is people-oriented, interactional, is accessible, and has a visible presence in the school (Niece, 1993; Whitaker, 1997). This was confirmed by the statements of seven of the research subjects. Their comments included: “The principal needs to be accessible, to be out in
the building, to be actively working with kids;” and, “The climate reflects the personality of the principal.” Several respondents stated that the principal should be a “people person.” Another said the “principal’s philosophy should permeate the building.” Others said the principal should “engage all members of the community,” “be an effective communicator” and “needs to understand everyone’s agenda.”

One of the important instructional leadership behaviors identified by Keller (1998) was that of promoting a safe, supportive atmosphere of trust and sharing. Faculty trust in both colleagues and the principal has been linked to positive school climate (Hoy, Sabo, & Barnes, 1996; Tarter, Bliss, & Hoy, 1989). In this study, none of the respondents specifically referred to “trust.” Three of the principals talked about the importance of the principal ensuring the safety and welfare of the students in the building, including the handling of discipline issues. One respondent felt that promoting an instructional climate was a critical role of the principal, that it was accomplished through relationships within the school culture, and that the principal must share leadership with key staff members.

Another instructional leadership descriptor for effective principals was that of maintaining high expectations for self, staff and students (Niece, 1993). Setting high expectations for staff and students was mentioned in three respondents’ discussions.
Four principals also thought that it was important for them to serve as a role model, holding high expectations for themselves as well as others.

In promoting an instructional climate, the effective principal nurtures good teaching and learning amid external pressures (Herman & Stringfield, 1997; U. S. Department of Education, 1999). This finding was confirmed by the respondents’ earlier statements in supervising teaching and monitoring student progress. Four principals felt it was important to promote a positive teaching and learning environment, noting that it was a critical role of the principal, and was accomplished through relationships established within the school community. Comments included: “It’s nurturing in a caring environment, and it provides a very positive type of climate which is conducive to learning;” and, “The principal needs to send a message that there’s a balance between the need to relax, to celebrate and to teach the curriculum.” One principal said concisely, “The principal needs to convey to staff a concern with how they’re doing.”

Two of the respondents specifically referred to outside pressure. One respondent’s reaction to parental pressure was to remind the parents of the mission of the school. Another principal stated that he served as a buffer between the school and outside constituencies, including the superintendent and the board of education. He said, “Principals absorb an awful lot of heat that never gets radiated into the classrooms.”
In an analysis of the responses regarding promoting an instructional climate, several observations were made.

1. Three respondents spoke to the need to ensure safety and security in the building, as part of their role in promoting an instructional climate. Prior to an analysis of these responses, it was anticipated that safety and security issues would be held as important in the larger schools, since they have the largest physical plants and the largest student enrollment, and these two factors provide the greatest challenges to adequate supervision of the students and the facility. However, this did not prove to be the case. While none of the principals of small schools addressed this issue, only one principal of a large school talked about the importance of providing a safe and secure environment as a component of the instructional climate. The other two respondents that gave similar responses were principals of medium-sized schools. Further analysis noted that concern for the safety and security of the students was not gender specific to the principal’s role. Of the three principals who addressed this issue, two were male and one was female.

2. All three of the female respondents spoke to the findings by Niece (1993) and Whitaker (1997). Specifically, they emphasized the importance of the principal being people-oriented, interactional, having a visible presence, and being accessible.

3. The omission of “trust” as a descriptor of the instructional climate was consistent across all comparison factors: size of school, years in current position, years in
education, previous positions held, and gender. This omission was considered significant, in light of the extensive research on trust in schools conducted by Wayne Hoy and his colleagues over the last decade (Tarter et al., 1989; Hoy et al., 1992; Tarter et al., 1995; Hoy et al., 1996).

To summarize this section, literature findings were cited that identified the components involved in promoting an instructional climate. The study subjects’ responses were congruent with the literature, with the exception of acknowledging trust as a descriptor of the instructional climate.

In addition, the respondents noted other facets of the principal’s role in promoting an instructional climate that were specific to the middle school. Their comments included: “It’s impossible to separate the middle school philosophy, concept, and mission from instruction;” and, “The middle school is a unique place, and instruction and approaches to students are different.” The respondents felt that the middle school principal must provide a “social climate,” and must ensure that the students’ social needs are addressed as well as their academic needs.

Organizational Management

A sixth dimension of organizational management had been added to the five dimensions of instructional leadership identified by Parker and Day (1997). This expanded the notion of instructional leadership to become a more inclusive concept of
educational leadership. As noted in Table 3, the literature had identified certain behaviors of effective leaders within this area. These included: (a) having effective communication, collaboration and consensus-building skills (LeMahieu et al., 1997; Whitaker, 1997; Mendez-Morse, 1999); (b) emphasizing accountability and effective problem-solving (Heck & Marcoulides, 1993; LeMahieu et al., 1997); (c) allocating resources effectively, and being knowledgeable of finances (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 1991; Heck & Marcoulides, 1993; U. S. Department of Education, 1999); (d) handling demands from various groups and agencies (U. S. Department of Education, 1999); (e) maintaining an orderly school environment (Heck & Marcoulides, 1993); and (f) networking with other principals, and having a mentor (Niece, 1933).

A number of studies have found that the effective educational leader must possess skills in the areas of communication, collaboration and consensus-building (LeMahieu et al., 1997; Whitaker, 1997; Mendez-Morse, 1999). This finding was confirmed by 10 of the research subjects in this study, as these principals consistently spoke of the need to be an effective communicator, as well as have the ability to work with others. One principal talked about the benefits of hiring people with different strengths. When it came to making changes in the organization, one respondent noted,
"The principal gathers information, studies changes to be made, talks with teachers and parents about changes, and then makes changes slowly."

The principal's role as organizational leader includes placing an emphasis on accountability and effective problem-solving (LeMahieu, et al., 1997). This behavior was acknowledged by 11 research subjects as they talked about their own accountability as principal, being responsible for everything that takes place in the school. As one respondent said, "It all comes back to the principal." With regard to management, another principal said, "The principal's organization reflects on the school's effectiveness and efficiency." In a statement related to problem solving, one respondent said that the principalship "involves trouble-shooting so that the building runs effectively."

The effective educational leader must also be a good manager; allocating resources effectively and possessing a sound knowledge of finances (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 1991; Heck & Marcoulides, 1993; U. S. Department of Education, 1999). The importance of the possession of managerial skills was consistently confirmed in this research, as all 15 of the principals emphasized the need to manage the school. However, one respondent cautioned, "The principal's primary focus should be on instruction and supervision, not on management."
With regard to the allocation of resources, seven of the respondents addressed this issue in the context of the creation of the master schedule and scheduling in general.

Several of these respondents also described the middle school schedule as "unique". There was a need to schedule common planning time for teams of teachers so that they can plan their instructional time with teams of students. One principal spoke of building a budget as an important but least desirable part of his job. He said that his budgetary priorities were personnel before equipment and materials, "because middle school has to do with interpersonal relationships, teams, creating a small group within a bigger community."

In addition to numerous other tasks, the effective principal must be able to handle demands from various groups and agencies (U. S. Department of Education, 1999). This interaction with other groups was described by 10 research subjects in various ways, but as one respondent summarized, "[The principal] must engage all constituencies and work together as a team. [The principal] must have a political dimension of awareness of activities in and out of the school including the elementary school, high school, the community and other districts."

The maintenance of an orderly school environment has been recognized as an organizational management behavior of effective educational leaders ((Heck & Marcoulides, 1993). Maintaining an orderly and organized school environment was an
acknowledged area of importance for the middle school by four of the respondents.

As one of the study subjects summarized his thoughts, "Management is important because you're dealing with the safety of kids... [The principal] has to ensure that there is a safe and secure environment. That's done through management and organization."

Effective instructional leaders were found to function within a network of other principals on local, state and national levels, and to also have had administrative practitioners who acted as mentors to them (Niece, 1993). Although none of the respondents in this study discussed organized associations, most of them talked with this researcher during the introductory stages of the interviews, about mutual acquaintances in the field of education. One principal shared the information that her previous connection with her superintendent led to her current assignment as middle school principal. In response to the research question concerning principal candidate qualities, one respondent stated that candidates for a middle school principalship "should have a diversity of experience and be mentored by someone with experience."

It was anticipated that the principals who would have difficulty in finding a balance between organizational management and instructional leadership would have come from the ranks of principals of large schools and/or principals who were non-tenured (i.e., less experienced). In fact, no such pattern developed. The four principals who spoke of this issue came from small, medium and large schools. They had a range
of experience from being non-tenured to more than a decade in their current assignment. It was also noted that two of the four had a background in guidance. All of the four were male principals.

To summarize this section, literature findings were cited that identified the components involved in organizational management. The study subjects' responses were congruent with most of the literature. Formalized networking activities such as memberships in organizations were not described; and only two principals made any type of reference to mentors.

In addition, the respondents noted other facets of the principal's role in organizational management that were specific to the middle school. Specifically, the middle school principal needs to "make a big school small," "create a small group within a bigger community," set up the school with a teaming concept, and ensure that the master schedule allows curriculum to be taught in team structures.

**Middle School Leadership**

In this set of three questions, the research subjects were asked about their perceptions of the attributes of an effective middle school principal. Specifically, did the middle school principal demonstrate other behaviors than those that had previously been described, did the middle school principal demonstrate behaviors that were
different from elementary and secondary school principals, and what qualities would be desirable in a middle school principal candidate.

A summary of the characteristics of effective middle schools as noted in the literature is provided below, and it was expected that an analysis of responses would reveal congruency with these findings. Since the literature is scarce on the traits of effective middle school principals, the subjects' responses in this area were analyzed by comparison to their own previous statements as well as to each other's statements.

The literature describes characteristics of effective middle schools, all of which center on the intellectual, social, emotional, moral and physical developmental needs of young adolescents (Clark & Clark, 1993; National Middle Schools Association, 1995). The organizational features of these schools include: (a) interdisciplinary teaming; (b) advisory programs; (c) varied instruction; (d) exploratory programs; and (e) transition programs (Keefe et al., 1983; MacIver, 1990; and NMSA, 1995). In addition, effective middle schools share the following characteristics: (a) a shared vision; (b) a commitment to young adolescents; (c) a positive school climate; (d) an adult advocate for every student; (e) family and community partnerships; (f) high expectations for all; (g) a curriculum that is challenging, integrative and exploratory; (h) varied teaching and learning approaches; (I) assessment and evaluation that promote learning; (j) flexible
organizational structures; (k) programs and policies that foster health, safety and wellness; and (l) comprehensive guidance and support services (NMSA, 1995).

This research confirmed the importance of the organizational features cited in the literature. All of the respondents were principals in middle schools that were organized in interdisciplinary teams. Principals frequently spoke of the need to attend to transitions of adolescents. In fact, one respondent described his uniquely scheduled middle school as being organized around the concept of transitions. That school had a different schedule for each grade level. The sixth grade schedule was more similar to the elementary schools from which the students had just been promoted, and these students had fewer academic teachers and longer blocks of instructional time. The seventh grade schedule was a more typical middle school schedule, organized around “quads” of four interdisciplinary academic teams. The eighth grade schedule was departmentalized to be similar to the high school schedule the students would experience once promoted from eighth grade. The principal described this organization to be “frighteningly effective.”

The research study subjects also recognized middle school students’ need for advisory programs, and they frequently referred to their own roles as being that of “counselor,” “father confessor,” and “a good listener.”
This research also confirmed that the effective middle school should have varied instruction, which includes instruction that is exploratory. Relevant comments from the respondents included: “The principal should be very much involved in the design, implementation and modification of the curriculum;” “The curriculum should be exploratory;” and, “Teachers should plan instruction that includes cooperative learning, because of the social needs of the students.”

All of the characteristics of effective middle schools identified by the National Middle Schools Association (1995) earlier in this section were acknowledged by the respondents throughout the interviews.

Other Middle School Principal Behaviors

While the characteristics of effective middle schools have been described in the literature and reinforced by the respondents, the focus of this study was to ascertain perceptions of leadership traits of principals of effective middle schools.

Seven principals stated that their role required a thorough knowledge of the needs of the middle school student, as well as what a middle school is and how it works. There were frequent references to the affective (social and emotional) needs of middle school students, in addition to their academic needs. This is one of the underpinnings to the concept of teams in the middle school. One of the tasks described by respondents was to break down larger schools into smaller groups, to allow for greater attention to
the individual needs of students. An analysis of these responses indicated consistency across all comparison factors (i.e., size of school, years in current position, years in education, previous positions held, and gender).

Five principals indicated that communication with parents and the community was important, to “keep the pulse” of the community and all constituencies, and to perform all necessary public relations duties. Four other principals reinforced this when they spoke about the need to engage and work with all constituencies, to bring them together to work with teams. Two principals talked about communicating the mission of the school.

Five principals talked about the importance of ensuring the social development of the students in a middle school.

Three other principals mentioned that they had additional tasks, which included district responsibilities such as making presentations at board of education meetings, grant writing and the implementation of tasks as assigned by the superintendent.

Two principals felt that their role involved counseling, “being a psychologist,” a “Father Confessor” and “a good listener.”

Two principals used the same phrase, “jack-of-all-trades,” when referring to the many and varied roles of the middle school principal.
Behaviors of the Middle School Principal that are Different from Elementary or Secondary School Principals

While several respondents stated that there were both similarities and differences, most of the respondents found differences among the roles of the elementary, middle and high school principals. Five principals stated that the middle school was different from the high school, while four principals stated that there was a difference between the middle school and elementary school principalship.

Eight principals responded that the middle school principal did in fact exercise different behaviors in general than principals in elementary or secondary schools, due to the different student population in middle schools, the needs of the emerging adolescent, and the social and emotional developmental stages and behavioral extremes of the middle school student.

Four principals talked about the middle school principal as a collaborator, and the need to work with teams.

Three other principals described the middle school principal’s need to focus on instruction due to the different curricular needs of the middle school student. For example, they mentioned the need for the curriculum to be exploratory, and for the middle school principal to work with teachers to improve their performance in the classroom.
Two principals talked about the need for the middle school principal to be visible, to be “out and about.”

All of the principals talked about the uniqueness of the emerging adolescent, to varying degrees. Two principals stated that the principal needed to be attuned and committed to the middle school student; that he or she must like middle school students, and must advocate this feeling to the staff.

Desirable Attributes of Candidates for the Principalship of an Effective Middle School

It was expected that the subjects’ descriptions of desirable attributes for middle school principal candidates would reinforce their earlier interview responses. Highlights of the principals’ comments regarding desirable attributes for a middle school principal candidate are provided in Table 5.

Nine of the principals responded that the candidate should have a true understanding and liking for middle school students and their needs.

Nine principals discussed the need for the candidate to have the right personality, to be a “people person.” They also said the candidate needed to be a skilled communicator and to be able to build and maintain relationships with all constituencies.

Eight principals indicated that the candidate should also have a clear understanding of the middle school design, mission, vision and philosophy.
Table 5

Desirable Middle School Principal Candidate Qualities, as Perceived by Middle School Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal Candidate Qualities</th>
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<tr>
<td>Have a true understanding of and liking for middle school students and their needs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have an ability to build and maintain relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Be a ‘people person’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Be a skilled communicator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have a clear understanding of middle school design, mission, vision, and philosophy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Be an instructional leader</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have a good knowledge of middle school curriculum and instructional practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>Possess previous middle school experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Have a great heart’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have a diversity of experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be a good manager</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Eight principals stated that it was important for the candidate to be an instructional or educational leader, and to have a good knowledge of middle school curriculum and instructional practices.

Two principals felt that the candidate should possess previous middle school experience.

Other descriptors of attributes the candidates should possess included that the candidate should “have a great heart,” “have a diversity of experience,” and “be a good manager.”

An analysis of the responses regarding middle school leadership indicated consistency across all comparison factors (i.e., school size, years in current position, years in education, previous positions, and gender). The majority of respondents emphasized the following qualities as unique but essential to effective middle school principal leadership: (a) a knowledge of and liking for the middle school student; (b) a clear understanding of the middle school design, mission, vision and philosophy; (c) educational leadership skills in the implementation of the middle school curriculum and instructional practices; and (d) possess “the right personality” as a “people person,” a skilled communicator, and a team collaborator, with the ability to build and maintain relationships with all constituencies.
The majority of the respondents stated that the middle school principal did in fact exercise different behaviors in general than principals of elementary or secondary school principals, due to the different student population in middle schools, the needs of the emerging adolescent and the social and emotional developmental stages of the middle school student; the middle school design and mission; the middle school curriculum and instructional practices; and the various middle school constituencies that require collaboration and consensus-building.

Summary

This chapter began with a re-statement of the purpose and nature of the study. The main content of the chapter followed with a presentation and analysis of the data. These data were gathered through the qualitative methodology of field research, which consisted of giving structured interviews to a sample of 15 middle school principals who represented 47% of the total sample population of 32 middle school principals.

The structured interview was comprised of 12 questions, organized in four categories. The first set of three questions (i.e., 1.1 through 1.3) gathered background information about the principals and their schools. This information included: number of years in current assignment, number of years in education, previous positions held, size of school (i.e., student enrollment), and principal gender. These data were
employed to assist in an analysis of the principals' responses, to determine if any patterns or relationships existed in the findings.

The second set of six questions (i.e., 2.1 through 2.6) asked the research study subjects about their perceptions of the principal's role with regard to the five categories of instructional leadership identified by Parker and Day (1997).

A sixth question about organizational management was added, based on the literature that defined educational leadership as instructional leadership and organizational management.

The third set of two questions focused on other roles specific to the middle school principal, and whether or not that principalship was different from non-middle school principalships.

The fourth set consisted of one question (i.e., 4.1) that asked for the attributes desired in a candidate that had applied to become the new principal of an effective middle school.

These questions were designed to help gather information to answer the three research questions posed in Chapter I of this study:

Research Question 1: What do middle school principals perceive to be the attributes of principals of effective middle schools? The research study subjects' responses to this question were provided and analyzed in this chapter, within the context
of questions 2.1 through 2.6, 3.1 and 4.1. These were the questions about educational leadership and other middle school principal behaviors.

Research Question 2: To what extent do these perceptions agree with what the literature identifies as the attributes of effective school principals? The research study subjects' responses and the extent of their congruency with the literature were provided in this chapter.

Research Question 3: Do the middle school principals perceive the effective middle school principalship to be differentiated from the effective non-middle school principalship? This question was answered within the context of responses to interview question 3.2. Responses and analyses were provided in this chapter.

Chapter V reviews these findings, determines and discusses conclusions, and identifies implications for future research.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Chapter I stated the purpose of this study, which was to identify the attributes of principals of effective middle schools. It also detailed the organization of this study and the research questions.

Chapter II provided a review of relevant literature, including the following areas: management and instructional leadership, descriptions of instructional leadership, perceptions of instructional leadership, factors influencing instructional leadership, instructional leadership attributes of effective principals, and components of effective middle level schools and middle level school leadership.

Chapter III described the design of the study, and the qualitative research method employed for the study. It also described the research sample and the interview instrument.

Chapter IV presented the findings and an analysis of the research subjects' responses to the structured interviews. These findings, analyses, and conclusions
constitute the next section of this chapter. The third section of this chapter presents the conclusions, and the final section discusses implications for future research.

Summary of Investigation and Research

It was anticipated that the research findings would be congruent with the literature. It was also expected that the research subjects would identify other attributes that were applicable specifically to the middle school principal. The following summarizes the findings, reviews the analyses, and identifies the conclusion for each research question.

Background

Research subjects had been in their current positions for an average of six and one half years in education, for an average of 30 years. The average school enrollment of the subjects was 794 students. Twelve of the 15 respondents were male, three were female, and all had served in prior supervisory/administrative and teaching roles. When the research responses were analyzed according to background data, no patterns emerged.

Perceptions of Educational Leadership and Organizational Management

Communicating the Mission

The study subjects’ responses were clearly congruent with the literature, with the exception of adapting administrative style to meet the unique demands of the community. None of the respondents specifically addressed this component. However,
it was inferred from the responses of three research subjects that they supported this
descriptor, when they commented that it was important for the principal to understand
everyone's agenda, that it was important to work with all groups in data collection and
implementing changes, and that the principal must be a liaison between the school and
outside constituencies. Two other respondents noted how community-based committees
were involved in the development of mission statements in their schools. One principal
described it by saying, "The mission must be built through teachers and community, not
just through the philosophy or thoughts of the principal alone."

In addition, with regard to the role of communicating the mission, the subjects
emphasized the mission of the middle school as unique and important. As one principal
said, "The principal must lead in terms of the tone and the culture of the middle school
and must decide what is important to a middle school."

It is the conclusion of this researcher that the principal of an effective middle
school demonstrates not only those educational leadership attributes identified in the
literature, but also those unique to the middle school, in the area of communicating the
mission.

Managing Curriculum and Instruction

As was expected, the study subjects responses were congruent with the literature.

In addition, the subjects spoke of other facets of the principal’s role in managing
curriculum and instruction that were specific to the middle school. Specifically, it was stated that "Curriculum should be exploratory and learning strategies should include cooperative learning; the curriculum should address the social needs of the middle school student." It is the conclusion of this researcher that the principal of an effective middle school demonstrates not only those educational leadership attributes identified in the literature, but also those unique to the middle school, in the area of managing curriculum and instruction.

**Supervising Teaching**

As was expected, the study subjects' responses were congruent with the literature. In addition the respondents noted other facets of the principals' role in supervising teaching that were specific to the middle school, such as: "recruiting and identifying good teachers who can work with students at this level," "and ensuring that teachers understand the unique developmental needs of the middle school students.

It is the conclusion of this researcher that the principal of an effective middle school demonstrates not only those educational leadership attributes identified in the literature, but also those unique to the middle school, in the area of supervising teaching.

**Monitoring Student Progress and Achievement**

The study subjects' responses were congruent with the literature, with the exception of two areas: (a) none of the responses specifically talked about reporting
student progress to the community; and (b) with the exception of one principal who
spoke of "making change slowly," the study population did not address "patience for the
process." Although public relations skills were identified by some as necessary to the
job, the actual reporting of student progress was not specifically addressed. One reason
for this omission could be the fact that the State of New Jersey issues annual 'School
Report Cards' for each district that are published in state and local newspapers.

While "the process" was described by all of the respondents, patience was not
expressly connected with it.

It was noted that the respondents also spoke of other facets of the principal's
role in monitoring student progress and achievement that were specific to the middle
school. These included: monitoring students' social and emotional development at this
age level; providing opportunities for students to grow socially; and working with team
leaders to analyze test results.

This researcher has several conclusion in this area: (a) That the principal of an
effective middle school demonstrates a substantial number of the educational leadership
attributes identified in the literature; (b) That the reporting of student progress to the
community is not an essential behavior to the middle school principal in NJ, since this
progress is reported in other formats, such as the NJ School Report Card; and (c) That
the lack of articulation of "patience for the process" may be connected to the
effectiveness of the school principals of I and J districts, who felt no need to have
“patience for the process,” if change is unnecessary. Principals in other districts with
lower student achievement might have this need, with more compulsion to change.
Therefore, this would be a point for future research.

It was noteworthy to this researcher that while several respondents indicated it
was important to monitor student’s social progress and development, this was not
addressed by principals of the large schools or by those with a guidance background.

Promoting an Instructional Climate

The study subjects’ responses were congruent with the literature with the
exception of acknowledging trust as a descriptor of the instructional climate. This
omission was considered significant, in light of recent research on trust in schools (Hoy
et al., 1992; Tarter et al., 1995; Hoy et al., 1996). The conclusion drawn from this
finding is that a group of 15 self-selected principals of middle schools in I and J districts
did not specifically refer to trust as a descriptor of the instructional climate. While there
is no obvious explanation for this, this should be explored in future research.

In addition, the respondents noted other facets of the principal’s role in
promoting the instructional climate that were specific to the middle school. These
included: that the principal must provide a social climate, and must ensure that the
student’s social needs are addressed as well as their academic needs.
It was noteworthy to this researcher that while several respondents indicated it was important to provide a safe and secure environment as a component of instructional climate, this was not addressed by principals of the large schools. This may have been due to larger schools having other personnel to deal with security issues, and is worth future research.

Organizational Management

The study subjects’ responses were congruent with most of the literature. Formalized networking activities such as memberships in organizations, were not described. In addition, the respondents noted other facets of the principal’s role in organizational management that were specific to the middle school. The middle school principal needs to: “make a big school small,” and “create a small group within a bigger community.”

It is the conclusion of this researcher that the principal of an effective middle school demonstrates most of those educational leadership attributes identified in the literature, in the area of organizational management.

The research questions did not elicit responses about principals participating in a national network. However, networking activities were revealed during casual conversations outside of the interview structure.
Middle School Leadership

The research study subjects confirmed the importance of the organizational features cited in the literature. They also confirmed the findings that middle school should have varied instruction, which includes instruction that is exploratory. The subjects also confirmed all of the NMSA (1995) characteristics.

The majority of respondents emphasized the following qualities as unique but essential to effective middle school principal leadership: (a) a knowledge of and liking for the middle school student; (b) a clear understanding of the middle school design, mission, vision and philosophy; (c) educational leadership skills in the implementation of the middle school curriculum and instructional practices; and (d) possess "the right personality" as a "people person," a skilled communicator, and a team collaborator, with the ability to build and maintain relationships with all constituencies.

The majority of the respondents stated that the middle school principal did in fact exercise different behaviors in general than principals of elementary or secondary school principals, due to the different student population in middle schools, the needs of the emerging adolescent and the social and emotional developmental stages of the middle school student; the middle school design and mission; the middle school curriculum and instructional practices; and the various middle school constituencies that require collaboration and consensus-building.
This researcher concludes the following:

1. Principals of effective middle schools demonstrate attributes that provide leadership to those schools as defined in the literature; and

2. The effective middle school principal demonstrates the following behaviors: (a) a knowledge of and liking for the middle school student; (b) a clear understanding of the middle school design, mission, vision and philosophy; (c) educational leadership skills in the implementation of the middle school curriculum and instructional practices; and (d) possess "the right personality" as a "people person," a skilled communicator, and a team collaborator, with the ability to build and maintain relationships with all constituencies.

Conclusions

1. The principal of an effective middle school demonstrates not only those educational leadership attributes identified in the literature, but also those unique to the middle school.

2. The principal of an effective middle school demonstrates not only those organizational management attributes identified in the literature, but also those unique to the middle school.

3. While principals of effective middle schools demonstrate the attributes defined in the literature for principals in general, they also demonstrate other attributes that are
specific to the middle school. These other attributes all contain an element of responsibility for the social and emotional development of the emerging adolescent.

4. The principal of an effective middle school demonstrates the following behaviors: (a) a knowledge of and liking for the middle school student; (b) a clear understanding of the middle school design, mission, vision and philosophy; (c) educational leadership skills in the implementation of the middle school curriculum and instructional practices; and (d) projects “the right personality” as a “people person,” a skilled communicator, and a team collaborator, with the ability to build and maintain relationships with all constituencies.

Implications for Future Research

1. The lack of articulation of “patience for the process” may be connected to the effectiveness of the school principals of I and J districts, who felt no need to have “patience for the process,” if change is unnecessary. Principals in other districts with lower student achievement might have this need, with more compulsion to change. Therefore, this would be a point to explore in future research.

2. Fifteen self-selected principals of middle schools in I and J districts did not specifically refer to trust as a descriptor of the instructional climate. While there is no obvious explanation for this, this should be explored in future research.
3. Provision of a safe and secure environment was not identified as a component of the instructional climate by the principals of larger schools (enrollment 900-1800). It would be worthwhile to engage in further investigation to determine if principals of those larger schools believe that the provision of a safe and secure environment is part of their role. A related question would seek to identify whose role incorporates this responsibility, if it is not the building principal.

4. Replication of this study inquiring to principals’ perceptions in middle schools from different DFGs should add to the literature about middle school leadership.

5. Replication of this study inquiring to principals’ attributes in middle schools from superintendents of I and J districts should add to the literature about middle school leadership.

6. Replication of this study inquiring to principals’ attributes in middle schools from middle school teachers should add to the literature about middle school leadership.

7. Replication of this study inquiring to principals’ attributes in middle schools from middle school team leaders should add to the literature about middle school leadership.

8. In a similar fashion, replication of this study in middle schools of school districts with different grade configurations such as k-8, 6-12, and 7-12, could also add to the literature about middle school leadership.
9. One principal in the study described a unique schedule in his middle school. Research to determine correlations between different types of middle school schedules and student outcomes could significantly add to the literature and our knowledge of middle school operations.

10. As noted in the Limitations of the Study section in Chapter I of this work, relatively few women were in the total research population (7 of 32) as well as in the sample population (3 of 15). This would indicate a need for further investigation in this area.
References


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New Jersey Administrative Code, Title 6, Chapter 11.


Appendix A
Principal’s Letter
Dear Principal:

My name is Mark Mongon. I am completing a doctoral dissertation in Education Administration at Seton Hall University, College of Education and Human Services, on the subject of behavioral characteristics of principals of effective middle schools. The title of the study is "The Perceptions of Middle School Principals of the Proficiencies, Skills and Traits of Principals of Effective Middle Schools". I would like to interview you in person, asking three background questions and nine open-ended questions, so that we may discuss this important issue and so that I may gain your perceptions about this topic. The background information is about years in your current assignment, prior assignments you have had, and years in education. The open-ended questions explore areas of communications of the mission of the school, managing curriculum and instruction, supervision of teachers, monitoring student progress, instructional climate, organizational management and other areas that may occur to you. The interview should take approximately forty-five minutes.

The interview would be held at your office or at a mutually convenient place and mutually convenient time. I will make notes of your responses and would like your permission to tape-record our conversation. The confidentiality and anonymity of all interviews and of all schools and districts will be preserved. This information will be used solely for the purpose of analysis and all notes and tape recordings will be destroyed at the conclusions of the study. Prior to that, all notes and recordings will be kept under lock and key in my home. Your participation would be voluntary and could be withdrawn at any time. All participants in this study will receive a copy of the abstract upon request.
This project has been reviewed and approved by the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board for Human subjects Research. The IRB believes that the research procedures adequately safeguard the subject’s privacy, welfare, civil liberties and rights. The Chairperson of the IRB may be reached through the Office of Grants and Research Services. The telephone number of the Office is (973) 275-2974.

It is my hope that this study will enhance our understanding of the proficiencies, skills and traits of principals of effective middle schools. Whether or not you decide to participate in this study, I would appreciate it if you would complete and return the enclosed reply form so that I will know who to contact for interview purposes. If you indicate you are willing to participate in this study, I will contact you to arrange a time and place for our discussion. Thank you for taking time to help with this project.

Sincerely,

Mark R. Mongon
Appendix B
Reply Form
REPLY FORM

The Perceptions of Middle School Principals
Of the Attributes
Of Principals of Effective Middle Schools

Please Check:

□□□□□ I agree to participate  □□□□□ I do not wish to participate

Name: __________________________________________

School: _______________________________________

Grade level configuration: _______________________

Student enrollment: _____________________________

Telephone Number: _____________________________

Best time of day to be contacted: ________________

A stamped, self-addressed envelope is enclosed for your response

Thank you.

Return to: Mark R. Mongon
Appendix C
Consent Letter
Consent Letter

I understand that I am agreeing to participate in Mark Mongon’s study of principals’ perceptions of behavioral characteristics of effective middle school principals.

I understand that I have agreed to be interviewed, and with my permission, the researcher will make notes of my responses as well as tape record our conversation, and that the tapes will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

I understand that this information will be used solely for purposes of analysis and that the confidentiality of the interview and of the school district will be preserved.

I understand that all recorded and documented responses will be kept in a secure cabinet in the researcher’s home and that my participation in this study is voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time.

I understand that after my interview, my participation in the study is complete. I also understand that a copy of the study’s abstract is available upon request.

I understand that this project has been reviewed and approved by the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research. The IRB believes that the research procedures adequately safeguard the subject’s privacy, welfare, civil liberties, and rights. The Chairperson of the IRB may be reached through the Office of Grants and Research Services. The telephone number of the Office is (973) 275-2974.

I have read the material above, and any questions I asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this activity, realizing that I may withdraw without prejudice at any time.

Subject

Date
Appendix D

Transcripts of Principal Interviews
Principal #1

Question 1.1 How long have you been in your current assignment?

    Well, this is my 5th year here.

Question 1.2 How many years have you worked as an educator?

    I started in 1968 so this is my 32nd year.

Question 1.3 What positions in education did you have prior to your current position?

    I’ll start in 1968 and work forward. I was actually hired in this office to be a high school industrial arts teacher. I did that for about 14 years and moved to the middle school when there was a retirement there. I moved from the high school to the middle school and taught industrial arts for two or three years and was made assistant principal at that middle school, was in that position for about two years, then became an elementary principal for 10 years in two other districts - a year and a half in [District A] and nine years in [District B]. And then when this position opened in [District C], I applied for it because middle school is really what I liked. So here I am.

For the next set of questions - I want to tell you that you are being asked your perceptions as they pertain to the job of principal of an effective middle school. Therefore, when the word “principal” is being used in a question, it is understood that it refers to a principal of an effective middle school.

Question 2.1 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to communicating the mission of the school?

    Well the principal has the principal role, the primary role, of projecting and communicating the mission to parents and the staff. I think to do that you have to have a pretty clear view of what the mission is and then you have to be kind of persistent, almost obnoxious sometimes, in reminding people what we are really trying to do here, because everybody comes to this with a very different perspective - board members, parents, and teachers. I keep reminding people the primary questions. Wait a minute, what are we trying to accomplish here? What is our purpose in this? Is this consistent with what we say we are really supposed
to be doing. It's really a leadership position, part of it you do by example, part you do by constant nagging and reminding and trying to be consistent in the message you send out.

**Question 2.2. In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to managing curriculum and instruction?**

Well, I think that it's probably highly variable depending upon the management structure of the particular school. I don't know if there is one way to do that. Probably the most basic way is that the principal should influence decisions that are made in curriculum and instruction based upon your previous question that is what is the role, what is the message, and what are we trying to accomplish here. So that when people come with proposals for changes, one of the questions is always - is this consistent with what we are trying to do here, and I would point out why it is or why it is not. So I think that is part of the primary one if there's a management system in place, a hierarchy in place, that would probably be multi-level. In other words, you would tell or she would tell the superiors or subject specialists who propose curricula changes to the curriculum, that really is not the direction we should be headed, and that is inconsistent. We have to justify this. In a system like this, we're kind of a middle size school, we have team leaders who really don't have curriculum oversight. I have no one doing curriculum oversight. Actually it's kind of whatever is left, and we think in a smaller school, the principal drives the curriculum almost completely. But I think a lot depends on the structure of the school, the mechanics of the school.

**Question 2.3. In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to supervising teaching?**

Well, again, to some degree it is dependent upon the size of the school and the management structure. I happen to believe that regardless of the size of the school, it is the most important thing the principal does. Whether you have a school of 2000 or 200, the principal's job is to work with teachers, coach teachers, know teachers' styles, try again to send that message about what the middle school is, what instructional approaches are appropriate for this age group. That's the most important thing we do - is just that. I think that's more important than curriculum. It's more important than budget to find good people and coach them and keep them on a consistent message and lots of strokes.

**Question 2.4. In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to student progress?**
Ok. Well I hate to condition this and put conditions on my answers, but a lot
depends on the size of the school. If I were the principal of a middle school with
2000 kids in it, it would be difficult for me to maintain any reasonable level of
scrutiny of pupil progress other than the most extreme case that would be
brought from either team leaders or house leaders or guidance people or an
assistant for a dean or whatever. In a medium to small size school, and I
consider this to be a medium size school, then I think it becomes a little more
intimate. I think when possible, the principal should be directly involved in
student progress especially when there's a lack of student progress.
Conferencing with kids, conferencing with parents, being part of the guidance
and academic team meetings to kind of send a message out about pupil progress,
and I think that may be true of some of the social and emotional issues too.
When you get involved is really the hard question, and when you hold back. My
assistant principal says you never throw your best pitch as your first pitch and to
kind of hold back. Sometimes you want to have let the team leaders do it, let the
guidance counselors get involved. If it looks like it's going to be a tough
process, then you kind of come in as the big gun and harrumphed them a little
bit. But I think the kids need to know what you know. And I know one of the
things I've always tried to do is pick out a couple of kids who I see either special
growth or if there's been real improvement and just collar them. Go down
during a quiet time usually when there's no one else around and say hey gee, I
see you really brought that grade up in English or I talked to your teacher and he
was really singing your praises - what a great job you've done in your science
exam. And I think that even though the kid's reluctant, I think they like that. I
think the message goes out.

Question 2.5 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to
promoting an instructional climate?

Well, I think like the message about the philosophy of the middle school. I think
it's impossible to separate the philosophy and overriding concept of the middle
school or the direction you are going in, the mission, with instruction, because
they are, instruction and climate, are what the middle school is or what actually
what every school is. But the middle school is probably the most difficult to
define because they have such a wide range of developmental problems, and
emotional levels, cognitive levels. But what is very important is, you know, you
worked in an elementary school, I worked in a high school and an elementary
school so I kind of have a pre-K through 12 range. Middle school is a unique
place and one of the most difficult groups of people to deal with are high school
people who now teach middle school. And sometimes because they didn’t want to and there was an opening and they got pushed down here, and to explain to them that this is not the high school. This is different how you instruct kids; the approaches you use are different. They look at you like you are talking a foreign language sometimes. Some of them get it right away but some of them are like what are you talking about? It is a unique place. There really is a middle between elementary and high school. Given my choice, give me elementary school people that I move up rather than high school people that I move down. And that is because of the instructional approach.

Question 2.6 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to organizational management?

Well, again the condition of the size of the school depending on what the administrative hierarchy looks like. And whenever possible the principal sets the tone for everything, and one of them is the structure and function of the school. What committees there are or what long-term plan there is and what’s in the works to be examined, who gets included in that process. How decisions are really made. What is an advisory committee, what’s an advisory group, and what’s a decision-making group, and how is that defined, and how do people know what their role is. The other thing I think we all do that I don’t think the teachers fully understand is that we really act as a buffer and liaison between the board and superintendent and parents and we take an awful lot of heat that never gets radiated into the classroom because we act as heat sinks for that, and that’s a really important thing. In a way, that kind of sets a tone too. I think you can dump on people and say hey, that’s not my problem, go talk to the teacher. And other times you absorb that, and I think that’s one of the hidden messages people really don’t understand goes on unless it doesn’t work and then they all understand real fast when it doesn’t work. I don’t know if that answers your question.

Question 3.1 Does the middle school principal have essential areas of responsibility and/or behaviors other than the ones you have already described?

I don’t know that it is different more than it is... the primary responsibility is the coalescence of bringing them all together and trying to make sure that there aren’t any great contradictions in the message we send out about anything. That instruction is consistent, programming is consistent, how we group kids is consistent, about the developmental levels of kids which is consistent with the social pieces that we put in place. I guess the consistent message, that constant
filtering, and making sure that everybody is hearing essentially the same thing
and at least we are getting everybody headed roughly in the right direction. It
won’t be exactly west but at least headed roughly west like herding cats working
in the middle school and everybody’s kind of all over the place.

Question 3.2 Do principals of effective middle schools exercise different behaviors than
principals of effective elementary schools or effective high schools?

That is a great question. I’ve never been a high school principal — just, I taught at
the high school level for 14 years but I was never a principal, so I’m not sure that
I can give you the full perspective, but I think it’s very different between middle
and elementary schools. Without sounding “sexist,” in many cases you are the
‘Dad’ at the elementary school. People saw you in a different role and you deal
with very different issues. I think I spent more time doing counseling as an
elementary school principal than I did working on a program, for example, at a
high school. A good friend of mine who is a high school principal, when I got
my job as an elementary principal, he said, here’s the one thing you’re going to
notice - is everybody cries at an elementary school. He said the kids are crying,
the teachers are crying, the custodian is crying, secretaries are crying, the parents
are crying. If you get through a day without somebody crying, it’s a great day.
He was actually right. I never saw so many people cry in my life. They cry
when they’re happy. They cry when they’re sad. I said, oh, what is this? But it
was an interesting perspective because he had been in elementary, middle, and
high school too, and he said that was what you are going to notice. Boy, he was
right on the money. It is a very different role you have I think as an elementary
principal, and I worked in small to medium size — the largest elementary size I
worked in was 600 kids. You spend a lot of time doing counseling and not
program stuff. Teachers are very much independent entities in elementary
school. What they want most is to be left alone, and don’t ask them to clean out
their closet. Just leave me alone, let me do my thing and I found that for the
most part and supported them. That’s a good strategy for them because they’re
the hardest working people on the planet. God, elementary people kill
themselves. Whereas, (the) middle school (is) a quasi-secondary school with
some departmentalization, some elementary elements, and some high school
elements. It’s a real juggler to keep all that going in the right direction. You
don’t have that in the elementary school. I mean everybody is heading in the
right direction anyway. They tend to all be well directed and pretty much know
what to do. The curriculum is more structured. They know what’s expected and
the way they go and mostly leave them alone. Here you have to intervene a little
bit more. You have to be a more pro-active person in virtually everything, I think. And a typical kid here sees eight teachers a day. In an elementary school, if they see three, that was a lot. And one of them was the phys ed teacher, the health teacher, and it just was a whole different ballgame.

Question 4.1 If you were advising a committee searching for a candidate to become the new principal of their effective middle school, what would you tell them to look for?

Well, that’s a good question. Let’s see. It’s a hard question. What would be the primary criteria? I would definitely say it should be somebody who obviously taught at the middle school level, which actually I don’t know if they always look for that. Somebody who has to have worked with this age group and the staffing to understand. There’s a certain lunatic fringe to teaching at the middle school level. You have to have a little bit of craziness and it is distinct. I am sure you noticed it. People tend to be a little flaky and a little quirky, and you have to be able to accept that in people. I’m not sure that everybody understands that. I think you really .... the person has to have a good sense of humor, not take themselves too seriously. You can’t have somebody who’s going to harrumphed from the depth - just flexibility - the ability kind of roll with things. And, like hiring teachers, that’s what you are looking for in teachers, you really need that in a principal. I think you need somebody who can recognize that there are many ways to accomplish the same task. Everybody doesn’t have to do it the same way. I’m very reluctant to bring high school people to middle school. Just because it’s an easy trap to fall into. Just, oh well, we’ll departmentalize this. To be honest with you, it would be easy to run this like the high school. That’s easy. I mean straight forward you departmentalize things and you say, ‘sorry kid that’s your math score and that’s where you’re going to be.’ And, but that’s not what these kids need and they don’t know what they need, and I’m not sure that the parents know what they need. But I know that’s not what they need. And so flexibility, a good sense of what the mission is. Somebody who can carefully define what a middle school should be. And it’s got to be with some degree consistent with what the community wants, but also it should be consistent with what we know about developmental levels of kids and the emotional ranges that the kids are in and how variable they are. And this is such a volatile age group. You can make all of the difference in the world. But by the time they leave here, if you don’t have them, they are probably going to be tough to reel back in. It’s like your last chance with some. Instead of some hard ass, you need somebody who can be flexible enough to find out what works, and it may be different than what worked the last three times.
That would be my guess. First would be a sense of humor. That would be the number one thing. You got to be able to laugh at yourself and laugh at some of the Looneytoon stuff that goes on. Some of the red hair and the some of the piercing are wacky stuff that they do.

Principal #2

**Question 1.1 How long have you been in your current assignment?**

Three years.

**Question 1.2 How many years have you worked as an educator?**

This is my 32nd year.

**Question 1.3 What positions in education did you have prior to your current position?**

High school teacher, director of athletics, vice principal, elementary principal for one year, back to the high school as high school principal for I guess it’s about twelve or thirteen years now. This is actually my fourth year as middle school principal.

For the next set of questions, I want to tell you that you are being asked your perceptions as they pertain to the job as principal of an effective middle school. So whenever I use the word “principal” it is understood to mean the principal of an effective middle school.

**Question 2.1 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to communicating the mission of the school?**

Well, that’s a primary role of course. You have to have a vision in terms of what a middle school should look like and how to accommodate the needs of the middle school child. Then it’s the matter of effective communication, developing a shared vision. I have an open communication with members of the professional staff, and the parent community of course, plays an integral role in helping to develop the mission of the school. Before developing the mission, of course as you indicated, you really .... I think an educational leader has to be a visionary. You have to have a clear sense of who you are as a person, who you are as a professional, or what your charge is in education. You have to engage all members of the community in this very important role of educating children. Which means you are going beyond, in my opinion, providing opportunities for children to learn but assuring that each and every child can learn. And meeting the needs of each and every child, be it children who may be classified in special
education programs, to kids who have needs for special accommodations like 504, and even of course the kids who are top academic achievers.

**Question 2.2 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to managing curriculum and instruction?**

To be quite honest with you I don’t think the principal plays as critical a role as he or she once did in curriculum development. Implementation and curriculum for the core content standards is a matter of ensuring that your curriculum is aligned with the state core content standards. Frankly, in my opinion, we should exceed those basic frameworks so it’s not only in terms of developing the curriculum within the district and the aligning with the core content standards, but it is also a matter of providing the best instructional quality. So that curriculum can be taught effectively and efficiently and thoroughly and creatively to ensure that kids are critical thinkers and problem solvers. And I think, you know, there’s a very important piece that a lot is written about, but I don’t believe that there’s enough focus on from an administrative perspective in the schools, and that’s the assessment piece. Because we have state assessments as you know, with the GEPA, ESPA, HSPT. But I think we should – we can do a better job in terms of assessing student progress within a curriculum framework by helping teachers, preparing teachers, developing, professional development, get teachers to write better classroom assessments. More representative of the types of test questions that children are going to experience. As an example, in the writing component of GEPA in the middle school, there’s a rubric from the state department of education. That rubric should of course be used across all disciplines. And these are things that in our school I try to encourage, as well as talking about the role of the principal in the curriculum. We have to monitor instruction and I’m not only talking about the effectiveness of the instruction, the elements of instruction when we do our evaluations of staff, but also in terms of monitoring the assessments that teachers are using. So I collect on a quarterly or semester basis at least one test from each teacher to see if those tests are clearly representative of the types of questions that kids are going to be expected to respond to when they take GEPA. So it’s really not so difficult a concept to understand, but rather a matter of kind of practicing in a sense for what it is kids are really going to be experiencing. And that doesn’t mean that you are teaching to the test, because you are not teaching the curriculum, but you are assessing student achievement within that curriculum by really preparing quality assessments.
Question 2.3. In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to supervising teaching?

Well, of course you have your district's obligatory evaluation program process, you know, for tenured teachers and more frequently of course for non-tenured teachers, and more frequently of course for your alternate route teachers, and so on and so forth. And because of the myriad of responsibilities that a principal has, unfortunately, a lot of people kind of push that down on their list of priorities. When they engage in it, they engage in it to meet the district requirements. But you are talking about an effective or an efficient middle school, so that has to be a priority. A principal is an instructional leader. The type of principal each and every middle school should have. Now clearly there's so much involved in that. First of all, the teachers need to know what it is they are teaching. How it is they communicate what the objectives of the discipline would be. They should have clearly their curriculum right there in their plan books, and they should be writing very efficient lesson plans. We won't get into the lesson plan process, but that's something that also I talk about. When I talk about monitoring assessments, I monitor the lesson plans. I have developed a framework and it was a shared decision making engagement. It was a very professional engagement in terms of getting teachers to research and develop with my guidance and my oversight a lesson plan framework which talks about all of the elements and quality of instructional plan. So we monitor that. So that's another piece that's so important.

Question 2.4. In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to student progress?

Well, I think we talked about it already. The principal has to have a vision. The vision has to be ultimately reduced to writing in terms of a mission. And in writing that mission, you need to get cross representation of your, not only your school community, but the general community at large - in developing a community of learners. So you help students in so many ways indirectly and directly. We talked about curriculum. We talked about instruction. We talked about assessment. So that's really how a principal helps students. We're not in the classroom necessarily teaching every lesson, but we are providing the organization which is well conceived and well designed and well communicated, and monitored for efficiency. Although I talk about principals not necessarily being in the classroom, there's a lot to be said for principals teaching classes on, maybe not an assigned class everyday, but as a guest teacher on occasion. To kind of set the example - be a coach so to speak.
Question 2.5 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to promoting an instructional climate?

Well, I’ll go back to what I believe is the most important thing. You have to provide for the safety, health, and welfare of kids. In order to provide a quality academic climate or instructional climate or learning environment, you have to provide a social climate where kids feel safe. It’s nurturing in a caring environment and it provides a very positive type of climate which is conducive to learning, of course. I think that is the first responsibility, as you know. That’s the health, safety, and welfare of the kids, and a very, very, tight organization in terms of establishing the highest standards and expectations for social responsibility, and high expectations for academic engagement. They go hand in hand, of course. If I can just add to that, in a student reward program, student recognition program, kids need to be not only called to task when their behavior deviates from the expected norm but also when their behavior meets or exceeds the expected norm. Kids need to be recognized. And I think there’s a lot to be said for the power of recognition, the rewards of recognition. So that’s another whole organizational structure that must be established in terms of recognizing appropriate behavior academically and socially. And of course the other piece is students that need support services, and I’m not talking special education. As an example, here at (the district’s) Middle School, we gave a presentation at last year’s conference for the NJPSA’s Spring Conference on our student support. A presentation by four of our professional staff members — administrators, guidance, counselors, and team leaders and teachers. And we talked about our mentoring program and our peer leadership program. And our MOK cultural Horizons Club and a role model outreach program, where I have very notable members of our community who have gone on to be highly successful professionals in their respected fields come back to work with on a monthly basis our eighth grade students. We have people who are in the highest levels of the FBI and the CIA, and people who are in vice president positions on Wall Street, and people in the movie industry. So engaging the community by having an open door policy and bringing the resources of the community into the school is another way. So, with all of these student support services, that’s another organization within the school that needs to be developed efficiently. It’s quite dynamic.

Question 2.6 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to organizational management?
There’s a lot to be said whether a principal should be a leader or a manager. I know you read all of the research, but I’m an advocate of some of the values and principles of a Sergiovanni. We need to be both. A leader, a visionary, a communicator. You need to set the example by the power of your example, but also you do indeed need to have some real clear business managerial skills. And I’m talking about little organizations within the school. We have a middle school here in (the district) that has about 800 students. We send our kids, of course, to (the district’s) high school which of course has about 2000 students. And that’s big. The key in my mind is to make a big school small. In order to do that you really need a clear direction of how to manage a big school in a small way. That’s where we get into the managing of the organization in terms of teaming. You want there to be personalization. You want the kids to get to know every teacher and the teachers get to know every child. And you want to have it connect between what’s happening in the classroom and what’s happening outside of the classroom. That’s where your conduit is - kind of your guidance people and your parents. So that connect between the guidance function, the parent function, and the teacher/instructional function is critically important. And breaking grades down into teams so that they have a common planning time in order to provide a very pliable interdisciplinary program, as well as providing the type of individual support or the type of support that individual kids need from a team of teachers, as opposed to having teachers work with kids in isolation is powerful. And that’s management. Management also relates not only to setting up your school instructionally as I just mentioned with the teaming concept, but developing a master schedule which allows your curriculum to be taught within the team structure in an efficient way. To be quite honest with you - that’s a challenge. And it all fits under management. So before we talk about leadership and example and philosophy and engaging the community and dot dot dot and that’s wonderful, but you also have to be a technician as well as a practitioner. You need to know - not to make an athletic analogy, but you can’t be a motivator if you don’t know your Xs and Os. Be it whatever sport, you’re not going to have ultimately a successful program. I think it is analogous to being a coach that is a motivator but also a coach that is a technician. A good principal is an excellent leader and an excellent manager. I don’t think one or the other ultimately is going to raise that program to the highest levels.

**Question 3.1** Does the middle school principal have essential areas of responsibility and/or behaviors other than the ones you have already described?
Yes. I think so. I think you have to be a kind of a jack of all trades as well as the master unfortunately of all trades, and that is pretty difficult. As an example this morning, I met with a couple of parents who had some issues that they didn’t feel were being effectively resolved by those people who were dealing with them initially. And they wanted to meet with only me. I said, I’ll speak to you on the phone about your issues, but ultimately if you come into my school you need to know that I am going to engage all of the people that are affected by what it is that we discuss. Because we work here in a teamwork fashion. So your child’s team leader and your child’s counselor and your child’s vice principal need to be involved in our conversations. You can give me a sense over the phone in privacy of what your concerns are, and in a discreet way I will deal with it within the framework or the dynamics of the meeting, but we work together here as a team. And they were open to that. And then there’s the political element as you know. There’s a political dimension there. So you have to be tuned in to not only what’s happening in the school, but also what’s happening outside of your school, in the community. And beyond that, what’s happening within the district in terms of other schools in the district. What’s happening in your elementary program. What’s happening in your high school program. I have had an advantage because I was an elementary principal and I was a high school principal, so I know where the kids are coming from and I know where the children are going, too. So I know the level of preparedness, and in fact that’s why I’m a middle school principal. Because I wanted to fill in that little missing links. And I know I read about the Carnegie Foundation, the turning points. You can read it but you really don’t become expert at it until you do it. And it was a hell of an experience the first year three years ago but I’m very comfortable now. If you’re an educator, which is another thing in talking about the role of the principal. I don’t think a principal should ever refer to himself or herself as the principal, as the educational leader. Others can refer to you that way but when you refer to others, you refer to each and every other as the educational leader, because everyone has a role which is most important. No one has a role which is less important. So that’s another thing I think a principal has to be. We have to be cheerleaders and psychologists to a degree.

**Question 3.2** Do principals of effective middle schools exercise different behaviors than principals of effective elementary schools or effective high schools?

Well, I kind of.... I’m not quite sure I know. I would say no in one sense. Leadership is leadership and there are some things, inherent qualities that cross over boundaries in terms of effective leadership. But then again, I talked about
the technical aspects. When you are in the high school, you need to know
high school curriculum and you need to know where the kids are going -
universities, colleges, and how to prepare as I said in the very outset, to go
beyond providing opportunities but ensure that these kids can learn. So you need
to know at the high school level what a high school is and what high school
curriculum is. What the desired outcomes are of your top level students. You
need to know your AP Program and develop your curriculum working
backwards. Planning backwards so to speak. In fact I gave a presentation last
night at the high school for parents of eighth graders moving into ninth grade in
terms of how they should be working through developing schedules for their
children as they approach ninth grade. If you don’t start with a ninth grade
program, you start with - this is your child’s interest. This is how well they’ve
done at this particular point in their lives; this is where they feel and we feel they
should be going. So you start with if a kid has an interest in technical interests
and engineering, or you have to start thinking well, AP Calc, AP Physics, you
know, in the math and science areas, and work your way down so they know
what to be doing in the eighth grade and then in the ninth grade. From that
perspective, there’s a significant difference. In middle school you need to know
what teaming is and what interdisciplinary instruction is. You need to know the
very critical aspects of personalization, and you need to know how to work with
individuals in small groups of students, classes of students, in terms of
decreasing impulsivity or reducing I should say impulsivity because pre-
adolescent kids are impulsive to a degree overall. Because of the significant
changes they are going through in every aspect of their life, so you need to know
the pre-adolescent child. And similarly, you need to know the dynamics of an
elementary child and the dynamics of an elementary program, so there are
commonalities, but then there are very significant differences as well.

**Question 4.1** If you were advising a committee searching for a candidate to become the
new principal of their effective middle school, what would you tell them to look for?

I’ll tell you what, Mark. I think in an interview I think it’s most important for the
interviewers and the interviewee to walk away feeling good about their
interview, about their interaction. You can interview a person that has all of the
answers but if you don’t have that connect - that indefinable connect - then it’s
not going to happen. I think interviewers ought to look for the person who has, I
talked about the person who has a vision, and true understanding of what the
mission of a particular middle school is. Do they understand how to open the
middle school to a community, how to keep parents engaged, and improve upon
parent involvement and participation. You also clearly know that parents have boundaries and parents need to know what those boundaries are. You need to look for someone who is an instructional leader, and on and on and on, and talk and repeat. The key thing is the person has to have a personality. They have to be able to be communicators, but communicators with substance. That’s the key. If you are looking for the President of the United States, you want content and you want substance. I mean you want substance and you want presence. So that’s what you are looking for - a person who has substance and a person who has a powerful presence.

Principal #3

Question 1.1 How long have you been in your current assignment?

This is my eighth year.

Question 1.2 How many years have you worked as an educator?

Since 1970. This is my 32nd year, I think, or my 31st. I’m not real sure. I started in September of 1970.

Question 1.3 What positions in education did you have prior to your current position?

I started as a junior high math teacher. I was in that position for about 4 or 5 years in [District A] when I became the department chairman of math, and that was in junior high. A few years later, I became the department chair of both junior highs. Helped them to reconfigure from junior highs to middle schools. Left there in ’81 I believe, and I went to [District B] as the K-12 math supervisor. I was in that position for about a year, and they threw on my desk all of the computer responsibilities, because of course, if you were in math you had to know about computers, you know. Served in that role for another year or so, and they downsized the central office and they took the assistant superintendent’s position and kind of sub-divided it between myself and another individual. I became what they called the educational programs manager. It was my job to deal with all of the testing and interpreting this stuff for everybody, as well as be the math supervisor and computer supervisor. At that point, I was kind of like on fast track to become a superintendent. I stopped and I looked at this stuff, and I said I don’t want to do that anymore. You get close to the superintendent, and I worked with a wonderful guy there. He used to be very active – a tremendous guy. And I started to take a look at this, and I said wait a minute. I liked being
closer to kids and all that kind of stuff, so when the elementary principalship opened up and he supported my candidacy, I became an elementary principal in about '83 or so or '84 in [District B]. And in that position, after four or five years, I was the 26th lowest paid principal in the state of New Jersey. [District C] had a principalship open, so I said I had to — they paid just so much more. I left [District B] and came here as an elementary principal. Worked here for about 16 months in one of the elementary schools and [District B] came back and said, look, we know you always wanted to be a middle school principal. We have a middle school open. We'll pay what [District C] is paying; will you come back? I said absolutely. So I went back to [District B] and served in the middle school there for about four or five years. Along the way, (the superintendent) left. Got a new superintendent, and I have to say I struggled with that person. I just, you know, I refused to work for her. So the [District C] middle school principalship was open and a good friend of mine, our business administrator, had a discussion with them and asked if they would consider me after I left in 16 months. He said absolutely because I didn't leave really on bad terms. They understood I wanted to do this. They were willing to take me back. I came back here in — I guess it was '92 - and I have been here since. And this is the place I will retire from. This is what I was meant to do.

For the next set of questions - I want to tell you that you are being asked your perceptions as they pertain to the job of principal of an effective middle school. Therefore, when the word “principal” is being used in a question, it is understood that it refers to a principal of an effective middle school.

**Question 2.1 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to communicating the mission of the school?**

I think the principal has to lead that charge. One of the first things I did when I came here was get together a committee. We started talking about what is the real mission of this building. Are we a junior high school? Are we a middle school? Do we embrace middle school philosophy? On that committee I had some parents and I had some staff. I didn't have kids. I don't know in retrospect, it's a tough age. I kind of worked with most of the community, and we ended up with the mission statement which is out there on my plaque as you first come in. We really kind of talked about essentially what it was we really wanted to be about and what was important to us. My English department got involved, which I think was a wonderful thing, because they started talking about what words really describe us. And if you look as you come in, we have a plaque with our mission statement. On the other side we have some words that we think
helped define us as a building. I think that as a principal you don’t have to be
an expert in everything, but you have to lead in terms of what is the tone, what is
the culture, what is important to us, and where do we make the tough choices
that kind of govern our decision-making.

**Question 2.2 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to
managing curriculum and instruction?**

I have had a variety of roles. I’m a little troubled right now by this whole
management of curriculum. I believe that the principal has to be the instructional
leader and has to be involved in an awful lot of these decisions as to what we do
in science, in social studies. Do we try to integrate? Do we try to bring things
together? What does the instruction in the classroom look like? I find that as we
become larger, the principal gets kind of pushed into more of a management role.
And it’s harder for me to kind of maintain a central position that I think is
important, for me to be as effective as I can be. You know, I got a supervisor of
math, I got a supervisor of science, and I got a supervisor of social studies. And
quite honestly, they are more of experts in those areas than I can be. I was a
math person. At one time, I was a hot shot math person. I was speaking for
NCTM and all of that kind of stuff. I thought I really knew the stuff. But I have
had to kind of take a back seat and allow these supervisors to be more of the
instructional leaders in their areas. And it’s how do I bridge and use their
expertise to make sure that what we do in the classroom is current. Because I
can’t stay current in all areas, but at the same time not allow things to just
become - I guess kind of too old. It’s a hard area for principals. Some people
come to the principalship and are uncomfortable with dealing with some of the
areas. I try to maintain a connection to all of the areas. I chair the special ed
department. I do that because one, is that it is the most expensive department
and a decision there could really cost us a lot of money. And two, it kind of
keeps me involved in all areas, because I hear from my people what’s going on
everywhere. Because, I have in-class support in science, in social studies, in
math, in language arts, so it helps me to indirectly stay in contact through a
bunch of teachers, but I find it is the area that I struggle to maintain control of.
I’ve got to be a facilitator, I can’t be a leader in that area. Elementary, I think a
principal has a lot more control.

**Question 2.3 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to
supervising teaching?**
Some of what I just said really applies here too, because as we get bigger I find it's harder, so I try to in a very formal way, to invest an awful lot of my time with my non-tenured folks. I got 23 non-tenured teachers, and several of them are brand new, so I go through the mentoring process with them. I think the most important thing I do as a principal is hire staff. I don't think there is anything more important. Because if I can hire the right person, it's like magic out there in the classroom. I mean that's - there isn't anything more important. And then, it's to find the very best that I have hired, and help cultivate them, and help them develop into an outstanding educator. Because after that, they are so self-driven, my management and direction really kind of steps back a lot. One of the things we're looking at right now is a whole alternative assessment process, to allow people who are just outstanding not to be governed by the same kinds of regulations, but allow them to actually go out and maybe do action research if that's what's important to them. To get involved in taking some risks that maybe they wouldn't do if they were going through the regular kind of process. So, I observe people again as the chair of the special ed department. It requires that I observe that department and that's the largest in the building. No, it's the second largest. Language arts is the largest. But one of the neat things that that does for me though, is that it requires, and I always try to see these people in in-class support settings, because one of the hardest things to do - to gain support in the community - is I am sticking two people in the classroom. What is that person - are they an aide to the child? If they hire an aide, then don't hire a special ed teacher. So it allows me to see a lot of my regular ed teachers collaborating and working with my special ed teachers, and hopefully implementing more of a co-teaching model in classes. I make sure that I see all of my first, second and third year people. My assistant does more observations than I do.

**Question 2.4 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to student progress?**

Oh, I think it ultimately all ends up with the principal. And one of the things I have to do, is I have to communicate to the staff using all of the different kinds of assessments that we have just how well kids are doing. What do the GEPA results mean? What are we doing on the language arts side of the setting? How do we compare to our comparison groups? Because ultimately that talk's about student achievement. Do we look at the IOWAs and do we say to ourselves, we're ok if we don't do well in this one area because it doesn't really fit with the way we teach. Or do we want to show improvement in a particular area by looking at the overall results of a particular class to see if there are any general
weaknesses in our program. And then it’s part of my job to work with supervisors to see to it that they implement the changes or they study or they look at and they discuss. I asked the superintendent a couple of years ago if they would give us a day, and we ended up with a half day at the end of the year, where we take all of our standardized tests by department and everybody looks at everything. And they get to look at their classes as well as their teams, as well as their grade levels, and for us it’s - part of it is a celebration of good results because kids do well here. But at the same time, if we don’t look at that stuff, then we’re not paying attention to where there’s a trend developing, where are we starting to slide, what do we need to pay more attention to. I mean one of the greatest challenges I face is that people don’t realize how diverse (this district) is. I got a 14% Latino population which is almost one-on-one in free lunch. If I tell people that 13 and 14% of my kids are in free lunch, they just look at me. This [District C], you know. These are non-English speaking kids who pass out of ESL and take the same tests. It’s incredible the kind of resources we have to put in, to try and get these kids through tests so we maintain scores, so we maintain support in the community. Because the community is very, very supportive; however, there is a high accountability. I think it’s my job to know how many of my kids are getting to algebra in eighth grade. It’s my job to know what percentage of my class is going to take the honors test for the high school, like we gave English today and we’re going to do science tomorrow. I maintain grade distributions of every teacher. We look at it. We talk about grade distribution because I’m so concerned about the whole issue of grade inflation, and there’s not enough separation to be able to define who really is the student that’s doing outstanding work. So there’s that whole issue of how well our kids are doing in class, based on teacher distributions. How’s one team doing compared to another team based on grade distribution. And then you get down into the individual cases. I have - it’s being printed out right now for me - we just finished our second marking period. I asked for a print out of everyone who has Cs, Ds, or Fs. And then I take those kids that appear on that list and we go through them and we look to see who’s got multiple Ds, multiple Fs. Multiple Fs is an unusual setting here in (this district). And then it’s my responsibility to meet with the guidance people too, and we say ok, get together with the team. What’s going on, why is the kid doing so poorly. Has the kid really chosen to fail, because ultimately they have that right, but what can we do in the meantime to safeguard it from happening? I had a board member give me a hard time yesterday because I was looking at every report card. You have to do that. You got to do that.
Question 2.5 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to promoting an instructional climate?

I think it has to be done a couple of ways. I think it's very important that the teachers see me as being very current in what I expect of them. I will attend the same workshops that we ask of all of our new teachers. I have been to brain research a couple of times. I'm going to go again. I want them to know that these are things I expect to see when I come into classrooms. We're talking about instructional practices, right? I think it's very important for me to ensure they know that I'm going to whatever I can to establish a climate that they can teach in that classroom. I expect that they are going to be very current in their research, and I think observation reports need to talk about applications of technology. Are we using technology or not? We're spending millions of dollars to enhance instruction. There's lots of ways to enhance instruction with technology - it ought to be reflected in the observations. I'll ask people to, if they are doing a special lesson, to let me know and I'll try to stop by. Even if it's only for a few minutes, because I want to see technology being used. I check the lesson plans of my department. Every supervisor checks the lesson plans of all of their departments. And the expectation is, do we see application of cooperative learning, because research says cooperative learning is a good instructional practice at this age level. The professional improvement plans that the teachers have, they should be addressing instructional practices. It's something that should be in there. If there's an area they want to improve in or an area they want to work in, they need to know that I support those kinds of efforts. So I don't know if that answers it.

Question 2.6 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to organizational management?

I think that I have to be sure that what takes place out there is organized. And I do the master schedule. In most schools of this size, the assistant principal will do the master schedule. He can't do it. He's a great guy, but he can't do it. And maybe it's my math background and I have been doing this kind of stuff for so many years. I just got interested in organization and how to creatively try to allow for different things to happen, so I do the master scheduling. And I deal then with the resources and how things are going to be organized to make sure that everything around here kind of works. I'm like - I was like the pigpen of math - if you saw my desk, but that's okay. All of this stuff is like post-its. It's all temporarily fixed to my desk but the piles just change. But it's my organizational stuff. But out there, the organizational style has to be one that
everybody understands exactly what their job is and how things have to operate. We put together - I'll show it to you - that's our teacher manual. Now, it's really big because of central office. The people in central office. I should put on my button that says it's the superintendent's fault. In the back role, there's different kind of policies and that kind of stuff. But everything else, we actually go to the part of sitting down and trying to lay out a calendar for a year so that we get things scheduled so things can happen. It's - I probably do more of this than I should. I would like to be able to delegate more of this, so I have ended up delegating almost all of the discipline. These are the things that can kill you. You talk about all of this other stuff. You have a mission - do you have great teachers. If things are not organized, it's like ducks kind of biting at you. They just, they wear you down. People get upset. People get unhappy. You know, this doesn't happen, that doesn't happen. Someone's giving a test and kids are getting up and walking out for a picture or something. Those are all the little things that can just - it can just siphon off all of the morale in a building, because people don't know what's going on, on a day-to-day basis. I have my teachers' union. I meet with all my reps like once every two weeks, or once every three weeks. Just to talk about all those kinds of things. I haven't had a grievance since I've been here. I'm proud of that but I haven't caved in. I try to deal with those things on the front end. And we all come to talk about - can we separate union issues from professional issues. But they want to get together with me next week I think it is. They have already sent me some items they want to talk about. But they just talked to me about one of those very things because we just had one of those weeks from hell here at the end of the marking period. Here's one of the agenda items. They want to talk about in-service, grades, progress reports, advisories, exam grades, and fifth grade orientation faculty meeting all in the same week. Hey, that shouldn't have happened. If they only have to talk to me about that maybe once or twice a year, then we're ok. If they have to talk to me about that all of the time, you lose sight of what you're doing. You're running around like a chicken with your head cut off, and I think I have to tell people 'no' every now and then. I don't know if you saw when you were coming in people covering the columns. They had a big thing out there for a few minutes because I said no you can't do it. Because now the librarian had organized these parents to come in to do this. Those columns are an interesting story. Three weeks ago all in the side hallway, we had the pillars of character education. There are six of them so we used our columns - really slick. It looked great. Well, I have an advisory program and they didn't get them done until January. Now, they were supposed to be done in November. Well, it just
didn’t happen. Ok. So they put them up in late January because they couldn’t get organized. Now they got them up and I have a Black History celebration here, and we work really hard to try and make that a really elegant kind of thing. Then we had all of these displays and it kind of cluttered the message of the Black History board, so I said, well, you have to take them down. They said, we just put them up and I said, I know but you had two months but now you have to take them down. We took them down and we didn’t throw them away. We put them up in the hallway. Now the librarian at the same time made arrangements for parents to come in, because I have that concourse for our African night which is part of our social studies and science. Science does endangered species and English writes poetry about different issues in Africa. I don’t know all of the different connections and then social studies study the African continent. They study the culture and geography of it. And we have this African history museum now. Big celebration. There’ll be all kinds of computer demos out there. There’ll be display boards. And they make an indoor rain forest. Well, the librarian arranged for the parents to come and cover the trees or the columns in brown today so they could become our trees. I said, no, you can’t do that because we have the celebration tomorrow night. Well, it was like, wait a minute. We scheduled this and I said, yeah, you scheduled, but this is first. This happens first. The Black History celebration happens Friday night. Well, the committee said, no, it’s ok, so at least they were able to work it out. You struggle with that stuff. People all well intentioned fall on top of people. And every now and then it happens, but it can’t be the way things run. Because then people go around saying, who’s running the ship? What’s happening? What’s going on? So, that management piece is very important. I think too many principals embrace that one because they are uncomfortable with some of the decisions in the curriculum areas. They almost give up the instructional leadership to all of their supervisors, and they become good managers at the expense of the other. It’s like the biggest thorn I have is to balance those things.

Question 3.1 Does the middle school principal have essential areas of responsibility and/or behaviors other than the ones you have already described?

Well, I think that the tone of the building can be established when I walk in the door. So, whether I had a bad night or not, I have to come in with a smile on my face. I hate to get up in the morning, but you know, it’s just so important for people to see the principal not down in the mouth about everything. It’s easy to get that way because you have a series of bad meetings, difficult parents, whatever. But I think it’s real important that they see me kind of upbeat and
positive about things. I also think they have to know that I'll match their
effort. I tell them I will work with you as hard as you work with me. And I have
to back that up. I think that it's real important now to be... it's finding the line
with parents and the community, and being careful that I made every opportunity
to make clear the mission of the school, and at the same time try to protect
teachers sometimes from parents who are unreasonable, and try to do that in a
professional way. I just had a parent call last week. She was all upset because
one of my teachers didn't call her back. I said, yes, she should have. Well it
turns out she was upset because it had something to do with our ski club. And
she was just ripping the lady, and I stopped her and said, do you know that she
volunteers to do this? You have to understand. She volunteers to do this. She
took 90 kids skiing last week, and with this we got kids that come on and kids
that come off and kids that can't make it and she's got to manage all of that and
redevelop the list and she has to get chaperones and she has to make sure that at
the end there's enough money to pay for everything. She volunteers to do this,
so that your kids have a chance to go. Now if she didn't call you back, yeah, she
should have but you ought to lighten up a little bit because you didn't pay her a
dime to do this. She did it because she thought it was a nice thing for kids to do.
She kind of listened and I guess she called, and she was really nice to the teacher.
I can do more of that because it's becoming an over demanding public and their
expectations of what we can do. And it's almost like that corporate mentality -
you know, fix it. You fix it. Kind of stepping back and wanting to lay blame
when it is not fixed. Instead of realizing that we have to do all of this together
and if we don't do it together, we are not going to be successful. It's both sides
that make the thing work and I have yet to see somebody here who doesn't care.
They care about what they're doing. They don't make the right decisions all of
the time but they care. As long as you care you can work this stuff out but some
parents are just incredible in what their expectations are. I am finding that's
becoming a more important piece of my job. It was never - people were always
appreciative of people who were working hard. Now it's not enough. It's almost
that results mentality, and I am finding that I need to do more and more of that
for my staff.

Question 3.2 Do principals of effective middle schools exercise different behaviors than
principals of effective elementary schools or effective high schools?

I don't know. I think that it's very important for me as a middle school principal
to understand the emerging adolescent; to understand the research that's out
there that supports how we should organize effectively to meet the needs of the
emerging adolescent. That was different when I was an elementary principal. I needed to know more about preschool. I needed to know more about how kids learn to read because, if I can teach them to read, I can teach them to do anything. I had to do different things but it’s the same thing, you know, it’s knowing the child. It’s knowing the age. And knowing what it is you need to do with someone at that age to kind of further them. I guess I tell all of my principals this, the middle matters. Whoever you got for middle school principal, tell them that. It’s the middle that matters. These other things - we’re the last great hope. I believe maybe that’s a little bit different. I group in math and I group in reading and I don’t group anything else. And I fight the community on that all of the time, because people want advanced English classes, advanced science classes, and all of that kind of stuff. And I tell them that we’re going to set the bar real high and we’re going to work real hard to make everybody meet that bar. Everybody is unequal. Some kids may have to come in early in the morning, some kids may have to work late at night. We’ll loan you laptop computers, if you need technology at home that you don’t have. We’re going to do whatever we can, but we are not going to group in those areas because research doesn’t support it. Because we are the last great hope. Because if I group them in sixth grade, it means that high school decisions are made in fifth grade because from fifth to sixth they’re going to group them, and as soon as you group a kid in a low track, you withhold programming. If you withhold programming, they fall further behind. I have to fight sometimes the community perception of what a middle school is because they think the middle school is a junior high. And I think I have to maybe act a little bit differently in this role to keep doors open for kids a little bit longer. I mean I have a hundred kids today take tests for the honors placement at the high school in English. I’ll have about a hundred tomorrow and there’s about 230 in the class. If I had a track, the decision would have been made already and if only the kids in the top track would have been down there, I would have had maybe 40 or 50 kids. So we are the last great hope. So it is the middle that matters, if you can teach them to read in the elementary school.

Question 4.1 If you were advising a committee searching for a candidate to become the new principal of their effective middle school, what would you tell them to look for?

Find somebody who wants to be here, because everybody doesn’t. If they really want to be here, they should be excited about being here. If they really want to be here, they should come in prepared and knowing a little bit about what you’re about. I think, I sit in interviews all of the time. I say, what do you know about
(this district) and people say, nothing. I say, well, how do you know this is a good place? Before I interviewed for my first administrative job in [District A], I went down and spent a day down there in the library and got out their local newspapers. I read the rags - what was going on in the community. I wanted to know what the perceptions were of the schools. How much were schools listed and were the people happy about things. Were they complaining about things? And I can’t believe that, if a school is looking for someone to be their principal that the person comes in like I’m ready for the job. Well, what are you doing to get ready? What have you done recently? What do you know about the emerging adolescent? How can you be a middle school principal if all you know is high school kids? If you get the job and you don’t know a lot, what are you going to do over the course of the next few months to prepare yourself for that job, to better understand what the needs of these kids are? Because they are different. I have worked at all three levels. As a supervisor in the high school, I remember trying to work with kids to get them through calculus. That’s a whole different set of needs, because they’re worried about college and they’re worried about what they’re going to do with their life. Here, it’s like you’re dealing with their identity and what are they all about, and whoever’s going to be in this seat better know something about middle level education. And if they don’t, all they’re looking for is a principalship, their first administrative job.

Principal #4

**Question 1.1 How long have you been in your current assignment?**

In this assignment, six years.

**Question 1.2 How many years have you worked as an educator?**

25.

**Question 1.3 What positions in education did you have prior to your current position?**

Middle school teacher for reading, English, and social studies for 10 years. Middle school vice principal for six years. Elementary school principal and then intermediate school principal, so that was in [District A]. That was really only two years, and I’m actually in my 7th year as - elementary principal should be three years because then I became a principal here in [District B] and then the difference would be six years as middle school principal.
For the next set of questions - I want to tell you that you are being asked your perceptions as they pertain to the job of principal of an effective middle school. Therefore, when the word "principal" is being used in a question, it is understood that it refers to a principal of an effective middle school.

**Question 2.1 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to communicating the mission of the school?**

The principal’s role is the most important. That’s one of the most important roles of the principal and I think of, when I think of our mission and the way I want it in my parents’ minds and the way I want it in my teachers’ minds and the way I want it in the community’s mind is - I actually reinforce it every year. I reinforce it with letters that I write, with information that I give out. (This school) has an agenda. The agenda starts with everything about the school including general information and everything else. And then also each year we have a theme. In this case, the theme is 2001 – The Adventure Begins. There’s been other themes over the years. So I’m constantly communicating to those three different constituents being the parents, the students, and the teachers my mission for this school. I think it’s crucial. I think that’s one of most important things that the principal can do. Because if they don’t buy your mission, they don’t buy anything else you do, and then you’re just turning your wheels.

**Question 2.2 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to managing curriculum and instruction?**

I have to say that initially, I was a very good manager of building and people, but I wasn’t as good a manager of curriculum. And this is backwards praise for the New Jersey state standards and the New Jersey state testing. The New Jersey state testing has spanked me into a role of becoming a curriculum leader in so many ways, because every single one of our curriculums had to be revised. It had to meet the standards. But quite frankly we are competing constantly with [District A] and [District C], because we’re in the same high school district to improve our scores. So the test and the standards and the benchmarks have all pushed me into being much more aware of curriculum and where we’re going with curriculum. So where I wasn’t a leader in that initially, I was more of a manager of a school building and not so much a leader of curriculum, I’ve come to be a real leader in curriculum through necessity.

**Question 2.3 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to supervising teaching?**
I just had a huge conversation with some of my colleagues about this because (our middle school) was, when I was vice principal here in this building, was, I think we had 85% of our faculty was at the top of the guide. Currently, I think we are somewhere down to around 44%. In other words, we have had two retirement incentives and all of those people are gone. The management of those people or I should say the working with those people was more moving them a little bit off the dime in this direction and moving them a little bit off the dime in another direction. My role has completely changed now. With the young people, two things are happening, and I really have become hardened by this. You come into my building and you don’t perform, you don’t stay a second year. I don’t want you here a second year. I’m not into, after a year of working with you, I’ll work hard with a new person. I’ll do anything to help them improve. In this district, we have all kinds of resources. We have coordinators of social studies, science, mathematics, and reading. And those people are available to help and, if you don’t come around after a year in this system, you are not coming around. So you’re gone. Part two, with those who show the promise, we really have been putting the resources and the time into making them as close to master teachers as possible, before we get to the point of proving them as someone who gets tenure in this district. So where it used to be more of a let’s get old Mr. or Mrs. Stuck-in-the-Rut out of the rut, it’s now more training young people, guiding young people. By the way, the mission becomes so crucial because I think I have my young people buying into my mission. I just was able to hire a young kid, and I am very excited about him. He graduated in December. He had a final interview in [District D]. He had a final interview in [District E] and a final interview with me. They both offered him a job. [District D] was actually offering him a regular salary. I have a pregnancy leave here, so I’m offering him a step one on the guide, no benefits until June, but then I have some openings next year. So I offered him a future, if he works out. [District D] was offering him a position where a teacher moved so he would get on salary and he would get benefits. So, I thought, ok, he is a great young man and really excited about the English language - very excited about what he wants to do. And so we just sat after his interview and I said, now I’m offering you this position. Here’s what it is and here’s your potential for a future. I said, if you don’t work out from March through June there’s no future for you here. But if you believe that I believe you are going to be a great young man, you’re going to work here and everything else. I started talking about school and I took him around and gave him a copy of the agenda. I introduced him to some people. We have three guidance counselors and a vice-principal. We have a lot of people buying into
our mission. My wife teaches in [District E] and of course you know (the superintendent) there, and (he) said to her yesterday, I'm so angry with your husband - he stole one of my prospects. And she didn't know what he was talking about. He said well, a young man just chose to come here because he believed in what we're doing. There's a long way of saying that we're getting these young people really involved in what we believe here. I really do think and I know the way [District D] runs their middle school, and I know the way [District E] runs their middle school, and I know we have a better program. We offer more to children. This kid eventually believed that, you know. So that was that.

Question 2.4 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to student progress?

I guess the one piece is that all of our entire grading system is electronic. It's all on my computer. The teachers put in their grades electronically. They send it to the file server. The file server uploads. A parent walks into this room and I turn around and go onto the MacSchool program and I look at their child's grades, their child's schedule, their child's teachers. Our whole middle school philosophy is the child. What you are going to do with this child between the baby who comes to us in sixth grade and the eighth grader? When I meet with the supervisors from the high school, they're upset with me because I haven't insisted that the children come to every single class through the entire year. They have their ten - you miss ten times, you lose a grade, or you don't pass a subject and that kind of thing. I keep saying to them that's your role at a high school. Go ahead and do that. I need to bring this child from pre-adolescent to young adolescent and send him to the high school mentally healthy and able to deal with what happens at the high school. So I'm always aware of the children. With MacSchool, you have the ability to put in your classes, put in your children, and press a button and out comes a schedule. We don't do that. We schedule every single child individually. And then we backload them into the computer program. We had a child that needed study and organization skills. At the beginning of the year, the parent wanted to put her into French. I didn't have a French class offered. I spoke with the teacher. We have a little bit of leeway in our contract that allows a teacher to teach a sixth period, if they want to. I said would you be willing to work with this child for a couple of weeks just to bring her up. She was a sixth grader and try to get her started in French. The teacher agreed. That happened. We have an eighth grader currently who finished Algebra I, and the high school usually will take Geometry I students from me in
September. But, this was a child that just finished two weeks ago. One of my teachers said, ok, I’ll do it. If you give me a break and I don’t have to do cafeteria and hallway duties, I’ll teach the child geometry and I said, that’s fine. So we individualize with students, know what they’re doing, know their grades. Now the grades were just finished – actually, we sent them yesterday. I reviewed every child’s grade because we then also give a principal’s award which is for all A’s. Ones and twos in effort. Scholastic awards - A’s and B’s - ones and twos in effort. And an effort award – ones and twos in effort in any grade. I’ll go in with my list into a lunch period and I’ll talk with students about how they did, whether or not they feel good about what they’ve done. Interesting conversation with a young man yesterday who at home speaks Spanish exclusively and he received a C in Spanish. So I said, tell me about this. How did this happen? He said, well you know, very bright answer, he said, well you know there are plenty of students around here who speak English at home and they get C’s and B’s in English, you know. So we went around and around with that. But, so a long way of saying again, I think in every one of these answers that that’s part of the principal’s role being involved with the students’ academics.

**Question 2.5. In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to promoting an instructional climate?**

You know in each case it is going to be leadership. We will go now right after the vacation no eighth grader will come out of a class for anything, anything short of an earthquake. They are not coming out of class because they’re going to be in their final preparation for the GEPA. We do a GEPA preparation that begins in September. It’s just a memo from me that says, it’s just a reminder no eighth grade student will be pulled out for anything from this time to that time. We do the same thing just before the IOWA test. I’ll send home a note and I’ll be speaking to the people from the local recreation – just a reminder, you are not going to have basketball games on the – I think GEPA is on the 6, 7, 8, and 9 of March so they won’t have basketball games on 5, 6, 7, 8 for any of my eighth graders. They won’t have any after school activities for eighth graders. So, we’ll be planning the program for the students that involves – that every part of the program here has to touch my desk. We do in each grade level there’s a special activity. In sixth grade, it’s the Native American Day; in seventh grade, it’s the Day of Understanding; which is the Holocaust Experience. In the eighth grade, it is the Immigrant Experience. With the seventh grade experience, we have a number of survivors who come to our school and speak. We had an
opportunity through Project Impact to get children of the Holocaust. We actually had quite a discussion with the teachers as to whether or not we were getting too intense with this, because we have had complaints in the past from parents who have said that our unit is great but it really depresses their children. So we went round and round. Are we going to bring in this Project Impact which is children of the Holocaust? And eventually we decided, actually I decided, that we were going to go ahead with it as part of the week before the Day of Understanding, which is our culminating activity. Sports, I’m involved in the sports program. I’m involved with the recreation. I do the announcements every single day so the children know that everything that happens in the school is approved by me. And they hear the different clubs. We have 42 different clubs running after school. We have a chocolate club, we have an environment club, and we have a collectibles club. We have a whole series of clubs. Well, they will hear me announce those everyday. Then the list of what’s happening during that day goes on the bulletin board in the cafeteria. And the PTO bought one those signs that runs like Times Square that runs constantly. Every single day we download to the sign, and everything that happens in the school goes by. So, the children know that the program of the school is approved by me and read by me. I’ll show up at the ball games. I don’t show up at every ball game, but tomorrow now I will be at the Math Counts Competition which is down in Fairleigh Dickinson. We have a Pep Club, and the Pep Club put up a poster congratulating the school geography bee winner. The Pep Club also puts a poster out here when [District A] comes - Welcome to (our) Middle School - [District A] Team. So that kind of thing. So the Pep Club does their athletics and their academics too. And they also do – they have a poster in the cafeteria now for the Math Counts Team. You know, Good Luck tomorrow, Math Counts Team and that kind of thing. So, we’re promoting the academics as well as the athletics.

**Question 2.6 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to organizational management?**

I think probably for me I think it’s very crucial. What I find happening in a small school district Is, because I am the one who is organized, I get an awful lot of jobs that aren’t mine. The snowstorm occurred and no one seemed to know whether the elementary schools had been – if the snow had been blown off their sidewalks. That’s not my job, but I end up with my custodian driving over there and finding out whether they are open. And I guess these things come to me through the back door but organization becomes important. And for the middle
school, our schedule is very, very complex. It's two special areas every day.
And the special areas don't flow through a week. Special area - you might have
information retrieval on Monday, Tuesday, you might have phys ed, Wednesday
you might have computers. So it's a very complex schedule that the children go
each marking period. One quarter of the year and then other quarter might be-
one quarter is art and music the next is computers and information retrieval and
the next might be wood technology and video production whatever it might be so
it's very complex at all three levels so that needs to be organized. Every single
student's schedule is individual. There are very few students - in fact, I have
had a complaint about that who will go through a day with another child. It's just
doesn't happen. And the parents will say, gee, Johnny was with Bobby all
through elementary school and now at your school he's only in one class with
him. I said you know what, so? That's the way it goes. That's a part of being
organized is to have the school organized. Great custodial group. Huge
building—my building is a 1970, I should say the other way around: 1906, 1930,
1950, 1970 additions. My least problematic building is probably the 1906 in
terms of what's happening. Interestingly enough, 1970's is probably where I
have more of my problems. It's just not — that was built to last 100 years. This
one was built probably long enough for the architect to get his salary. Talk about
maintenance, for this building, and then I'm on the 50's, and on the 30's and that
kind of thing. Being organized for that. Being organized with teachers and
programs and everything else. Just crucial.

**Question 3.1 Does the middle school principal have essential areas of responsibility
and/or behaviors other than the ones you have already described?**

Because I am in a small district, I am in charge of all Titles I, II, IV, and VI.
All middle school principals, I think, depending upon the size of your district,
you're given other responsibilities. There was a time I had transportation, and
that was one thing I am so glad I no longer have. Titles I, II, IV, and VI — I've
done that since I was vice principal. I am also the liaison to technology, science,
and all middle school special areas. And I make the calls for snow days. The
superintendent lives in New York City, and he'll call me and say it's raining
there, and I'll say well, there's a foot and a half of snow here. So district
responsibilities, four of my liaisons I am also responsible for hiring. So if there
were a science teacher they might ask me to. We just hired a technology person.
I hired that person. That's a piece of it. Again, I think the smaller the district,
the more other little pieces you have. And so here I've got quite a few.
Question 3.2 Do principals of effective middle schools exercise different behaviors than principals of effective elementary schools or effective high schools?

I guess there’s this inner core of beliefs and skills that I believe any good administrator has to have. So, but having been an elementary and an intermediate principal, there’s a whole different set of roles that you play in those positions than you do in a middle school, especially in a focused middle school. We really have lots of outstanding programs that go on here. And therefore the leadership in those is so much different than going into the second grade classroom and reading every other week. Reading time, sitting on the rug and that kind of thing. Which is a great leadership. Don’t say in any way or think I am minimizing that which is so different than being at the high school and sitting with the committee to determine what the true drug policy will be for the students – that drug and alcohol policy will be for my students who are playing athletics. So there’s lots of different roles but that one core person. And I’m so excited about this new person that’s going to be up in (the district’ high school), because he is a lawyer who has chosen to be an administrator. And he was at [District F] high school. I guess he’s still at [District F] high school. He was at [District F] middle school and now at [District F] high school as a vice-principal, and now he is going to be a principal up here. And I’m very excited about him, because right away from that I assume a whole set of core skills. You know, organization, leadership, direction, goals, and goal setting. Maybe a little bit of firmness, but then also maybe a person who’s been around a little bit and knows kids and will be able to work with them that way. PS - we haven’t mentioned this. There’s a skill - I was thinking about skills – public relations. And we’ve left that out and it becomes such a part of the middle school leader, and I have been thinking about this for a long time. Back in the ‘80s when I first came in as vice principal, there were many people who would come and question whatever my decision was. Whether it was the child is going to stay after school for detention because he threw paper airplanes in class. I got a parent that would come in and say, how dare you take my child and insist on him coming to detention? I don’t think that’s fair. And I would sit there and think how can you even question it. It’s a discipline thing. Now, having been in (this district) 14 years, almost 15 years, a parent would not even ask me that question. They wouldn’t dare. If I were to say, your child is suspended for four days, the parent would come in and sit down here and say, thank you, I really appreciate that. What did I do to earn that? And I think about the process that occurred and it really is that I began to lead a school. I began to show that I knew what I was doing. That their school was a good school. Everything from test scores to the
programs we run to allowing the parents to be a part of the whole piece, which is all public relations. We send home a monthly (newsletter) always the first week. Goes home with the children and I'll get you copies of that so you can bring that with you. It has all the information about the school. I often say that if a child doesn't know or a parent doesn't know when something is going on, you can't blame me. I can't say that for where I live or some other schools that I have been to. A parent will say, do you know that on that night there's going to be an activity somewhere else, and their assumption is that I should have spent weeks looking at every other place in the entire town's calendar figuring out whether or not there were any conflicts with anything so I can set it up for them. It's that, they're so into what we do and how we present it, that they can't accept whenever any conflicts with it. They know that we really plan well. So how did I earn it? I earned it through hard work. The harder I work the luckier I get. But maybe the harder I work, maybe the more respect I get. We would have the Washington D.C. meeting when the children – our eighth graders go to Washington D.C., so the parents would come in and ask the question, Is it going to be safe there? Now the question they ask is, are you going? Oh you're going, that's fine. That ends a whole series of questions. They are very comfortable with me and that's the PR piece which is crucial that we didn't talk about.

Question 4.1 If you were advising a committee searching for a candidate to become the new principal of their effective middle school, what would you tell them to look for?

I think we just named it - Jack of all Trades. I went down - we go down for these meetings with J. McGreevey. We go into the Engelhard Building, and gorgeous building, two story atrium, gold, marble, everything. You go up to the third floor and you walk out the door and there's sixty cubicles. It just amazes me because I have talked to some of these people. You talk to them and meeting them you ask, well, what's your job? My job is to - it might be to design this piece of a logo for Engelhard. That's his job. Here, our job is to get this covered, put it together, and at the same time discipline that child, and at the same time set up the program for two weeks from today, and at the same time make sure that all of the books are in, and did you get your budget in, and have you done this or that, and you know it as well as anyone - 500 jobs. Business sometimes will look at education and say gee, how come you are not succeeding? That one really irks me because here are those people and I'm thinking that every one of those cubicles has another small job. And the other piece is then we walk down to one of the conference rooms. And the conference
room probably has a $50,000 video-audio set up with lighting, and the table probably costs more than all of the tables I have in (this) school. It’s one of these mahogany 30-footers with the chairs. You kind of sink into them. Four or five choices as whether to go back or forward. So, we sit in this one of two conference rooms and with the mayor of Woodbridge, who is being given this privilege to sit in this room with them, and they would have conferences in here with their VPs deciding whether or not this is the cover or that is the cover of the next Engelhard publication. And here in education, it’s: make a decision, make a decision, make a decision. We talk about the 500 decisions. My door has been closed now and it’s hardly ever closed. From 9 – 10:30 in the morning, we sometimes we make 100 decisions. Can I do this? Is it all right if I do that? This child - where are we going with this program? Can we? It’s no, no, yes, yes. There, it would be let’s have a board meeting about it; or, we’re going to learn this new program. I got to think about our MacSchool program and I am still tugging at people to get them really savvy with it. I can’t tell you how many times people will turn in their grades and they’ll be in the first quarter, and it’s the third quarter grades. Little pieces like that. Well, in business, we would have had a two-week seminar on this new piece of software that we purchased for our company that every employee is going to have to use. Here, well, at the faculty meeting I did run a 20-minute piece with the projector on and everything. Here’s how you do this and then questions and answers, and I go out to their classrooms and I do it for them and the computer teacher helps them but that’s the way we do things in education. It’s few doing many. And I guess we’re back to that, the smaller the school the more you do. So, who are you going to hire? And then the other piece is, it’s funny how I am now giving more weight to it, that personality piece that I think is so crucial. And I can’t tell you how I see people who are very effective in terms of their organization and maybe even in their curriculum who will lack that ability to just speak with people. They rub people the wrong way. And they aggravate the populace. And all you need is enough aggravation your fist couple of years and you’re dead in the water.

Principal #5

Question 1.1 How long have you been in your current assignment?

5 years.

Question 1.2 How many years have you worked as an educator?
Question 1.3 What positions in education did you have prior to your current position?

I've been a principal and before this I was a principal in [District A] as a principal. Before that I was in [District B] – always at the middle school level. Before that I was in [District C] and before that, I was the director of guidance in [District D]. Before that, I taught social studies in [District E].

For the next set of questions - I want to tell you that you are being asked your perceptions as they pertain to the job of principal of an effective middle school. Therefore, when the word “principal” is being used in a question, it is understood that it refers to a principal of an effective middle school.

Question 2.1 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to communicating the mission of the school?

I think it’s one of the primary responsibilities. First of all, to maintain the focus of what our mission is, and then to continually refine that focus so that the people understand that as the school’s needs change. The focus is often very generic; but within that generic statement are very specific goals and needs, and the principal has to make sure that everyone understands that resources are committed toward those things, that everybody is on board with the same goals and ideas, and that we’re moving towards the same end.

Question 2.2 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to managing curriculum and instruction?

Principals need to be educational leaders. And education in many cases has been about managing the building and many principals do the facility management and scheduling management and a lot of other things that really don’t have as much to do with what I think is our prime goal, which is educating children. So I think that it is very important that principals well understand the curriculum as it applies to their building. It’s the greatest vehicle for delivering the service that we’re supposed to be delivering from the beginning. And if we don’t pay attention to it, very often it becomes the teachers’ province and then it is unequally applied, it’s changed, it becomes whatever they think it is. In many cases it’s not what you set it out to be, and therefore the mission doesn’t get done because people are doing something different than what we assumed they were doing.

Question 2.3 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to supervising teaching?
It's a primary responsibility, because once we go on a mission and we decide what the curriculum is as a group, the actually practice of getting that across is the primary responsibility of the teacher. And it's my job as the building administrator to see that the teachers are doing that curriculum and that they are doing it in an appropriate manner. That - we're talking about things like learning styles and differentiated instruction. Other vital factors talk about the delivery of education, and if I'm not there to see it, then I can't guarantee that it occurs and I need to be there to see it because that's my job.

**Question 2.4 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to student progress?**

If students aren't making suitable progress, then all of the other things don't really matter. So that, I don't think it really means what I guess the Governor or the President think it means in terms of high stakes testing. I'm not sure that that's a real measurement of student progress. Certainly it isn't in a community like this and it hasn't been, because all high stakes testing really talks about 2 or 3% of our kids. The bottom end and the rest of it is about everybody else who falls in the upper end. And that's not really measuring progress. We spend a lot of time here talking about what kids know now, and what they're going to know at the end of the year. And how are we going to get them from where they are now to where we want them to be. These are the same kinds of things we talked about in your earlier questions - the ideas of good teaching, a sound curriculum. So that's what I mean by student progress. I don't mean how did we do on the GEPA's, or whatever the test the government is going to come up with next. Or even the Iowa's for that matter, or the California's or any of those things. It's really measuring I think in a more poignant and a higher level, based on what we think we are doing here and how well we achieve those things.

**Question 2.5 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to promoting an instructional climate?**

I think the tone of the building is something that is very perceivable. And I had an opportunity to be in a lot of different schools in districts as an employee and as a visitor, and I think you get a very significant sense of the tone of the building. I think that I set the tone in this building, and I think that it is my responsibility to set the tone. If I say, for example, that time on task isn't important and therefore every time it's Groundhog Day, Valentines Day, whatever, the kids or classes - we'd have parties and we'd have an all day assembly to celebrate dozens of things, the message I am sending out to the
teachers is that what they do isn’t as important as all of those things. The message I need to send is there’s a balance. We need to celebrate. We need to relax. We need to do things that kids will remember and personalize, but we need to be in class and we need to teach the curriculum that we said we’re going to teach, and we need to do it in a way we said we were going to do it. And if I set that tone and establish that kind of feeling, that what we do is important everyday, then people don’t throw away minutes and say, we got ten minutes left just do your homework, talk quietly, and don’t bother anybody. We’ve lost time, and time is precious to us. If I say to people we are going to have an assembly, but we’re going to fit it into this time and every other period is going to be short and just slightly, because I don’t ever want you to miss that class, and then I’m saying to you what you teach everyday is important and I’m not giving it up and you shouldn’t either. I think that matters.

**Question 2.6** In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to organizational management?

Organizational management is - I don’t know how to make the analogy. It helps the building to go forward. I think well-organized, well-managed buildings tend to operate effectively, but at the same time, I don’t think that is my primary focus. I’m not - my key job is not to make sure that the doors are all oiled and the hallways waxed. I have somebody who does that and I ask them to do that, and as long as they are doing that and they are doing that well, I’m happy with that. But I know people whose pride is all of those things. The clock is never off and the hallways are the cleanest they possibly could be and their energies go there and not to instruction and not to supervision. They run a very clean, military style, organized building, but to the detriment of the things that I think are more important. So I hope that I balance them both, but I see that as a by-product of what I am trying to do rather than the product of what I’m trying to do.

**Question 3.1** Does the middle school principal have essential areas of responsibility and/or behaviors other than the ones you have already described?

Middle schools are different places, and I’m not sure that everyone recognizes that. Certainly parents don’t. I don’t know that boards of education do either. I spent 32 years working in middle schools. And I think that early education elementary schools focus on a very family, nurturing environment that is driven by a balance of curriculum and a balance of student needs. And I think high schools are organized according to teachers’ needs. And I think middle schools
have to be different than either one of those things. Our students are distinctly different than either group. We grow more, we change more. We absorb more than at any other time than the first year and a half or two years of a child’s life. So you have to recognize that, and recognize that the 557 kids who are here are different entities than their older brothers and sisters and younger brothers and sisters. If we don’t run a school that reflects who they are, then in fact we are not really – we are running the school in spite of them. And so we have to approach it differently, and I think a good middle school principal is really aware of that, and it identifies who those kids are. Every morning, as much as I can, I make it a point to stand by the doorway when the kids come in, and see who walks through the door. Because they are different than the kids I’ll see at lunch time, or at the end of the day. I can learn a lot about who I’ll see during the day and what’ll I’ll do when the day… plus see who walks through the door in the morning. How they’re dressed, what they’re ready for, what their energies are that day. Just as an example, discipline is always a major factor in schools and we don’t have serious discipline problems in a school like this. But we do it with a philosophy that is consistent with middle schools, in that every child who comes to see me or the vice principal is treated like an individual with very different needs than the child who sat there ten minutes before. Because you have to understand that whatever he went through to get himself in trouble is different than the kid who was there just five minutes before. Even if they did exactly the same thing, and we may treat them differently, and assign them different detentions, different punishments, or say to him, don’t ever do that again, goodbye. And other people would like us to have a Chinese menu. If you do A, you get C, and you can’t. You can never do that here. I think it’s inconsistent with the kids you work with. Look at the research and look what you know about children and then say, how can you ever do that? How can you ever be consistent? And that message to parents is a very difficult one to get out, but I think it’s the most defensible thing we do – is to treat everyone as individuals. And yet, it’s hard to get that message out, so I really think, as a middle school principal, I have to take all of those factors and weave them into the fiber of the school and make that message clear that it’s a different place than where your children came from and where your children are going. And that we are going to treat them as individuals, and we’re going to run a school reflective of who they are and try to do things that are appropriate for them. Every year, I fight the mothers who want to have the Coronation Ball where the girls will wear $100, $500 gowns and the boys will wear tuxedos and we’ll have a prom. Because it’s developmentally inappropriate for 90% of the children who are
going to graduate from the eighth grade. And yet moms would love to see the
girls get dressed up. And the daughters would like to get dressed up and be
fancy, but it’s just wrong for kids. Instead, we wear shorts and tee shirts and we
go to the Poconos for the day and jump in the water, and fish and play volleyball.
Because that’s what kids this age should do. It’s hard to get that message across
because moms would like it to be different or dads would like it to be different or
the kids would like it to be different. But you have to hold that line and make
sure people understand.

**Question 3.2 Do principals of effective middle schools exercise different behaviors than
principals of effective elementary schools or effective high schools?**

Oh, I think so, very definitely. I had an opportunity to see my colleagues at both
levels and five times a year we do a principal exchange for a day where I go to
the high school or the elementary school and they come here. And you just see
what different places they are and I hope that my colleagues recognize how
different this is. My kids are sometimes the least socially developed people on
earth. They’re also kids who go through far more extremes of emotion, of
behavior. If you can’t laugh, you can’t work here. Because if you take
everything very seriously, you don’t understand the people that you are spending
your day with. If you can’t - my colleague, who is the principal of the high
school, sets a to do list out everyday and does it and I don’t think you could ever
do that here. I set a to do list because I want to have a plan but I don’t always
expect to get it done because I have to react and respond either proactively or
retroactively to the events that go on here. It takes very few things to change the
heart and soul of the building in any one day. You need to know that and be
flexible and respond to that, so I think it’s very, very different.

**Question 4.1 If you were advising a committee searching for a candidate to become the
new principal of their effective middle school, what would you tell them to look for?**

I think you want somebody who is serious about student achievement.
Somebody who genuinely likes middle school kids. Someone who has a sense
and a scholarship about middle schools, who can articulate why they’re different,
who understands the act of teaching middle school students. I will not accept a
teacher’s plan that says for the next 35 minutes I’m going to do whatever – to
show a film, or review mixed fractions, or do a lab, or mitosis, because you can’t
do a 45 minutes lesson with middle school students. If your plan is to do that, it
is doomed for failure. It’s not going to achieve the objectives of the lesson, and
people that don’t understand that can’t work here. You can’t do that. You can’t
go out and run an effective middle school, if you’re expectation is the kids will have a 45 minute attention span and that there’ll be one objective and one teaching style and one unit that flows for however long the period is. If you don’t have an objective that says there’s a time to do – we’re going to touch some things – we’re going to get up and move around and we’re going to hear some things, see some things, read some things, you address the learning style of a third of the class or less. And your objective doesn’t make it and you fail each day and so, if you don’t understand that, you’re not going to be good at this.

Principal #6

Question 1.1 How long have you been in your current assignment? Since 1976.

Question 1.2 How many years have you worked as an educator? This is my 39th year in the business.

Question 1.3 What positions in education did you have prior to your current position? I was an algebra teacher. I was a junior high school vice principal. Then I was a junior high school principal and then I was a middle school principal. Actually, when I came to this building, it was a junior high school and then about six years later changed to a middle school.

For the next set of questions - I want to tell you that you are being asked your perceptions as they pertain to the job of principal of an effective middle school. Therefore, when the word “principal” is being used in a question, it is understood that it refers to a principal of an effective middle school.

Question 2.1 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to communicating the mission of the school? I think that is probably one of the most important things that the principal does. Because after you assemble of what you hope are a group of top flight professionals, your job is to continually keep them motivated and what we say time on task for classroom, we really say the same thing for teachers. So I think the things a principal does each and every day whether they are very formal things or informal things contribute to setting the tone of the building. And transmitting some those organizational goals to the teachers. An example now, we were very stable for many years, and years, and years. One person would
retire and the next year no one would go, and one would go. The last three years I now have 19 of my 48 teachers are here three years or less. This year I have three pregnancies on staff. Everything's changing so as the new people come in to me that's very important to meet with them as frequently as possible to set examples with them because they are the people who are going to transmit the culture of the building. I mean the teaching culture. So to me that's one of the most critical roles of the building principals plays.

**Question 2.2 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role in managing curriculum and instruction?**

Well, we're fortunate in our district that we have basically a large number supervisors most of them working in a K-12 role but some them just working in a 6-12 role science, social studies, so really the supervisors have taken the majority position in drafting curriculum, revising curriculum. Though we get involved. Principals can get involved to any degree I really don't get to the point of selecting textbooks or doing English writing rubrics or things like that. The supervisors have picked up a great deal of that. The district has in place a five year sequence of five years where every curriculum is reviewed, every textbook is reviewed like the first two years are basically investigative and the third year is making adjustments and making recommendations and implementing which I think is a good process in that you don't put something in place and twelve years later, you're still using 1989 science textbook which you can easily slip into if you don't have a review process. I don't play a tremendous role in curriculum.

**Question 2.3 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to supervising teaching?**

I think that that is very, very important. I always held a personal belief that the teacher should recognize the building principal as their primary evaluator. We do x number of observations by state regs and for non-tenured too doing one in the first half and one in the second half and more. We always try to do more than we call it an end of the year evaluation which really has to be complete by the end of March. I basically write each one for every one of the teachers in a pencil or a graph form and I submit to the supervisors and they adjust delete and back to me for typing and then we meet with the teacher. But I've always stayed with that role because I really always want my teachers to feel that I am in their corner and I know what is going on in their classroom. I'm not an advocate of having someone else write the evaluation and it comes on my desk and I do a 20 second signing and that's it. Personally I feel that if I do that too many years in a
row I am going to really lose that contact – that principal-teacher contact that
I think is very important. If I write it down I can at least say I saw it. I was in
there and I saw it.

**Question 2.4 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to student progress?**

I think that’s very important. I go over all report cards. After report cards are
issued, I have a set for myself and I will sit here one day and I will take my
magic marker and anyone who has a D or an E, I mark it. I talk to those
youngsters over the course of the next couple of weeks to encourage them Kids
that are really getting two or three grades I’ll meet with that team, whichever
team the youngster is on. I’ll meet with the guidance counselor. I’m particular.
We address the kids that are getting the failing grades but I’m always concerned
with the kids who gets the D. They’re not failing. They’re not staying back.
And they’re not a discipline problem but how many years can you go through
school being that D student. It has to have an effect. So I like to focus on those
kids. See what we can do to augment, to address their programs whether it’s a
referral to PAC Committee or whatever. Just don’t let them get that perennial D.

**Question 2.5 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to promoting an instructional climate?**

Again I think the instructional climate goes hand and hand with the building. I
think the instructional climate goes hand in hand with the building tone. What
do we expect from our teachers? We expect them not to just maintain an
invigorating classroom but be willing to try new things. I try to put in at least an
hour of professional reading a day. Most of it I do at home to be honest. Then
I’m forever taking articles out of different things and sending them out to staff.
In fact I just had one here. It’s on writing software for working with
handicapped youngsters. And they offer three different programs there that seem
to be successful in helping youngsters with handicaps. And I’m always trying to
get three or four of these a week to the staff because sometimes the teachers in
the trenches may feel overwhelmed and may say, I don’t have the time to stop
and do this type of thing. I don’t have time to peruse some of the professional
journals. I always look at it as modeling that I’m showing that I take some time
every day or every week to read and put stuff out. I hope you read it. Some of
them are going to throw it in the basket. I know that. Hopefully eight out of ten
are going to read it.
Question 2.6 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to organizational management?

That's an important part. I have a new assistant principal, this is her second year, and that’s a thing that I spend a lot of time with her reviewing and projecting. We’re already starting to talk about next year’s scheduling, how it’s going fit in staff utilization, because you’ve got to have your organization tight. You’ve got to have it up and running. It almost has to sustain itself. I always, tongue in check say, if I go somewhere for a workshop and I come back the next day I walk in and the ladies in the front office will say, oh everything ran well yesterday, in fact, it runs better when you’re not here. My answer always is, and that’s how it should be. The organization should be set up to be self-sufficient for a period of time and not have to-- be self-generating, really. You do that by delegating responsibility to people. Two years ago, I had the only time I’ve had firemen in the building. I had a locker fire. I wasn’t here. The guidance counselor managed the whole thing until I got here. By the time I got here the engines were out front with the hoses coming in. My guidance counselor took over and did everything. I wrote him a very nice letter. I was very proud of the fact he took that initiative and things went well. No one was harmed. To me that’s how an organization should be--ready to tackle everything, we don’t have to run to that door and knock on that door and say what do we do next.

Question 3.1 Does the middle school principal have essential areas of responsibility and/or behaviors other than the ones you have already described?

I think communication with a parent-community is very important. We're very fortunate, we have a very active PTA group. Our membership at PTA is—we've got 540 students in the building right now. We probably, out of that, get a family membership of maybe 800-825 people, which is very good. The PTA has several meetings a year, as I am sure that most do. They take a very active role. They sponsor several assemblies for us throughout the year. At the closing portion of the year, they do a major part in our final eighth grade, we call it party, we don't call it a dance, we're trying to get away from that formalized thing. They play a big role in that. They represent us at PTA meetings. The other part I like about—we use an interdisciplinary team structure. Sixth and seventh we have two-four member teams and each of the teams has a planning period and a prep period and they're back-to-back. So it really gives them about, oh an hour and a half amount of time either in the morning or the afternoon, depending on which grade level they have. They spend a great deal of that in parent-conferencing. Many of the conferences we generate ourselves, we don't wait until you get the mid-marking period increment or Johnny's getting a D. They'll
call and say can you come in and talk with us. In most homes it’s a very important part of the process they play because they’re setting a tone, they’re setting a feeling that we’re concerned about your son or daughter. Sometimes they complain a little bit, you know how many conferences we had this week. But it’s important.

**Question 3.2. Do principals of effective middle schools exercise different behaviors than principals of effective elementary schools or effective high schools?**

That’s a tough question to me. Some degree. Because I’ve never worked in either of the other venues, I’ve always been a junior high/middle school person. I think they must behave somewhat differently due to the nature of the young person who is in the building? What are we, ten and a half through maybe fourteen, fourteen and a half is our age span. And probably, I think, young people will undergo some of most dramatic changes of their entire life during that four year span. New friends, new values, mom I don’t have to listen to what you tell me anymore, I can pick my own friends, blah, blah. So you probably do have to demonstrate a slightly different attitude toward these youngsters cause they’re really changing, they’re not the seventeen year that drives to school and knows what he wants to do. So you’ve got to be a bit more attuned to the young people and to the change process that they’re going in. So yes, I think that it’s a—you need to reflect some different values and some different postures.

**Question 4.1. If you were advising a committee searching for a candidate to become the new principal of their effective middle school, what would you tell them to look for?**

I would tell them to look for someone, number one, who values the contributions that the teaching staff make to the building. I would tell them to look for someone who really feels education is significant and important and can transmit that enthusiasm to not only the teaching staff but to the students and to the parents. I would look for somebody that values the understanding of the interpersonal skills that weave throughout the building. How youngsters get along with their staff, how staff get along with staff, how staff get along with parents. Education is becoming so much more a very comprehensive situation compared to what it was twenty-five years ago. I mean, we’re doing all the things, we have 504 plans now, we have things reach far into the home. In other words, once they’re out the door that’s not the end of the day for them. So I would look for someone that recognizes the human qualities that have to be exercised every day in operating the small city that’s here. We’ve got, as I’ve said, 540 kids, we’ve had another, adults, they have to use the term adults, they have to put everyone
in, so another 70 people. So everyday you've got this little group of 600 plus people, interacting in so many ways. You have to be a bit of a social scientist.

Principal #7

Question 1.1 How long have you been in your current assignment?
As principal? This is my fourth year.

Question 1.2 How many years have you worked as an educator?
This is my 34th year.

Question 1.3 What positions in education did you have prior to your current position?
I was a classroom teacher for thirteen years. I was a guidance counselor for ten years. And before being principal I was a vice-principal for seven years—all in [District A].

For the next set of questions - I want to tell you that you are being asked your perceptions as they pertain to the job of principal of an effective middle school. Therefore, when the word "principal" is being used in a question, it is understood that it refers to a principal of an effective middle school.

Question 2.1 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to communicating the mission of the school?
I think it is a very important role. I think we need to be effective communicators, we need to be instructional leaders. However, unfortunately I don't feel, and I have said this to a number of people, that, I am not an effective instructional leader simply because of the other tasks that are involved in the position. And I rely a lot on the district supervisors to provide that curriculum leadership for me. But, I think it needs to come from the top down, being that the principal needs to be certainly an effective communicator in regarding schools goals, missions, etc.

Question 2.2 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to managing curriculum and instruction?
I think the descriptive that you just used is appropriate—manage. In fact this morning was a good example. We had a writing meeting going on that was run by our district supervisor. We had a math meeting that was being run by our math supervisor. What we're trying to do, is we're trying to have grade level meetings, sixth, seventh and eighth grade level meetings of math teachers, science teachers, etc. The district supervisor runs the meetings, I'm involved in being at the meetings, learning what is going on in different curriculums, but I manage them as far as who needs to do what, when, etc. But I'm looking for the leadership in those areas from my district supervisors.
Question 2.3 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to supervising teaching?

I think it’s – we need to be very proactive in doing that. I think that’s something that other than the other two questions I just answered, I’m not involved with the supervisors. I am as far as discussing various teachers with them, but we need to be proactive, we need to get into the classrooms. I think probably the most important job that we have is evaluating staff. Because, and I’ve said this to many people, education doesn’t happen in this office, it happens those classrooms. You know between those four walls and we need to be proactive in monitoring staff, evaluating them, assisting them, providing them with workshops to go to, reading material, etc. Very important role.

Question 2.4 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to student progress?

I think we’re part of that process. I think we are accountable for student progress. If our scores are, let’s say for example on the GEPA, not what they should be, I’m going to say this - it’s a dirty four letter word, you can quote me on that. My superintendent is going to look to me as far as what happened. Now will I have the answers? I’m going to then go to the district supervisors and discuss with them. But I think that overall, whether we want to believe it or not, yes the progress testing—it all comes back to the principalship even though we have other people we can go to. I have been told at a curriculum meeting, and I’m going to be very honest with you, that we didn’t get some funding because our GEPA scores weren’t what they should be and as the principal of this building that’s kind of embarrassing when you’re sitting with all of your colleagues, other principals, others supervisors, and it’s hinted that the district didn’t get some money because of GEPA scores which means that the onus is here. Now, recently we just had a meeting were it was told that we were given X amount of dollars. Quite a bit of money because of GEPA scores. So you have the other extreme as well. So, but they look at the principal as the primary motivator and provider with regard to those scores.

Question 2.5 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to promoting an instructional climate?

I think it’s an important role. I’m not sure if there is a, Mark, if there is certain category that can be ticked off with it, but it’s a role that again we need to be active in. It’s role that if we do our job in monitoring staff, in evaluating them, I think that all adds to the instructional climate in the school. If the staff feel that
we’re not concerned with how they’re doing or we’re not concerned about scores, I think that will rub off negatively as far as their performance in the classroom.

**Question 2.6 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to organizational management?**

Again, I think it’s unfortunately or fortunately, I don’t know how you want to view it, but I think that and I’ve said this to people, that I have become a manager. I don’t know if I’m as much an instructional leader as I would like to be, but unfortunately, sometimes we end up managing the building regarding schedules, regarding things that are happening within the school, within the school day, and during the course of the week. We troubleshoot a lot of things so that the building runs effectively. It’s an important role, it’s part of the, I feel, the principal’s responsibility because I think that if you are an effective manager then things flow from that.

**Question 3.1 Does the middle school principal have essential areas of responsibility and/or behaviors other than the ones you have already described?**

I think the middle school principal—you need to be the instructional leader, but we’ve had that already, you need to be a manager. But you are—you need to be disciplined, you need to be out and about. Any time the bell rings and I’m in my office and I don’t have someone with me, I leave the office and I go into the hallways, and as corny as it sounds, I shake students’ hands, and we are at a point now where that when they see me they will extend their hand to me. I think it’s important. I think that adds to school climate, although I think that our school climate can improve, but I think that is part of it. You need to be visible, you need to be a good listener, you need to be a troubleshooter. You know, you are kind of a father confessor, you’ve been though this. The most famous line you hear is, do you have a minute? And then number two is, can I close the door? So you know that it is not something that is going to be, what are you having for dinner tonight? It’s going to be something a little more serious than that. But, they need to know, and I think that my staff knows, that a principal needs to be able to have an open-door policy, and sometimes it is, what is the word I want to use, sometimes it’s untimely. There are times when staff are at your door and you have seventy-three other things to do but it’s do you have a minute? You have to make that minute for the staff, because what they consider important you may consider as a minor thing but they need to know that you feel what they’re saying to you is important by listening to them and then providing
them with some suggestions, advice, etc. And I think that if they don't have that, I think you lose your staff and it doesn't make for a good situation in school. And I pride myself on the fact that I'm accessible. There are a lot of things I could be doing but those are the most important.

**Question 3.2** Do principals of effective middle schools exercise different behaviors than principals of effective elementary schools or effective high schools?

Boy, that's a good question. I would say, based on some of descriptions I've just answered to the previous question, I think that if any principal were to use some of those behaviors, I don't think it makes any difference. Certainly the kids are different. High school as opposed to middle and elementary. But I think if the behaviors of the principal are such that you are out and about, you're visible, you have an open door, you're a good listener, you act on things that teachers have a concern about, I don't think it makes any difference what age level or what school you're a principal of.

**Questions 4.1** If you were advising a committee searching for a candidate to become the new principal of their effective middle school, what would you tell them to look for?

That's a good question. Because that may be happening here in about two or three more years. I would tell them to look for someone who cares about kids, someone who is a people person, someone who has a vision, who is a motivator, certainly knowledgeable about middle level children, who gets along with people, who is a good listener. Basically some of the traits that we just talked about. You know, many times you are always asked during an interview, and this is an important aspect, you know you need to be an educational leader. And it's difficult when you have twenty-seven other responsibilities that you know you need to be a part of. And I feel that, in my humble opinion, personally I fall short in that area only because I find that I don't the time to get very much involved in a lot of the different disciplines. Certainly I rely on the supervisors for that but I need to be more active with regard to that. But unfortunately because of the demands I think today on the principalship whether it be with parents certainly with kids, staff, etc., it takes a little bit away from some of those things. But those are the things that I would look for if I was sitting on a committee. That's who I'd want to have.

Principal #8
Question 1.1 How long have you been in this assignment?

I've been here for six years.

Question 1.2 How many years have you been in education?

Twenty-nine.

Question 1.3 What positions in education did you have prior to your current position?

Before this I was vice-principal at our high school in [District A] and before that I was a guidance counselor in the high school, the same high school where I was VP, and prior to that I was the head of the guidance department in a K to 8 district and prior to that I was a teacher in the seventh and eighth grade—Language Arts.

For the next set of questions - I want to tell you that you are being asked your perceptions as they pertain to the job of principal of an effective middle school. Therefore, when the word “principal” is being used in a question, it is understood that it refers to a principal of an effective middle school.

Question 2.1 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to communicating the mission of the school?

Well, I think the principal has to have the vision and has to believe in the vision. And I know that would be the case in any school situation, but I think in the middle school particularly, you have to have a vision in what is a middle school. And then you have to promote that vision. And then when you have the availability, to being around other people, you have to make sure that they join you in that mission and that vision.

Question 2.2 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to managing curriculum and instruction?

I think the principal has to be the leader in there. Right here in [District B] we do have curriculum people which is wonderful and is very, very helpful but I think the principal has to be also the leader—an instructional leader. If that’s not the case then you are not going to get the buy-in by the staff or by the parents.

Question 2.3 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to supervising teaching?

Oh, primary. It's what I really feel I need to do more and most of. Unfortunately, when you get to be a principal you find out you don't have all the time for it that you need. It's really what I enjoy doing the most. But I think it's very primary because you can't really talk to teachers about instruction and
really believe in what you’re doing unless you’ve been in the classroom watching on.

Question 2.4. In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to student progress?

Again, I think the principal has to take an active role. I try to keep up with the student progress. I try to make sure that I’m making sure that whatever is in our curriculum, is in our curriculum, whatever is going on is maintaining student progress and a big part of that is assessment to making sure that kids are being taught the material and then whether the assessments are really showing what we’ve been teaching. So it’s a primary responsibility of the principal as well. I think you have to be on top of that to make sure that what’s going on in your school is truly educationally sound.

Question 2.5. In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to promoting an instructional climate?

Oh, again, it’s comes—I’m a firm believer that a principal if he doesn’t have the vision and doesn’t have the full scope and doesn’t show the—maintain the aura of what’s it’s all about, then it’s not going to filter down to everybody else. So you really have—the principal has to maintain that. He has to have the belief and the vision and the mission, and he has to promote it in everything that he does, and he has to be consistent in everything that he does. All the decisions that he makes, the scheduling, any educational decisions that are made in the school should really go back and promote what the vision and the mission is. And if that’s sound, then all your decisions will be made on that premise, and that’s important.

Question 2.6. In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to organizational management?

The principal has to be kind of like the drafter of this, kind of like set the format for it. But I am a believer that you have to empower your people. So as we do in the middle school here, there is a principal, there is an assistant principal, then I have team leaders and they sit on a team leader—I call it like a cabinet—and we meet weekly. And so when those team leaders sit on their teams and they direct their teams and it goes down. Now there is a management style. My management style happens to be one of modeler and one out of working with my people as opposed directly to telling them how to do it. Because I believe I’m working with all professionals, and if you believe that you don’t have to tell them what to do you work with them to promote. And then having said that, as
any leader is whenever you find that you have a missing link or you have a
weak link, you have to deal with that as well. But for the most part, I have been
very successful with picking strong people, working with strong people and
professional people and, therefore, being able to - then hence have a strong
student body. Because again it goes from the top down, it keeps going all the
way down to the kids. It also filters out to the parents, cause when the parents
believe in you, then the parents respect you. And the thought that you are there
for their child and for the benefit of their child, then they’re in there with you,
too,--for the most part.

Question 3.1 Does the middle school principal have essential areas of responsibility
and/or behaviors other than the ones you have already described?

Well, of course, his other big responsibility would be the budget. The budget is
something that I would probably least enjoy doing, but however, most affects
what you can accomplish, because there are certain things you need and if you
don’t have the budget in place and all other things that you need, you can’t
accomplish what you want to accomplish. So I do a lot with trying to make sure
that, I mean we’re very lucky here in this particular district that we have a strong
budget and we can deal with it. But when you stretch your budget you have set
your priorities and it’s always a matter...Every year when I do the budget it’s an
entire reevaluation. Same with priorities, because that’s what the budget is all
about, where do I need the most personnel to keep the program going. It’s very,
very important to me that finance does not interfere with the program. So if I
have to cut something, I can cut things and still have the program running - that’s
my priority. And it’s usually not in personnel, because personnel is what helps
me run the program, obviously. It’s a big part of the middle school, because
middle school has to do with interpersonal relationships, teams, breaking it down
from a large group to a small group within a bigger community, and those kinds
of things. So that’s a big part of it. If I have to cut anything sometimes I cut
materials, cause you can always deal with that if you have to. But, so that’s one
big thing. I’m trying to think of anything else. The only other thing that you do
a lot of, you do lot of parental communication, which is good because the more
you communicate with the parents, the more they’re on your side, the more
they’re working with you and the more they think you’re trying. The parents
have an opinion that if they don’t hear about your things, that you’re trying to
keep a secret from them. And that’s not at all the case. It’s just that sometimes
we get so caught up in our own, what we’re doing, we forget to communicate to
people. And so the more I tell them, then I try to give them all the information
cause I’m not hiding anything. So they appreciate that. And then we’ll say that, well, I knew that and the more they know, they go ‘we knew that,’ and it becomes their middle school too. It’s not my middle school, it’s our middle school - we all do it together. So that’s a big part. I work very closely with the PTA. And we have a very strong PTA here. They meet here in the building one day a month and then periodically the president of the PTA will stop in and we’re always working together to try to figure out what we need to do for the kids. That’s a strong relationship. Another part that I have to play, which is important, is a part of an administrator team district-wide. We meet every other week in mid-counsel. Which is important because we don’t live in isolation here in the community. It’s the middle school, there’s an elementary school, there is a village school which is K-2, there is a high school. And we’re all inter-related obviously. So, therefore, we have to meet and work out some issues together as a group and meet with the superintendent. So that’s another piece that we play, and then there’s also the piece of the board of education. Which is, ultimately, the main people who run the school, financially. And so many times when there is something that is called upon where I have to attend more meetings, where I have to present information to the board, which is all part and parcel to what we do. Ultimately, it was going back to the fact that I always feel like if I have to - you’re defending your own turf, you’re defending your building. It’s not even in a negative way, it’s a positive way of saying, when I was out there I need it for my building cause this is an important place to be. Not negating anything else in the district, but this is important to me. And then you just kind of go with it from there.

Question 3.2 Do principals of effective middle schools exercise different behaviors than principals of effective elementary schools or effective high schools?

I think there are some things that are general. But yes, I think that there are also differences. Having been at both the middle school and high school level, I was both the VP and the guidance counselor, I was at the high school level for about ten years. And then having taught at the middle school, I was there for about 13 years, so I’ve been at both. There is a whole different clientele, there is a whole different atmosphere in a middle school than in a high school. And I would then venture to say it’s also very different from an elementary school. I think very strongly that probably one of the toughest areas is the middle school, because you are trying to be a little bit of everything. The atmosphere here has to be warm and caring, which you get a lot of at the elementary level, but it has to also be strong and the discipline has to be strong because you have to prepare the kids
for the high school. So you’re right in the middle, you’ve got kids that are
going into adolescence, they’re going through a lot of turmoil in their lives right
now. Because they’re going through that elementary model to a high school
model, and we’re literally caught in the middle. That’s why middle schools are
important, because we’re not like elementary and we’re not like high school, but
yet we have to prepare our kids for high school, yet we have to wean them away
from what they got in the elementary school. So we’re trying to make that
breakthrough. We have three years to do that, and a lot of times the kids go
through a traumatic time in the sixth grade, cause it’s that transition. By seventh
grade they’re usually okay, then eighth grade they go through another transition.
So that in three years, they go through three transitions. One into the middle
school, one into the high school. I think it’s mandatory, obviously on the high
school level, that there’s much more of a management piece that has to go along
with the administrators. You’re managing young adults in a lot of curriculum, a
lot of—they’ve already grown up to some extent, and they’re trying to get into
college and you’re treating them much more like adults. We’re trying to treat
them right in the middle, and it’s difficult because sometimes I have kids in here
that are playing with cars and then I’ve got the ones that are dating the girls.
Some of them are in the same class. Because they haven’t made the transition
yet and we always have to remember that no matter what their bodies look like,
we’re still dealing with 11, 12, 13 year old kids and we want to make sure that
then they really are a fun group because although they haven’t nailed it in yet,
they haven’t decided this is what I want be for the rest of my life. They’re still
kind of changing and growing and molding and it’s kind of a fun time. But it can
be also a very hurtful time for the kids, cause they’ve been through a lot of
stresses.

Question 4.1 If you were advising a committee searching for a candidate to become the
new principal of their effective middle school, what would you tell them to look for?

Again, you would have to have someone with a vision and an understanding of
the middle school child and of a middle school. You have to find somebody who
really enjoys and likes middle school kids. The person has to be strong, they
have to be dedicated, they have to have a strong background in curriculum and
understanding middle school curriculum. But most importantly, that they like
the kids and that they want to work with those kids. Cause even though you
have to be strong, you have to be really understanding and caring. I found that
the—though I’ve been here for six years—but I’ve been in education for a long
time and I’ve seen it time and time again--once the kids know you’re being fair
and you’re being caring they’re okay. I mean they’re not going to be happy
that they’re getting detention or they’re not going to be happy that they have
social penalty or something, but they so understand when you’re being fair. And
fairness is an important thing, very important thing to a middle school kid. Like
I said, they may not like it, but as long as you’re being fair, they’ll live with it.
They’re okay with that. And as long as they know you really like them, they’re
actually okay. Even though they’ll get upset, they’ll cry, they’ll do whatever, but
the next day they say, hi Mr. R. how are you, you know, they’re okay with that.
But if you don’t like them, and that’s the same with teachers in the middle
school, if you don’t like middle school kids you should not—don’t be here. If
you don’t like teaching—you shouldn’t be anywhere. But you can kind of get
away with it at the high school level sometimes, you can’t get away with it at
middle school because the kids pick up on it right away and they will turn you
off right away and they’re not going to learn if they don’t truly believe that you
like them and that you care about them, you respect them.

Principal #9

Question 1.1  How long have you been in this assignment?

Eleven years.

Question 1.2  How many years have you worked as an educator?

Thirty years.

Question 1.3  What positions in education did you have prior to your current position?

I was a language arts supervisor in this district—it varied over 8 or 10 years
between grades 4-12, 7-12. I was also a language arts teacher at the high school.
I taught at the high school in [District A] for four years and then came to
[District B]

For the next set of questions - I want to tell you that you are being asked your
perceptions as they pertain to the job of principal of an effective middle school.
Therefore, when the word “principal” is being used in a question, it is understood that it
refers to a principal of an effective middle school.

Question 2.1  In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to
communicating the mission of the school?
Well, I see that as important and I think it needs to start with the faculty. That the faculty needs to understand so that they can work together. But it also extends to the parents and the children, as well. And I think the principal, in a sense, is the keeper of the flame. There are all kinds of pressures that you get. In our case, I've been here through a kind of evolutionary development from what we used to call a junior school into a middle school program. We did a lot of study and research and we had a very large community-based committee to help develop the middle school program and as soon as we developed a middle school program we started to feel, from my perception, we started to feel pressures that I would describe as going back to junior school or junior high mentality. The whole dichotomy between departmentalization versus teachers on the team is a continuing struggle that you go back and forth with. Issues like the ability grouping of kids and where that fits in a middle school when you are trying to meet the needs of all the kids is another ongoing struggle. We did some ability grouping in math and we do have a language arts honors program and that has an effect on the way we do structure our teams. So I think that's a really central idea that you get reminded about and get brought back to on fairly regular basis because of those kinds of issues.

Question 2.2 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to managing curriculum and instruction?

That's another tough one because of the—you get involved with the district support structure and we have an assistant superintendent for curriculum. We are a K-12 district. We have articulation issues with the high school and articulation issues with the elementary school. We have supervisors—in this district we have supervisors who are K-12, supervisors in what I describe as non-core areas, they'd kill me if they heard me say that but in health and phys ed, fine arts, computer technology, guidance and world languages we have K-12 supervisors but we don't have K-12 supervisors in math, language arts, social studies and science which are extremely important areas. We had a committee in the district that met last year to take a look at our supervision and evaluation program here and they recommended that we add supervisory help K-8 and there is a proposal right now in next year's budget to create a K-8 language arts supervisor. We have also created this year a science lead teacher at each of the four K-8 buildings. One at the middle school and each of the elementary schools to help give us more focus in the curriculum areas for the curriculum side of the work. So the role of the principal, in a sense, that of the principal's job description — you're responsible for everything and obviously curriculum is part
of it. But in the curriculum issue because of the complexity I think it does get complex enough at the middle school level that you need some specialists and specialized attention there. So you’ve got to work with those people. Right now I’m technically responsible for the language arts—directly for language arts—and science programs. And I have two assistant principals in the building who work with math and social studies and actually we now have a special education K-12 supervisor also, that was a new position this year which next year there is a proposal to split the special ed supervisor position into a K-8 and 9-12 supervisor. So that person, as soon as that job is created and people saw what the assignment looked like with the number of special education teachers in the district, they realized that even that brand new position wasn’t enough to handle the needs there. So curriculum is another real challenge. There are a lot of people that you need to work with. It affects how the teachers teach on a daily basis. In our district like a lot of I and J districts, I’m sure there’s is a lot of pressure there’s a lot of high expectations on the part of parents. They want a solid curriculum and you get into those discussions pretty frequently.

Question 2.3 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to supervising teaching?

Well, that’s another fairly complicated question I think. Because it has to do with the delivery that occurs in the classroom, it has to do with staff development because part of supervision is helping become better. It means providing appropriate staff development for people, which I think in this district we do a good job. It also involves evaluation and feedback, conferencing. We, again, that’s a role that we share. We have a program in our district where the non-tenured teachers get observed four times by no more than three people. The first year people have an observation by the assistant superintendent and the second and third year people are observed by either a supervisor, in areas where we have K-12 supervisors, or by one of the administrators in the building. So I get to see all of the non-tenured people at least once a year in a class visit and one of the assistant principals shares the other piece of those. But it’s a big package. You know that I mentioned that we had a committee that took a look at that process in our district last year and we were trying to come up with—what I thought they should have come up with was the number, the appropriate ratio of teachers to supervisor. What’s a reasonable number that a supervisor can handle in terms of active supervision of teaching staff? And when they took a look at the numbers in the district, I think they were frightened at what that ratio looked like. And I don’t know what—I guess there are industry standards outside of education that
might be very different. But in this building you have three administrators
and about 65 teachers, so the ratio would be somewhere around 22 to 1. To do a
good active supervision job, that's probably pretty high. But that's not unusual
in education.

**Question 2.4** In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to
student progress?

Well, to me that's related to curriculum. But it's another interesting area because
so much of what we try to do is based on the individual needs of the kids and
where they are and it also opens the question of measurement, which really
should be part of the curriculum. We do a variety of standardized testing in the
district to take a look at measurement, you know we have that—what I think is
pretty difficult in New Jersey—identification for basic skills, reasons and what
not. We have the eighth grade GEPA test here which is another measure, in fact
in Sunday's paper they had the grade eight proficiency assessment results from
local area middle schools reported by rank and DFG. Which is very interesting,
I've never seen that done before. What they did was take the number of kids
who passed the two levels, proficient and advanced proficient and they compared
that. We had in our DFG in [county A], we had [District C], [District D] and
[District E] and I'm pleased to say that we—in terms of our rank of DFG, which
was not particularly high, and that was the shocking part of the story we were
ahead of all three of those other schools. But not by much but by one or two
places. I don't think the state tests really help us very much for that reason. I
think it may be helpful to identify kids who need remediation at the high school
level but the amount of information we get back from the state about what's in
those tests and where the particular areas are where the kids are weak is not
particularly helpful. But to me it's a question of curriculum, are we meeting the
individual needs of the kids and the other kinds of assessments we have are
largely teacher based. In math I think they do a pretty careful job in keeping
track of where the kids are. Part of that is because of the fact that we have so
many different levels of math and we're moving kids up and down on a regular
basis.

**Question 2.5** In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to
promoting an instructional climate?

I'm thinking about all the implications of what that might mean. There a couple
of different pieces of that, one has to do with discipline and the idea that teachers
feel supported in their efforts to create the atmosphere in their classrooms that
they need. I also think there is a lot of modeling behavior that happens there. The principal ought to be accessible, the principal needs to be out in the building and have a good sense of what that climate is. The principal should be actively involved in working with kids somehow, sometimes that could be difficult but I think that is really an important part of the job that you need to have contact with kids and you need to show the faculty that you’re interested in those kinds of relationships and I think you can do a lot of encouraging for the teachers—the way a discipline referral gets handled in the office is significant. There are times when the principal needs to get involved with the teacher right away but I think a lot of times administrators, assistant principals and principals can have a different kind of relationship with kids than the teachers do and sometimes it means changing teachers approach to an issue and that can be tricky, it can be subtle sometimes. I think it is even more important now a days with the amount of inclusion that is going on, we have more kids with behavioral issues who are staying in our schools, that’s probably generally true across the state, across the country I suppose. A lot of the teachers are not used to dealing with some of those special kinds of needs. That’s a real problem area I think. That’s an area where we need to do some more staff development, in fact we’re creating staff development plans specifically to deal over the next three years with the needs of special education students and what the staff needs to be trained, with and for to meet the needs of those kinds of kids. So that there is a lot there, and I think the middle school level it’s really critical because of the age of the kids, they’re active, they’re big, they have a lot of social issues that they’re dealing with and the school should be providing something to meet those needs. The social needs as well as the academic needs. We’ve done a lot with that. We’ve done an after school enrichment program. We have a late bus five days a week. We have dances. We have activity nights. We have a pretty extensive intramural program and interscholastic athletic program. I think all of that lends itself to developing the climate, how the kids feel about the school what the school feels like when you’re here.

Question 2.6. In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to organizational management?

Okay, you just raised a few ghosts in my mind. There are a lot of support services that make things run around here. I think, and again there are several levels, one has to do with the day to day operation of the office with the secretaries, the assistant principals and how we greet the public. What the school looks like if you come in as a parent or as a community member. Those kinds of
organizational things are really important. The way the phone is answered.
Can people get through on the phone, which is a challenge at times. We have
Lucent right now and we’re trying like crazy to find a cheaper and better way to
handle that, it’s unbelievable. So there are those kinds of organizational things
and it reflects on the school and it’s important that the principal has a handle on
what that looks like and how it’s going. There are other kinds of, we already
talked about organization in terms of supervision and evaluations so that’s
another organizational piece. There are from time to time some mechanical
types of issues with transportation and maintenance, which are the two major
support services we deal with in the district. We are a school that is about 98%
bused and it is a 56 square mile school district so there is a lot of transportation
with issues and then bus behavioral issues and what not. We’re dealing with five
different contracting companies at this point. So that’s really complicated. But
there are problems. We had a bus last Monday when we had the snow on an
early dismissal we had a bus that got lost with a substitute driver, it was
somewhere in [town A] instead of going to one of our communities and the
driver went off the road and the bus went on its side, resting on its windows and
under those circumstances parents are supposed to be called to say you child is
on a bus that had an accident, no one was hurt your child should be home in 45
minutes half hour, or whatever. No phone calls were made. So we had a public
relations disaster for the parents on that bus. The communication between the
school and the transportation office did not work very well last Monday
afternoon. It was embarrassing and as it turned out none of the kids were hurt
but it was not a good situation. There are custodial problems, I don’t think
principal when they go to graduate school to study to be a principal take any
courses in managing custodians. What we found, and I think in part it is a
function of the success of economy, that it has been very difficult to hire
custodians and get good people. We’ve had a lot of turnover in the past couple
of years on our workforce and our district is growing, the school has grown in
the last four years when we added the sixth grade to the building. So, again
you’re relying on a lot of different people, the transportation director, the head of
maintenance, the head custodian of the building. We have boiler problems, we
have roof leaks when it rains and the wind kicks up and all that kind of stuff can
get in the way of the educational program. Some days it’s just unbelievable. We
have a pretty good district we do pretty well on that generally but there are days
when everything comes to a halt and that’s what you deal with.

Question 3.1 Does the middle school principal have essential areas of responsibility
and/or behaviors other than the ones you have already described?
Well, I think you need a kind of empathy for kids of this age level. I've done a lot of work in discussion and reading about middle level schools and the unique situation that the kids are at this age level, and I think you need empathy for that. I think that it's different at the high school level and it's different at the elementary school level. I think that what goes on with the kids at this age is really specific to the age level, which is of course is why middle schools have been designed the way they have been designed. But you really do have to have an empathy for that. I think one of the things—I didn't realize that to the extent that I do now when I first came here as a high school teacher and supervisor to this level. I kind of knew it in my head that it was different but I really understand how it was different. I believe even more strongly now than I did even a few years ago that's significant. I also think, and this pretty obvious I suppose, but you need to be a good people person. You need to be able to work with teachers and parents as well as kids. You probably spend more of your time working with teachers than anything else as a middle level principal. You have a responsibility to be able to recruit and identify teachers with potential to work with kids at this level. Being a good teacher isn't necessarily enough, you have to be a good teacher who is going to be successful with kids here. That's a little different.

**Question 3.2** Do principals of effective middle schools exercise different behaviors than principals of effective elementary schools or effective high schools?

I don't know if the behaviors are different. I think with the behaviors that I just described are probably would be true of an administrator at either of the two levels as well. I think that the difference is the sense of purpose, you know, you started out by asking about the mission. I think the mission of the middle school can be different. I think the mission of the middle school is very different than the mission of the high school. To the extent that that is true maybe the mission of the high school ought to change. But I think it is and the perception is different and the pressures are different. The pressures of the—the biggest factor is the pressure of getting into college which becomes a very strong reality in the high school level. We're lucky in a sense that we don't have that pressure that strong here I think we have pressure enough to help the kids develop academically. So, I don't know if the behaviors are any different necessarily, but I think the perspective is different.

**Question 4.1** If you were advising a committee searching for a candidate to become the new principal of their effective middle school, what would you tell them to look for?
Well, look for somebody with a lot of patience and a lot of energy. But I think some of the things I alluded to earlier, somebody who has a sense of curriculum, to start with centrally, somebody who has a sense of middle school kids and what their needs are and can articulate that and then has a sense of curriculum. Probably experience in terms of working with teachers in identifying teacher needs and staff development possibilities. Someone who is a good communicator both in person and in writing. I’m not sure how much writing gets looked at when people are screened for positions but I think that can be very revealing and significant. I probably would not focus on some of the operational kinds of things which may be a mistake, but I think you do have to rely on some of the support services in the district for that type of thing. If you get the support you need that piece will be okay. I remember when I got interviewed for this job a long time ago, one of the board members asked me about budget and what kind of experience—was I going to be able to handle developing the budget, controlling the budget for the building. The budget can be very time consuming, it can take a lot of your time and in this building I do the budget myself. I work with one of the secretaries on that. So you need to have a sense of the budget but I think that is something that if you are reasonably bright you can work with and develop and I don’t think you need any special training. I came here with some experience just handling the language arts piece of the budget, which I had done for several years. But I think it is important to recognize that it’s serious when you’re spending somebody else’s money. There are some things you do and some things you don’t do and you need to know that. You need to be able to plan, you need to be able to anticipate what needs are and look down the road and know where you’re going to be a couple of years from now.

Principal #10

Question 1.1 How long have you been in your current assignment?

In this particular assignment, I’ve been here for thirteen years. This school opened in 1987 and I was the principal that opened it. I’ve been in the district for 40 years. Started here in 1960 as an eighth grade science teacher. Forty-one years here.

Question 1.3 What positions in education did you have prior to your current position?
I was a science teacher for approximately eight or nine years. The years run together. I was a principal of an elementary school K-4 for approximately eight years. Principal of a four through six school for eight or nine years and then this assignment for thirteen. So that takes me through my career at [District A] and [District B].

For the next set of questions - I want to tell you that you are being asked your perceptions as they pertain to the job of principal of an effective middle school. Therefore, when the word “principal” is being used in a question, it is understood that it refers to a principal of an effective middle school.

**Question 2.1** In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to communicating the mission of the school?

I think the principal has to have a clear vision of the role and the mission of the school and then it’s his responsibility to communicate that to all of the staff members and all students and members of the community. They need to understand what the mission is and how we expect to achieve that mission. But the mission has to be built through the teachers and through the community through meetings and discussions, so that everybody knows what it is and everybody took part in designing just not the philosophy or the thoughts of the principal alone.

**Question 2.2** In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to managing curriculum and instruction?

Well in this district it’s beginning to change, I think the principal should be very much involved in the design of the curriculum, the implementation of it and any modification that take place in that curriculum as it affects teaching assignments and the structure within the school. In the past, the principal has been part of the curriculum committees where when revision was made in many cases the principal has chaired the committees. We used to do a lot of work here in the summer time revising the curriculum. When I came to the middle school, I came here with one assistant principal and two supervisors. It was the four of us that kind of worked together as a management team not only to design the organizational part of the building but also had the responsibility that the curriculum to insure that the curriculum was designed properly and then implement it and if change needed to be made we did it together. Now I think what’s happening in our district, were the roles are changing just a little bit and probably because we had two middle schools and instead of having two supervisors in this school that were assigned to me, the supervisors now number
five but they are split between two schools. So they are not always here and they are not under my direction. They are not under my supervision. So I don’t have as much control of curriculum as in the past. I think the principal needs to be involved in it in helping design the curriculum and also implementing it.

**Question 2.3 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to supervising teaching?**

Well actually my role as, using the old cliché, the instructional leader, I see my major responsibility is to improve instruction and see that the curriculum is implemented. I like to spend a lot of time in the classroom working with teachers. I think that should be my primary responsibility to improve instruction and obviously you do that through many conversations with teachers, making observations, many walk-throughs. I try to keep the management of the building, certainly running in an effective way with a majority of my work should be in the area of improving instruction. That’s the idea, but does it always happen, probably not. Not as much as I want. But again, I also have supervisors that work for me, five are shared. And in this particular organization I have my own set of teachers that I supervise. We all have approximately 15 teachers to supervise that includes the assistant principals and myself and the five supervisors. My major role should be to improve instruction, help teachers become better teachers, provide them with ideas and be sure that they’re following the curricula and they are making as many connections as they can and making the instruction relevant.

**Question 2.4 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to student progress?**

I think any of those areas fall back to the principal assuming the responsibility for everything that happens within school. Obviously, with his emphasis on improving instruction, instruction and assessment go hand in hand. So, as instruction improves, so should assessment. I think the principal has to be aware of how the students are progressing and if he sees areas that need to be shaped, he has to take the leadership and initiative to step in and provide that guidance.

**Question 2.5 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to promoting an instructional climate?**

I think that is a key ingredient of the principal. That’s where the principal’s personality will take over and provide a climate that kind of reflects that person. If the person is flexible and open and willing to encourage ideas and allow the teachers to take risks you are going to have an open and engaging climate within
the school. So that the climate of the school really reflects the direction that
the principal wants to go, his philosophy should permeate the building.

Question 2.6 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to
organizational management?

Again, I think the principal plays a key role there. Obviously, he consults with
his assistant principals and the supervisors, but it’s really under his direction as
to how the building is organized, how effective and how efficient it is. If the
principal is perceived as an organized person and he is an organized person, you
will have things maybe running more smoothly in the building. If he doesn’t
look to this particular aspect of his job as being very important then there could
be things falling though the cracks there could be disorganization. I think the
more—he has to balance his time between the instructional area and the
organization and management area. Certainly management is important because
you’re dealing with the safety of the kids. He had to insure that there is a safe
and secure environment and that’s done through management and organization
being sensitive to detail, making sure that procedures are in place, the handling
of a particular crisis or just handle the routines that come up on a day to day
basis. So his management skills then come into place. So all of these things are
all tied together. If there is a problem with one then you are going to have a
problem throughout the school.

Question 3.1 Does the middle school principal have essential areas of responsibility
and/or behaviors other than the ones you have already described?

I think the middle school principal has to constantly advocate for middle school
education and for his middle school students. The developmental needs of a
middle school child are unique and the teachers need to understand that the
program should revolve around the developmental needs of the middle school
student. Strategies and techniques and all the attributes of an effective middle
school should be in place and if they are not he should be taking a leadership role
to put them into place. He should encourage teachers to go to workshops on
middle school education. Go to the national middle school conferences. He
should be attending them himself. He should encourage teachers to read middle
school journals, share ideas. He should insure that the organization within the
school follows middle school organizational structure, which is teaming, where
taking a big school and breaking it down into teams. You should insure that
within that team organization there are common planning times for the teachers.
That there are advisor programs, that there are mentoring programs. In essence,
everybody in the school should be advocating for middle school kids. They
should understand the uniqueness of the middle school child and build their program around it.

**Question 3.2 Do principals of effective middle schools exercise different behaviors than principals of effective elementary schools or effective high schools?**

I think some of the behaviors are the same, some could be different. I perceive myself as being somebody who is highly committed to middle school students. Who is someone who is structured and organized but who approaches things in a flexible and adaptable way. I think knowing the characteristics of middle school students, I think the middle school principal needs to be someone who truly likes to be around this age level student, understands their idiosyncrasies and is able to adjust and bob and weave to the needs of the students and he or she should be advocating that staff members do that. Also while they’re trying to balance this instruction to the social needs they also have to insure that the program is a vigorous and challenging program, it’s not a play over time program, it’s one where the kids need to see that what they’re learning is relevant but it has to be done in an exploratory way. So the middle school principal has to be willing to attend all of the activities, be seen by the students, show the students that he is interested in being around them, be visible in the hall, not only in the morning but between classes, share lunches with the kids, go on field trips with the kids. In essence, just showing the students and the staff that he is involved.

**Question 4.1 If you were advising a committee searching for a candidate to become the new principal of their effective middle school, what would you tell them to look for?**

I’d ask them to look for some who, if possible, has middle school experience, has worked with middle schoolers either as a teacher or as an administrator. Someone who understands middle school philosophy, is well read in that area. Someone who is enthusiastic and has a young outlook on things not necessarily does the person have to be young but certainly an energetic and invigorated kind of person. Someone who understands middle school curriculum, understands middle school students and their idiosyncrasies. Someone who is an effective communicator. Somebody who can be decisive but also flexible. Someone who is able to build relationships with the community, teachers and the students.

**Principal #1**

**Question 1.1 How long have you been in this assignment?**

This is my first year as a middle school principal. Last year I was a vice-principal in the district.
Question 1.2. How many years have you been in education?
In education, 16 years.

Question 1.3. What positions in education did you have prior to your current position?
I was a vice-principal in this building last year. For the two years prior to that, I was the dean of students at [a school] in [District A]. I essentially functioned as a VP without doing supervision. For three years prior to that, I was a middle school band director. For the five years prior to that, I was a high school band director in [District B]. For the four or five, whatever the balance of years is left, I was a high school math teacher at [District C] and also did a sabbatical leave for someone out in Pennsylvania.

For the next set of questions - I want to tell you that you are being asked your perceptions as they pertain to the job of principal of an effective middle school. Therefore, when the word "principal" is being used in a question, it is understood that it refers to a principal of an effective middle school.

Question 2.1. In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to communicating the mission of the school?
I think it is the role of the principal to communicate that. I think the principal role is that of an instructional leader. It’s easy to get caught up in the day-to-day routine of organizing and answering questions and signing papers, but when it all comes down to it, I have to provide a better instructional setting. I have to teach my teachers to present material and to function the way they are supposed to. I originally perceived my job as being one of a manager of time, and an organizational kind of person. And I think in my experience in the last year and a half, I have found that that’s entirely untrue. For me to be effective, I have to be a true instructional leader and not just a manager of people or a managerial leader.

Question 2.2. In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to managing curriculum and instruction?
In this district it’s different than my perception from before. We do have K-12 supervisors, for each of the academic areas. We also have a supervisor of physical education and also down in performing arts. My role is a little bit different than really—the person that requests and provides materials and input towards what concepts I need to have covered or I’d like to be covered and addressed and the supervisors role is then to, essentially, determine what type of program to undertake and what direction to move in. An example is, for some of them we are doing statistics. I’ve found that we have a problem with reading
comprehension. The kids sound like they can read, they're fluent, but they don’t understand what they’re reading while they’re doing that. My role then as a principal is to say I’ve identified the problem, it’s the supervisors’ role now to address reading comprehension in the K-8 or a K-12 fashion. So the charge this year is to either revise curriculum or rewrite curriculum to address the need.

**Question 2.3** In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to supervising teaching?

I believe as an instructional leader that that is my primary responsibility. I believe not only in supervising teachers by teaching teachers how to teach better. I would say that would probably encompass about 40-45% of my day. An example of that would be, this school did not have computers a year ago and the district believes that they are technologically sound when in fact they are seven years behind the times. My role is to teach teachers how to teach, how to use the technology they are given so that they are more effective in the classroom. So I wouldn’t just supervise. If I made a recommendation, I would schedule meetings with specific teachers to teach them how to infuse Internet topics into their lessons and how to infuse programs into lessons effectively, not just setting up kill and grill situations. You know that doesn’t work, so we removed that years ago. So, I would say that’s my primary role right now, in that area.

**Question 2.4** In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to student progress?

In the area of testing, my role is to identify needs and also to determine trends through the use of statistics and standardized test scores, and input from my teachers, input from my team leaders. Then, with that, to develop plans that can effectively move the kids on. I’d mentioned before the reading example. We define reading comprehension as the single most factor that affects kids’ progress in middle school. Eighty percent of our sixth graders three years ago failed the eighth grade test three years later. I think if I track back three more years I can probably go back to that high school test and I’d probably find 80% of those kids had failed that too. So, through the whole ball of wax I’ve found reading comprehension to be the single factor here both in math and language arts. So, as far as progress is concerned, it's my responsibility to determine what that problem is and to effectively research it so that the people that are around me can effectively do their jobs also. As far as the social growth of the children, obviously, middle school is the most drastic change that takes place during any three or four year period. I do believe that we do not give the kids the avenues to
express themselves and their needs, and essentially hired a consultation firm through the Character Education Grant to evaluate this school building so that I can determine what the needs are in that area. I think they are equally as important as the progress of academics. There is the social progress that kids should follow also at this age. So, I believe in statistics, I believe in research and I believe that if I don’t have the skills I need to hire a consultant to do those things.

**Questions 2.5 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to promoting an instructional climate?**

I think it’s important to have—to really understand the pulse of the building. I think it’s important to understand who your formal and informal leaders are. I think that the pulse of the building really revolves around that. If I want to affect climate I need to have some type of consensus to build on, and those are two areas that I look to when thinking about an idea or promoting an idea. To promote that climate, I believe and I exercise site-based management, committees. Our school goals and initiatives come out of morning committee meetings. They’re not from my mouth, they’re from the mouth of the teachers or a group of teachers that have a belief or have determined a need. I think it’s easier to motivate teachers saying, the core team defines this as a need and these are some of the ways that we can go about addressing that need; as opposed to saying, I have an idea—jump on my back I’m going to take you to the promised land. But, I tried that as a vice-principal, that doesn’t work too well.

**Question 2.6 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to organizational management?**

I believe that I’m supposed to set the example for my two vice principals and for my teachers and team leaders. I believe in effectively communicating and essentially ‘walking the walk’ or ‘setting the example’ for them. When I do find that that is not taking place, I do take the time to remediate and to assist those people that are also in leadership positions to more effectively manage their time. I do meet and I’ve given out about five copies of the Franklin Covey books, just to get people jump-started who have a perception of what leadership is and what they really need to do to organize themselves to meet that goal. I do survey and go through different tests with my team leaders, also with my vice-principals, to understand what their learning styles are so that I can use them effectively within that organization. I look to hire people that are different from me and some that are the same just to try to match things up to—to kind of round it out. For people that need remediation, I do have a 7:00 to 7:30, we start at 9 here, time
where I do meet at ten minute intervals with both leaders and teachers that are having difficulty organizing their day and I meet up to four times a week with those people. And in turn, they have a check-in time at the end of the day to see if they’re getting through. It’s been effective for the last few months. Weaned the people off and they’re out on their own now, but there’s expectations that we have and a job that needs to be complete and if they’re not meeting that, I take it personally, I think it’s my responsibility to make sure that those things happen.

**Question 3.1 Does the middle school principal have essential areas of responsibility and/or behaviors other than the ones you have already described?**

Well when you walked in we were doing scheduling, that’s a responsibility. I believe that I was hired to move this building forward in the area of technology. I do believe in setting the example, not just for my building, but for the district. I have an informal responsibility of changing the scheduling program for the five elementary’s and the high school to the system we’re effectively using right now. I do have some responsibilities in the district level. That would be in, whether it’s the evolution of supervisors or I call it ancillary administrative positions, such as technology supervisor and things like that. I do evaluate, out of a staff of 88, I’m the primary evaluator for 60 of those people. Obviously, plan books and whatnot for non-tenured teachers. Responsible for the budget. Add about nine thousand other things to that too, whatever the superintendent tells me to do, that’s on my job description. Yeah. I think more so than anything is trying to keep the pulse of the community through attending PTC meetings, things that place in town, I write a grant a year and encourage my teachers to write grants also through local foundations.

**Question 3.2 Do principals of effective middle schools exercise different behaviors than principals of effective elementary schools or effective high schools?**

Yes, I think they do. From being a high school teacher for about ten years, I think the high school principal is more like a mayor of the town, where there is a lot about activities after school. They’re always in the public limelight, so to speak, at very large events. I think they’re esteemed up to a higher level within the community. In comparing the high school principal to a middle school principal, I think I have to exhibit much more patience, especially in dealing with parents. First year middle school students, they don’t understand what changes they’re going through, they can’t understand why all of a sudden they’re having problems and why their son looks different than just five months earlier. Those are very difficult things and I think my role as a middle school principal compared to high school, I think I have to spend more time educating and being
patient with parents as their kids grow through the middle school time. I don’t think my style of teaching in my first ten years of my career, which was high powered, very motivated, win at all cost, get kids into the best college, develop the best resume, I don’t think that really works in middle school. I think you need to have a little bit of a different demeanor. Kids are different— the kids have different needs. I think socially, physiologically, they’re certainly at different levels at every grade, some kids are ready for algebra in seventh or eighth grade and some kids may not be reach that point till ninth when they say it’s appropriate and time for them to do those things. And I think that with that you need to have a lot of understanding. I don’t think the middle school principal needs to be as detail-oriented. I am detail-oriented. I think to be successful in a middle school and an elementary job you don’t need to be that precise, but I think you do need to work more with teachers at this age. To really teach teachers how to work with middle school kids, I think all new teachers that I hired here, and I’ve hired 24 now in two years, the new teachers’ last perception of what education is, is their recollection of what their high school teacher was like. It’s rare that they can reflect back to remembering what middle school was like and to get the young teachers away from the lecture format and more into... give me a great teacher that owns the kids, and let’s let the kids talk about this. And generate some kind of cooperative attitude in the class where there’s some movement, there is communication. That’s the teaching part I think that takes place in middle school that maybe a high school principal may not have the time for nor care to address.

Question 4.1 If you were advising a committee searching for a candidate to become the new principal of their effective middle school, what would you tell them to look for?

I would tell them to look for someone that’s up-do-date as far as advances in technology and in curriculum development and in approaches that are effective for middle school kids. They should have a sound understanding of what the typical middle school child is like and what differences you experience from grades six to seven and seven to eight—even five to six. They should have a sound knowledge of transition from elementary to middle and middle to high school, to try to quell the nerves of the community. I think they should have an understanding of the different instructional delivery methods when compared to a middle school teacher, when compared to a high school or an elementary to a middle school teacher. I would recommend the person’s hiring practices be up-to-date so that you’re not re-tooling people, if you have the opportunity to hire people that are trained in this area. I know a lot of our southern universities now
are giving middle school degrees. If you have that opportunity to find someone with a middle school degree, they’re trained to do your job. They should have good technological skills, so that you don’t have to retrain your staff every time a new person walks in to turn on the computer. And it’s time to move on. I think that those would be the four or five most important.

Principal #12

Question 1.1 How long have you been in your current assignment?
On this one, I’m reaching my 6th year.

Question 1.2 How many years have you worked as an educator?
Since 1974, about 26-27 years.

Question 1.3 What positions in education did you have prior to your current position?
I started out as social studies teacher, grades 6, 7 and 8. Then moved to a special program, school based program, called [special project]. I was a counselor, a crisis intervention counselor. Even though I had a degree in student personal services, I was thrown into the mental health field. I did that for about 2-3 years. Then ran in the HUD grant. Working in the projects, as a grant, in [District A]. That’s where my whole experiences has been. L. is my superintendent. She brought me here. So, that’s how, L. brought one person from [District A] and that was me. I’m a [District A] girl. So I was in a HUD grant and so I did that for about 2 years. Shortly before L. leaving though, she put me in charge of all the student assistance programs and then shortly after that she said do you want to be the vice principal? So I became the vice principal here and then stepped into the principalship.

For the next set of questions - I want to tell you that you are being asked your perceptions as they pertain to the job of principal of an effective middle school. Therefore, when the word “principal” is being used in a question, it is understood that it refers to a principal of an effective middle school.

Question 2.1 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to communicating the mission of the school?

It’s probably one of the primary roles to communicate to the community. It should, I think you are going to have to explain that question a little bit more for me. What do you mean my role? My role is important to communicate through everything I do. But it’s really important to be lead person in developing the mission. So I think it’s important that that person develop that mission and have
that vision. I’m trying to think which we did here. We were able to, instead of a mission statement, we have a set of principles that we live by. If you walk into the building you’ll see it to the left as you walk in. That was a collaborative effort between the faculty, the board of education, parents, students, and teachers. So we have some principles that we believe in that guide us. So that’s my job to make sure that those are fulfilled. We also, if you want add to that, we developed a strategic plan here, which I think is unique for a school system. You may have at a district level. Which we all live by. But I felt strongly enough that we developed a strategic plan for our building, which was a 5 year strategic plan and it encompassed everything from facilities, technology, student achievement, support services, and we looked at where we were now and where we were going to go. And that also became part of our vision and it included students, parents, teachers, a board member and administration.

**Question 2.2 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to managing curriculum and instruction?**

In a small district, everything. With a lack of supervisors, we don’t have supervisors in [District B]. We just incorporated two years ago, actually last year, lead teachers. So, we only have one curriculum coordinator, which is usually our assistant superintendent. So, the principal becomes a very important part of developing and making sure that the curriculum is being implemented. With the core curriculum content standards, as you well know, is driving everything we do. In [District B] every committee we have is led by a principal. So I am responsible because my area is social studies, so when we were developing the curriculum, I was the lead person for that. We are very much a part of that whole development.

**Question 2.3 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to supervising teaching?**

That’s where we spend most of our time not only supervising, when we think of supervising we’re thinking of evaluation part of it. I think we’re also--a very important part being a mentor and a lead teacher to the teachers. And that means that I’m continually—I try my best into the classrooms and then giving them immediate feedback you know, please meet with me, let’s talk about what I just saw informally. I think there’s tremendous growth, I also think that it’s important that they feel that I’m safe and that we can share ideas, share concerns. With new teachers, we have a monthly meeting with new staff. I think we’re actually looking at developing a new teacher mentoring program that’s better than we have now. I think that’s a big issue everywhere. As the number of the
applicants becomes thinner and thinner. So what we have to choose from, so we need to work more with that. But I think I see myself as a lead person in working with staff.

Question 2.4 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to student progress?

I think it’s important that when you say student progress I think of student achievement. Where are we? And we looked at our standardized tests, for us we’re looking at the GEPA, we’re looking at this year where we’re going to be highlighting the Terra Nova. We tried NJ PASS now we’re trying the Terra Nova. It’s important that I make sure that our kids are achieving. If they’re not, we need to look at it. What are the areas of weakness, so that we can address it. So, I guess I lead that charge and see that that’s done. It’s important that when I’m in the classroom, I’m seeing that. Although, in the curriculum we are writing whatever skills are needed, it’s important that we keep the level high. Middle schools are unique, you have a flavor—you have people certified elementary or secondary, you don’t have a middle school certificate. So you want a balance between elementary and, I’m struggling with this now, elementary and secondary teachers. And when you have a lot of elementary, you sometimes you lose the content. Sometimes the level comes down a bit. I find, you don’t want a school full of secondary, cause it starts to mirror more of a high school kind of mentality. You have to balance that and that’s a very... - each grade level is something you have to think about. And worry about. So I always want to make sure my students are achieving, then I’m looking at what’s actually going on in the classroom. What is the expectation? What do the assessments look like? I find the teachers want to make parents happy. You start to see everybody getting A’s, you start to worry.

Question 2.5 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to promoting an instructional climate?

It’s important when I’m working as a mentor to them, I’m talking about instructional delivery. I’m talking about lesson plans development. I’m supporting them also through staff development. We have a very large staff. We put money into staff development, let’s put it that way. Last couple of years because of our sub shortage, again all districts—you know substitute teachers, we used to allow teachers to go out a lot more but L. kind of said we can only allow so many people out a day. So that’s curtailed a little bit of allowing our teachers to go out to assure that they’re learning some of these wonderful workshops that are available. But we do do it in-house. We do have teacher in-
service twice a year and then we provide for after school courses that we do right here in-house. So our administration is involved in that also, principals are involved in securing people to teach those courses. A good example is when, five years ago I probably thought that maybe about 15% of my teachers were computer illiterate. So it was important for me to find a mechanism to, and we did that during the school day of having once a month classes and computer, so over two years we had everybody up-to-snuff, at least comfortable with computers. That was several years ago we did that.

**Question 2.5 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to organizational management?**

I think that L. would say that coming from [District A], that's what we do. We manage a building and probably that was my first comfort, cause I managed programs, you know, HUD grants and so, you're making sure that the building, the facility is up-to-snuff. I'm dealing with an architect, to dealing with managing the faculty, the students, that's what we do. I don't know if you want me to elaborate on it, you know it's everything we do. We manage parents.

**Question 3.1 Does the middle school principal have essential areas of responsibility and/or behaviors other than the ones you have already described?**

Yes. I don't think I have to talk about them separately. My counseling background is tremendous, I mean, I'm doing counseling everyday. When a student comes in, you know, any behavior shows any dealing with something social, emotional issues. You know, middle school is the, I compare—I always tell parents, I compare middle school to like-the first year of life. You know, your child was this—the growth spurt that goes on the first year of life is similar to what your child will experience this year. You know, it's just tremendous. So, the social, emotional part of it is a difficult time of life so we as a middle school, you'd better have some background in counseling. And the vice-principal should also. So, it's important. So I think it's a very important role that I do. I'm trying to think any other areas. I guess when you talk about management, you talk about scheduling and all, cause we spend a tremendous in time scheduling. It's unique though, because in high school, when a course is filled you just say you have to take another course. In middle school, you better schedule every child into every course and it's a very difficult thing we do. And maybe people who are more math orientated love it, I hate it. But I guess that would be under managing the school, you're into the scheduling. Again, as a small district we do so much more. I know at—or actually I've compared to a high school, at a high school I think scheduling is really done by the guidance
department and principals don’t have that much involve other than putting the framework together. How many sections or whatever you need. But, at the middle school we do it all. I have one guidance counselor but he’s not setting up the scheduling, I’m doing that. So it’s a big piece of what we do also. And you also, again I don’t know if it falls into any of the areas, you’re promoting your school, you’re publicizing it, you’re getting articles in the paper, you’re promoting whatever new thing that you’re doing, you’re looking for awards and recognition. It’s the publicity that you’re looking for, to tell the community we’re doing a great job for your kids. So you do all that also. I don’t know if that falls into any of the areas we talked about.

**Question 3.2. Do principals of effective middle schools exercise different behaviors than principals of effective elementary schools or effective high schools?**

I think they are very different than an elementary school. Again, scheduling is never an issue, it’s not as complex. I tend to think that elementary school principals have more opportunities to work one-on-one with teachers than we do. I think because of the time and the number of responsibilities we have, I picture elementary school principals as being more in the classroom, there’s less discipline that we do. I think that in an elementary setting the principals do less disciplining than we do. Just by the nature of the teachers in a contained classroom take full responsibility and there’s less opportunities for kids to have altercations or whatever while out in the hallway. Though my teachers are wonderful, they’re in the hall during changing of classes but anything that happens is usually sent to the office—becomes our responsibility. Lunches, things like that. I think, so we’re spending more time probably, actually probably with students we do more of that. We probably do more disciplining than in an elementary environment. How we differ from high school, I would think we’re probably closer to a high school in relationship to all the things a principal does than in an elementary. I take something back. One thing a high school principal does much more is there is a lot more evenings than a middle school principal. Although I do, many athletic programs are after school, they’re not in the evening. We do have dances, I think we actually have more dances than high school. High schools don’t have dances any more. We have one a month. We have some kind of teen canteen. So, although I’m out a lot after school or once a month evening for some activity for the kids, I imagine a high school principal does a lot more of awards, dinners and things like that. Has to be at football games and all that, that I don’t have to be at. So, you know, I imagine that there a lot more evenings for high school principals versus a middle school principal’s responsibilities.
Question 4.1 If you were advising a committee searching for a candidate to become the new principal of their effective middle school, what would you tell them to look for?

Someone knowledgeable in middle school first, having had experience in middle. Understanding a middle school child. That’s a first thing. I think that you have to have a tremendous thing of work effort. But you can kind of address everything where you, to be an effective principal requires you to be. I work, you know, when I first started out, practically every night at least one weekend all day. I mean Saturday or Sunday was totally to working. I still do that. I still, I may not be back every evening, you know, I stay till five but I have to plan a full Saturday or Sunday. When I say full, I come here, I live in town so it makes my life easier, I will be here maybe 11-12 o’clock and stay till five. Cause there is no way you can do our paperwork. If your door is open for kids and for parents and for teachers, there is no way you can do your paperwork or any of your planning. That’s just keeping the building, that’s not talking about observations and writing them up and your annuals and all. So that’s—that I do at home, but I’m talking about in the building being here and taking care of what I need to do. So I think you need a person with a tremendous work ethic who truly understands the commitment that they have to make to be a principal. I think that’s why most people don’t go into being principals and there is such a shortage because the time that you have to give up. You basically have to give up your family. I was just talking, I have one of my teachers who wants to be a principal and I said—that your children are grown, because if you have to try to balance all that you have a hard time, you really do, if you have young children it’s difficult. That commitment, you know, giving to your family, you’re torn. They look at work ethic, look at understanding the middle school child, then I think that they’d have to understand—be able to be a good manager, to be able to, I just shared this with a colleague—one of my teachers, teachers by their nature, because you want to be a teacher, that you have a nurturing quality. You just do that. And that doesn’t always go well with being a principal because—when you come into school that needs change, you’ve got to do what you’ve got to do and that could be difficult for a new principal who wants to be successful, wants the teachers to like them but know that there’s a need for change. So can you, are you capable of doing what needs to be done? And that means that saying to someone, I’m not happy with you performance, I’m not—you know we need to do this, this and this and change. And you know the paper trail that you must create. And you have to do that and that sometimes doesn’t go with the kind of personality of people who go into teaching. So you have to be able to be a good manager and to be able to supervise people and
supervise people that may not like to be supervised. I would say good understanding of the curriculum, understanding what New Jersey—what’s going in core curriculum content standards. You have to have an understanding of the curriculum and then finally having to understand about instruction. You know, being on the cutting edge, knowing what is out there. You know, understanding multi-intelligence, understanding differentiated instruction, you need to be knowledgeable in all those areas. Because teachers today are. And you’d better be up there on that. Did I give you enough?

Principal #13

Question 1.1 How long have you been in your current assignment?

Actually, I’ve been a principal in this district, this is my seventh year. But I’ve only been the principal of the middle school a year, since July. Since July of 2001.

Question 1.2 How many years have you worked as an educator?

Twenty-four.

Question 1.3 What positions in education did you have prior to your current position?

January of 1977, I started as a teacher in [District A]. I was in [District A] public schools K-8 setting, at the elementary level and coaching at the high school, for four and a half years. In February, I guess of ’81 if my math is correct, I became a high school teacher in [District B] and I was in [District B] for five years before moving to the high school at [District C]. I was a teacher in [District C] high school again for probably four and a half years. During that time, I started my masters, got my master at Rutgers, offered a position as a middle school vice-principal in [District D] and I was in [District D] for, again, four and a half to five years. Because I left [District D] in February to become an elementary principal in [District E], I was an elementary principal in [District E] for four years and then was offered an elementary principalship here. I started here seven years ago and I was an elementary principal for the first six years and, had the very good fortune I guess I somewhat perceived myself to be a bit of a change agent and somewhere around five years, five and a half years as you might be able to determine, I started to get ants in my pants because at that point I realized that I’ve either done everything I could do to affect change in that building and bring it to where either the superintendent asked me to bring it or that I perceived it needed to be brought or I realized that at the end of five years,
five and a half years, if I hadn’t been able to fix it in that amount of time, then I probably can’t fix whatever it is and it’s time for me to move on and give someone else the chance. Fortunately I had that conversation with the superintendent here and he said, that’s going to play into our long-term goals we were thinking about you as the middle school principal anyway—even back when we ultimately hired you and how about we affect that change for this summer. So I’ve been able to, really for the first time, stay in the same district but have an entirely new experience. And there is some hope that I might stay here for at least three or four or five years. There are some things that need to be addressed here and then, little doubt, I’ll move somewhere else. I’m not really sure exactly where, I haven’t thought that far ahead to be honest with you. I know I do not want to be a superintendent at this point.

For the next set of questions - I want to tell you that you are being asked your perceptions as they pertain to the job of principal of an effective middle school. Therefore, when the word “principal” is being used in a question, it is understood that it refers to a principal of an effective middle school.

**Question 2.1 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to communicating the mission of the school?**

I think the principal has to be the most verbal cheerleader for the school. If the principal is not able to articulate his/her vision for that particular setting, for that particular school, then other people will struggle to do that. I think that it’s not so much mission statements but it’s, not so much what you say, but what you say has to be supported by what you do and I think that if the principal is an enthusiastic communicator of his or her vision for the school, then it’s much easier for the kids to adopt that vision, it’s much easier—and I say them first because then it’s much easier for the teachers to adopt that same vision and then ultimately the community adopts that vision as well. I have worked with administrators who are afraid to put themselves out on the end of a limb. They were, it was almost management by survey, and my own personal belief is that you become less effective if you’re not able or willing to stay the course that you’ve plotted out for your building or for your school. I think it’s also refreshing for parents to hear, well here’s what we’re going to do because this is what I believe. Because from the national scene right on down, people are somewhat afraid to do that because they don’t how it reacts on—how different people would react to that, but I would rather have someone know where I stand than to have me vacillate because of the direction the wind was blowing that particular week. But I think people respect that and I really think that’s what
creates effective leadership when the leader is out there saying, here’s what I believe what we should be doing for the next five years as opposed to, well I know last week we did one thing but I’ve kind of reconsidered. If you’re not really prepared to stay the course you’ve become less effective as a leader.

**Question 2.2** In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to managing curriculum and instruction?

We have a very low hierarchical scheme here in this particular district. We have a superintendent, the next person is really the assistant superintendent, but his title is director of instructional services and then we go right to principal. We have no department chairpersons, per say, we have no curricular leaders per say, I understand that even before I arrived seven years ago, there was some budgetary constraints or some budgetary considerations those positions were eliminated. As a result, in the time that I’ve been here, I’ve chaired two different curricular revision committees. One was a reading committee the other was a language arts committee. This district’s concession to that budgetary consideration was that we would identify an ‘informal leader’ from among the teaching staff. The following years that—let’s say you were an outstanding language arts teacher and you were generally known to be that among your peers. We would pull that person out of the classroom for the entire year. They would be paid a regular salary, but their responsibilities would be completely dedicated to learning about national trends, learning what the future might be in that particular curriculum area, coordinating things with the core curriculum content standards and the various state assessment instruments and working hand-in-hand with an administrator whose primary responsibility was to make sure that all of that was facilitated. We were responsible essentially for the deadlines. So, with that practice I learned something that I would not necessarily learn, that was K-12 perspectives in language arts, K-12 perspectives in reading and other principals have had the same responsibilities. We are currently in the—right in the middle of, and it’s being somewhat bogged down by the state activity with social studies curriculum revision. Once they decide then it will be ultimately easier for us to decide. I’m very happy that I’m not chairing that particular curricula revision because it’s now been on-going for two years. What that then does, is it shows teachers that when some principal is at every single meeting of that language arts curriculum revision activity and contributing, it shows them that you’re not the suit, you’re actually contributing, you actually have some knowledge. And then when you do enough of those things, then teachers realize that, yes indeed, even at the high school level or at the middle
school level or at the elementary level, you are part of the instructional leader
that the literature says you should be. But I am also sensitive to this, there are
certain activities going on at the high school in math, in bio, in—about 100% of
the time I know enough to defer to the classroom teachers in the area of
curricular revision. At the very first meeting, I said to teachers, we actually
have three different curriculum in language arts. We have a tome, that is about
nine inches thick, that the board approves but doesn’t read. We have the
curriculum that is presented when an administrator walks into the back of you
room when doing a formal observation. And then we have the real live thing that
happens when a teacher closes the door and interacts with kids. As a result I
would be glad to show you at the conclusion. Our language arts curriculum is
about this thick. And what I ask teachers to do is, let’s be completely honest
with the board and with each other and let’s not develop these extensive
documents that next year’s brand new teacher’s not going to be able to use. So
we have a very friendly—user friendly document that really is—it’s probably
less than 30 pages. And that’s K-12. And I’ll be glad to share it with you but
that has really served as the model for all of the subsequent curriculum that have
been revised.

Question 2.3 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to
supervising teaching?

I do a lot of, what is it, management by walking around. I did more when I was
an elementary principal because after awhile once you’ve learned the lay of the
land, which I had not yet done, and I think it’s going to take me about two years
to do that. I regret that I spent more time in my office than I would like to and
teachers know that. But there will be many times that I will grab a notebook,
grab a pile of papers that I need to process and walk out and walk into the back
of a classroom. I may stay for five or ten minutes, I may stay for an hour. If I’m
really fascinated in what’s going on, I’ll put my pile of paper away and start
writing it up as a formal observation. Originally, that was disconcerting to
teachers. Then they typically undergo this transition. When they get into the
faculty room and they say, you know K. was in my room three times this week.
You guys hear anything. And somebody else will say, well he was in my room
two times this week, and he was in my room three times this week. Well, then
they finally come to the realization that, well that’s what he does, you know he
doesn’t really like his office and I tell them, I go into a classroom and sometimes
it’s because I need to check on Johnny’s progress. I need to see how Johnny is
interacting with other kids or interacting with you. Sometimes I'm there
because—I don’t know—the wind was blowing north and you happened to be in the north wing of the building and sometimes I’m there because I want to see how things are going so that if parent say, do you know what is going on in Mrs. Smith’s room, I can say, yes as a matter of fact I was there today. Great things going on, why what do you think? And I think that then puts teachers at ease when they realize—and it’s the first blush, the first year through. Even here I’ve had teachers say, well anything going on, why were you in my room today? Well, I wanted to see what you were doing, you were doing a great lesson and I just wanted to be a part of it. But it also allows me to keep my fingers on the pulse of what really is going on in school. And I think that a principal who says, well I’m in my office from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Well, he’s probably not a very effective principal. And, then when you have to comment critically on something that is going on in class, then a teacher is able to say to themselves, he gave me ten pretty goods and nine very goods and today he had to give me some bad news. But you know what, that’s okay because he’s doing his job and he allows me to do mine. So I think it’s probably management by walking around. I try to sit down and have lunch with the kids, in the cafeteria—actually sit at a table, that I just randomly pick. And the same kind of conversation, hey-what’s going on today. Oh, one thing I try not to do is go into the teachers’ room during lunch and that’s intentional, because I also think that they need the opportunity to vent about some decision that I’ve made and if I’m sitting there that stifles that. And I want them to have that opportunity. I want them to be able to say, did you hear what he did yesterday, and well that’s okay, because this is an activity done for the most part in isolation and about the only thing you can hope to do is keep 51% of them happy with any decision that you might make. So you need to give the 49% that opportunity to grouse.

**Question 2.4** In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role in regard to student progress?

Well, I think that part of my answer to the previous question reflects that. We have a child study team meeting, which is not really a child study team meeting, we need to re-label it but we have a meeting every Wednesday, from 2:00 until we’re done. And that meeting includes, we have [an agency] counselor here, we contract with an outside agency that’s—their name is [the agency]. They provide an in-house counselor, not to be confused with a guidance counselor, whom we also have. Every Wednesday, the nurse, the [agency] counselor, the guidance counselor, the three members of the child study team, the vice-principal and the principal meet. And, on the agenda, the agenda is distributed Wednesday
mornings and there will be a list of student names. There are students who came to our attention in any way shape or form. It might be parent phone calls. Might be teacher requests that we discuss. It might be students who have put in a request for counseling or a request for a session with either the guidance counselor or the Bridge counselor. Might be students who were referred to the child study team from parents or teachers or really anyone in the community. Every Wednesday we sit down and we go through the list and we say, okay you give us the outline of the situation and then we brainstorm. It's a very, very informal process, listen we just need you to know, we've got to keep an eye on so and so because first marking period he got a couple of D's and just recently teachers have told me that he is not doing some homework. Well there might be some family issues, there might be some social or emotional issues. Sometimes it's just, hey K. you know this kid? Yeah well, he went to the elementary school that I was the principal at, I know him for the last seven years. Why don't I call him tomorrow morning and see what's going on. So that's how we monitor student progress. We also have a formal process of—that every school will have—progress reports, parent phone calls, we have a homework hot line here that's updated on a nightly basis. Parents can call me to—I mean part of that stuff that comes with being a principal. Parents walk in and say is Dr. B. available and if I'm not out of the office then I think it's my responsibility to drop whatever I am doing, because they're gone out of their way. For some parents that's a difficult thing. Some of them are leaving work because this is on their minds. Some of them are going to late to work and so I think we really need to be responsible to the community, to be able to listen to parents and teachers and everyone else associated, and kids, and to mediate their issues so that we can bring it to some resolution. Hopefully a positive resolution for the kid.

Question 2.5 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to promoting an instructional climate?

Well, I'm a tough grader. This is life in a fish bowl and we actually have a teacher who has been out now going on the second week with double pneumonia, and this is principal's heaven, in that, I've actually gotten phone calls from parents wondering if it would be possible for us to book the same substitute till further notice, so that at least there was consistency of program. The kids are really unique in that respect, in that, maybe they're not, but at least to me I give them a lot of credit because they are dedicated learners. We have a teacher who has been offered a position elsewhere that's a little closer to home
she's leaving for, what I think are all the wrong reasons but she thinks are all the right reasons. Her last day will be March 1st but we've made arrangements for her replacement, her substitute, who is a tenure track teacher, we've told her, we're hiring you and we hope you stay for the next 35 years. She's going to start and there will be an overlap on the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of, well the 26, 27 and 28 so that those teachers communicate with each other and there's hopefully a seamless transition from one activity to the next.

Well, so when you have that kind of sense from the kids, for the last week I've been on the phone with parents because they are expressing concerns that their kids got a C that it was a 78 and couldn't the teacher have given them a break and given them the 80 to give them a B. Ninety some odd percent of the kids graduating from the high School go to college. And that's really pretty unusual for a comprehensive high school—comprehensive public high school. So it's something—it's 90-92% either go to a two or four year college, the vast majority of them going to a four year college. So there's, I'll pull something out from my dissertation. There's academic press here. So it's easy for teachers to hold their students to a high level of academic expectation and more times than not, the kids meet the challenge. When we have those weekly child study team meetings that I referred to earlier, typically the concern is expressed about that student who was previously a B-C and he got his first D and now we need to address that issue with that student. We need to know why he got his first D. I know in other school districts that I've been associated with, unless a kid really crashed and burned in a number of content areas, you didn't really discuss his academic progress. That's not the case here.

Question 2.6 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to organizational management?

Everything. This was a very well organized building and I think that part of that is the consistency of the administration. My immediate predecessor was in this building for 33 years. He was a teacher for 16-17, forgive my math it won't be right, he was a vice-principal for a handful of years and then he was the principal for the last 11. The vice-principal was the vice-principal for the last 11. Now as a district we're undergoing a lot of change. Over the next three or four years and for the last three or four we've had a lot of retirements. The same thing has happened administratively. The vice-principal who started here in September has earned his stripes, he is now a principal over at the elementary school. He was appointed and it took effect January 2nd. So I'm interviewing for a middle school vice-principal. That vice-principal and I will ultimately lay a foundation
for maybe the next ten years. We need to do everything but this first year I’ve been asked by the superintendent, “Don’t screw it up.” So for the first year I’m really just feeling my way, I’m gathering information, I’m gathering data. There are some changes that I know must take place in order for us to better meet the needs of the kids in this community and certainly in this school. But, I’ve only affected change in those areas that were completely against my, I guess philosophy. To the credit of the people here, they are generally excited about some of the changes that we talked about. What I’ve said is, I’d like to talk about these things with the teachers, with the parents and with the kids and talk about the merits of changing them for September of 2001. I was very sensitive to not changing the rules of the game for the seventh and eighth graders. So, kind of mentally I’ve developed this three year timeline because we’ve effected some changes in the sixth grade—well they didn’t know any better, they were fifth graders last year from four different elementary schools. Next year those changes will affect the sixth and seventh and then the following year the sixth, seventh and eighth. That allows the kids to remain whole at the same time that I’m comfortable that we are moving in the right direction to affect some changes and only those things that really need dire repair were immediately changed in, let’s say in October-November of this past year. But we’re responsible for everything. As you know. If one person messes up in one corner of the building the principal’s responsible for it, so as long as I’m going to be held responsible for it and held accountable, I want to make sure that I’m comfortable with the procedures that we’re introducing. So, it’s everything. It really is. It’s part of the administrative role, you do everything.

**Question 3.1** Does the middle school principal have essential areas of responsibility and/or behaviors other than the ones you have already described?

This is a unique building. We have three different grade levels and we have very separate and distinct schedules and mindsets. When I need to hire new faculty, and we have three retirements by the end of this year, I’ll look for someone who is—I’ll look for three different people because one opening is in sixth grade, one opening is in seventh, one opening is in eighth. Our sixth graders, somewhat like the typical fifth grade classroom, we have two teachers who co-teach. If the two of us have—you have a class and I have a class, you might do all of the science and social studies and I would do all the English and math. So, while you’re doing science I’ll do the math and we then we switch classes. So the students have—we’ve laid a foundation in this district for that process. In that, each of the fifth grades—one teacher teaches all the science, one teacher teaches all the
social studies but I teach my homeroom everything else and you teach your
homeroom everything else with the exception of the cycle subjects. We extend
that a little bit because now it’s shared between two teachers. In seventh grade
it’s a quad. We have eight homerooms and really we have four classes doing
something over on this side while four classes are doing something over on this
side. So one teacher teaches all the math for those four classes, one all the social
studies, one all the science. In sixth grade their schedule is very open, so they
have mutual planning periods every single day. But, if tomorrow I decide that
I’m going to need an hour and fifteen minutes for my science lab, you know that
you have an hour and fifteen minutes of those kids with social studies. So you
plan accordingly. Could be two hours could be thirty minutes, it really is—that’s
the teacher’s domain. In seventh, grade we have four classes, sixty minute
duration in addition to the cycle subjects. In eighth grade, we have the high
school schedule. A student has seven periods during the course of the day.
We’ll have seven different teachers. Now, it took me all of July and all of
August and most of September, October, November and December and I’m still
just learning to appreciate nuances of that schedule. We don’t have any—we
have four bells here, one to give the kids a warning for homeroom, one at the
beginning of homeroom, one at the end of homeroom, one at the 2:50.
Everything else works on a clock or a watch. Because we would be ringing bells
all day long and that would be interrupting classes. So we really have three
separate and distinct entities. Sixth grades are on the third floor, eighth grades
are on this second floor, seventh grades are downstairs on the first floor and they
are separate and distinct. It really is a genuine middle school process and
schedule and—because we—when this was developed back in the early 80’s the
principal and vice-principal went out and visited nationally renowned middle
schools that had effectively transitioned from the junior high and come up with
this schedule. It is frighteningly effective. Our attendance rate is above 90 on a
daily basis—95% of the kids are here. More importantly our attendance rate for
teachers is somewhere around 97-98%.

Question 3.2 Do principals of effective middle schools exercise different behaviors than
principals of effective elementary school or effective high schools?

Our earlier conversation about the complexities that empirical data tell us, is the
difference between an elementary and a middle and a high school would support
that middle school are more complex organizations than are elementarys or less
complex than high schools.
I think the most effective middle school principals have an appreciation for the complexities of the high school program but try to deal with people as elementary principals do. In an elementary school you serve as the leader of the hub of the community. When I left [School A], which was a wonderful experience for a lot of people including me, parents were horribly upset that—this school, what's going to happen to this school. First of all as long as the secretary is there, who has been there for 18 years and what could you do to be there, as long as she is the first person you see walking into the office, things will be okay. More importantly, with the self-contained classroom climate that exists at almost all elementary school, you child—it might be nice for the elementary principal to visit the classroom every now and then and to know your child's name and do all of those things, but let's not lose sight of the fact that your child's primary relationship with an adult at the elementary level is with one teacher. As long as that's a great relationship then your child is going to be happy. Then he or she will be happy for the six years that he or she goes through kindergarten through grade five. I brought that mindset to the middle school. I took great pride and I am working on this, I knew from the first year that I was the principal at [School A]—I knew every single student's name. So that when I walk down the hallway I can say, hi Joe how are you doing, hi Mary how are you. It's very disconcerting to some of those kids when I do that here. But, I have a Rolodex over there with pictures on it and I actually flip through and I have no great memory. I really do think that it's important that it's more important because middle school kids are social animals. It is vital for them to know that there is some connection. They expect a connection between themselves and the teacher. But when the vice-principal or the principal walks down and says, hi Jane how are you, how are you doing today, hey how'd you do on that math test yesterday, it's because you made a connection that Jane is in Mr. Smith's class and Mr. Smith gave a test yesterday so you know that Jane took the test. That's exciting for kids. It lets them know that they're not one of 625 kids in this building, that they are actually one of one. At least for that moment. I don't know because of the complexities that exist at the high school, that high school principals have the luxury of that. They have a larger administrative team. Here it's a principal and one vice-principal, there it's a principal and two vice-principals. I think that there are because of that at least one level removed from the kids. What I try to do is convince the kids that I'm not removed, I mean, kids knock on the door and say Dr. B. do you have a minute? Well, yeah sure, and I clear my desk and we come over to these tables and I say, what's up guys. I think that it is important for kids to know that
because they’re going through a lot. When you turn 12, 13 or 14 I kiddingly say to them, I understand and appreciate that you’re not quite human yet. The sixth graders are still babies, eighth graders are mature because they are getting ready for the big house and seventh graders are somewhere in-between. I also understand, and tell the kids, I know you need to try on different hats. I know that a great student every once in a while has to intentionally not study for a test just to see if it works for him or her. I know that students who typically don’t do well academically at least once will kill themselves to get an A. That’s important to them. In my early—we have a series of orientation programs sixth, seventh and then eighth grade parents on separate nights and I tell them here’s what you need to understand. Absolutely wonderful, wonderful kids will sometime over the next three years, while they’re here, do something absolutely so silly that it will get them in trouble. There are kids out there who will typically not do the right thing. One of those days they’re going to do something so wonderful and touch someone else’s heart that they’re going to make you feel proud of them for the next ten years. We need to be there for both days. We really need to be kind of on an even keel for both days. I think you do that by communicating your expectations for student behavior. We only have four rules here. And they’re really simple. And those are four school rules that I had when I was an elementary principal. If I ever become a high school principal, we’ll have the same four school rules. When I was a middle school vice-principal we had the same four school rules. They are kind of universal. I’ll share them with you if you want. They’re not fluffy. If you do this then we do this and typically when kids come in with disciplinary referrals or because they’ve been sent to the office, I flip to page 11 of the student handbook because we feel so strongly about these that we put them in writing, we sent them home to parents. We say, if your child does this then here’s the consequences. I think more and more in this day and age, people, not just kids, but people need to know that there is a consequence to their behavior. Oftentimes, people do something and then they say, well but couldn’t you give me a break here. Well, from the highest office on down people have made excuses for their behavior not willing to accept the consequences of their behavior. What I would rather have is the whole student population that realized that if they do something that the consequences are universally implied. That waits on an even keel. I think that administrators run into trouble when they say, you’re good kids so here’s the consequence for you or you’re not a good kid and so here’s the different consequence for you. That’s when kids start to look at you cross-eyed and realize that from this opinion that
you're not necessarily trustworthy as an adult. And I don't want them to do that with me.

**Question 4.1. If you were advising a committee searching for a candidate to become the new principal of their effective middle school, what would you tell them to look for?**

Find a great heart. The rest they can learn. I think—and that's what I look for with teachers. I think that's a vital component for teachers because they interact with kids and parents. That certainly needs to be a vital component for any administrator because if you have some empathy for the plight that some of these teachers, or parents or kids are going through, then that will temper your reaction. Also the other part is, if that person has a great heart then he or she is going to be here until seven o'clock at night because they have to get some things done to be effective leaders because it's important to them. They've personalized the process. I think that we've all met people who were very well organized. They didn't really care about kids or other people, but they were great with paperwork. Maybe they should be in some other role in education but they shouldn't necessarily be dealing with people. I really do believe that if a board only hired people—if you could somehow ask questions that convinced you that that person had a great heart, the rest of it is secondary. They will be effective principals, or effective teachers, or effective secretaries, or whatever.

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**Principal #14**

**Question 1.1 How long have you been in your current assignment?**

I opened that middle school in 1987, in the role as curriculum supervisor, as part of a four person administrative team. Two content administrators, an assistant principal and a principal. That was great fun.

**Question 1.2 How many years have you worked as an educator?**

Years of teaching all together? Two, four, about four and a half. At the public school level. Okay. Collegiate teaching either as an adjunct or full-time, between six and nine years.

**Question 1.3 What positions in education did you have prior to your current position?**

I've been a teacher, a supervisor, a middle school principal, and a superintendent.
For the next set of questions - I want to tell you that you are being asked your perceptions as they pertain to the job of principal of an effective middle school. Therefore, when the word “principal” is being used in a question, it is understood that it refers to a principal of an effective middle school.

**Question 2.1 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to communicating the mission of the school?**

The principal has to not only understand the client, 10-14 year olds, and the kinds of teaching strategies that are developmentally appropriate for those kids. But also understand that everybody has a variety of agendas of what we’re supposed to do with kids during that time. If you as the principal are not clear what the thing is supposed to look like you can’t possibly be the cheerleader or the leader or the encourager. You can’t possibly be able to provide the leadership that’s necessary. The vision of what the school is all about is absolutely essential. In all honesty, I never wanted to believe when the first studies, a place called school and all those things came out. I never wanted to believe that one person could make a difference in a total school package. Boy did I learn differently. It’s been an incredible ride. Because the optimistic we can do it whatever, translates to the staff. You know. Just like the kids copy from their teachers, the teachers copy from their administrators. So you are absolutely the most important person but you never better show it or it won’t work.

**Question 2.2 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to managing curriculum and instruction?**

I think the principal has to be an active participant in the planning of curriculum, the selection of materials, the delivery of instruction. In our district we do that through the kind of relationships we have with the content supervisors. Because I’ve done K-12 supervision in a variety of subject areas, I have a real personal interest in the content, what’s appropriate for middle school kids. We’re having an ongoing dialogue about whether or not ancient civilization is really reverent for sixth graders because the principal is asking that question. Now, I see them do an interdisciplinary thing with the art teacher, and they’re learning about that. But I keep asking the question of the supervisor and the sixth grade teachers. I see that as my role that if I’m the one who is supposed to be the expert on who these children are, then I should always be the one asking questions about whether or not the content we deliver is what we should be delivering. Now granted, that’s in line with social studies standards and core content standards
and all the lovely tests they have to take and whatever. The part of it is, is that the place in which you shape instruction, particularly for an experienced staff, is in the way in which you observe and conference both formally and informally. The way in which you encourage teachers to experiment to take a look at their teaching styles. The line here that I use with the staff is that good teachers are learners. Great teachers are reflective learners. So that means that what is it that we do everyday. Well you know, they’re delivering instruction everyday. So my role in that is to help them think about what it is they did. And why it didn’t work and should we keep doing it that way. So it’s a very proactive role.

Question 2.3: In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to supervising teaching?

Probably the most important thing on my list because I am a teacher of teachers. The term principal came from principal teacher. So, my job is to make sure that my teachers are learning. Now, I tend to use a collegial supervisory style with them. I also since I’ve here since August of 1998, I have encouraged six folks to leave us. Some of them I could do nicely and some of them I couldn’t so nicely. But, it’s my job to make sure that there’s no teacher in this building that I wouldn’t want my own kid to have as a teacher. That’s a very narrow perspective in terms of what makes a good teacher. But if I wouldn’t want my kids to have him, why should anybody else’s kids have him?

Question 2.4: In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role in regard to student progress?

My role in regard to the academic part, is the role I play in decisions about grouping, placement, content standards those kinds of things. And the monitoring of report cards, parent concerns, child study team concerns and so with regard to—are the kids learning what we want them to learn and if they’re not, whose fault is it. Socially and emotionally, I’m very tightly connected to the guidance team, my child study team. I meet with each of them weekly, once a month we meet jointly. We talk about kids. My job is to make sure that the atmosphere of this building provides for safety, a pleasant place for kids to be, a place kids want to come to school And sometimes that shows itself in baby-sitting book bags. Other times in just the way in which you interact with kids in the hall. One of the things that I had difficulty with since this stupid mobility issue came up this fall, is the fact that I am, was, hope soon to be again, a building walker. Okay. So, I take numerous tours of the building and everybody
would watch for me at my morning tour and since I’ve developed this stupid muscle thing I’m not able to do that and I really, really miss it. The door here is rarely ever closed. Kids are free to drop in. Kids come to me with petitions, you know they come to talk about—this student/faculty basketball game they have been busting about is a kid and head custodian factor. We have a fantastic peer leader program. A 150 of our 248 eighth graders are in our peer leader program. There are seven projects that they can select to work on. One which is Make-A-Wish program, so half the money that the kids are raising is going to Make-A-Wish the other half is going to go locally to purchase defibrillators in memory of a fifth grader who is died last year. That to me is the kind of role, so that an eighth grader can waddle in here and say, Dr. G. can we have? Dr. G. a couple of my friends want to raise money for, can we do this? For the kids to have the image that it’s perfectly fine to walk into my office to talk to me about almost anything. I often do the 7 a.m. tardy detentions, of which we don’t have a lot, but the thinking being if you can’t be here at 8 o’clock, come at 7, try it out—see if Matthew can get there on time. This is where they meet.

**Question 2.5**  In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to promoting an instructional climate?

First of all there’s modeling. That Maslow Theory stuff. Not only do we try to practice it, I teach it to the staff, and then we’ve even done exercises periodically. March is one of our tough months by the way, cause March is a long dreary, yucky month and I don’t know which probably why they picked it as National Middle School Month and I need to practice the kinds of interaction that leads to safety and security. The words I use, the way in which I talk to staff, just the way in which I interact with them. One of the things that they said that they miss the most last year when I wasn’t here was my laugh, which could be heard all over the building. Cause I am loud, I know that.

**Question 2.6** In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to organizational management?

If you don’t do that practical stuff you don’t have a school. Okay. So that means that, parent phone calls need to be returned within 24 hours. The deadlines of all the lovely things that people want us to do, you have to be real good with your calendar and do it--get it done. Don’t handle your mail more than twice, either pitch it or file it or do it, but don’t touch it more than twice. The budgeting stuff, which everybody gets in a hullabaloo about. So, you know, you’ve got so much money, you’ve got to figure how to spend it best to support
your program. I tend, and maybe it’s because I sat in the superintendent’s chair, I tend not to argue with the superintendent. You come to me and tell me that, I’m sorry you’ve got to cut $200,000, where are we going to find it? You don’t throw a tantrum and say, I can’t do this, I don’t have time, I don’t whatever. I think those kind of management things—if you don’t know how to be efficient, you’re not going to make it as a principal because you’re going to get totally bogged down in trivia. I make it a practice that my desk is clear when I leave, doesn’t mean that I’ve got it all done, but it means that when I walk into my office first thing in the morning, I start with a fresh desk space. That’s a model also for staff. You want the kids to turn in their papers on time but it takes you a week to get them back, wrong. As a classroom teacher, I believed that if they turned it one day, they got it back the next day. Now, it took me a little longer to figure out you don’t do that with term papers at least you don’t have all 100 of them come in on the same Friday. I think it’s a mindset that you’re in control of the organizational trivia paperwork stuff. So I don’t buy it when somebody says the schedule won’t let us, wrong. You make the schedule, what do you mean the schedule won’t let you. Our staff now is at the point of taking advantage of some of the freedom they have in teams. Okay. They have to see it. They have to see that they can rearrange their time. But I have to practice that. I feel that if a teacher comes in the door, which is why you have ‘x’ staff, no matter what the issue is, they get taken care of before anything else I do. My priority is kids, teachers, parents, paper.

**Question 3.1 Does the middle school principal have essential areas of responsibility and/or behaviors other than the ones you have already described?**

Well, yeah, you left out one of the biggies in terms of the whole parent-community, parent-education, parent support. My guidance counselors put a lot of time and energy into counseling parents. In January of every year we run something we call Parent Academy where we invite the parents to come and learn. In March, we do evening events we invite them back for. Middle school principals have a more difficult job of keeping parents involved because they’re real wonderful to have at home all day long. So, the last thing they want to do is put a lot of time and energy into cookies and phone chains. The kids don’t want them anywhere near the school. So, it’s a much—you’ve got to work harder at developing your parent community at the middle school first of all, than you do at the elementary principal. The secondary principal branches off from the sports clubs and whatever. The other piece that I think is real important particularly in the State of New Jersey is the expectation for creating the next
cadre of middle school counselors. Whether it’s mentor my assistant or
whether it’s participating in state organizations—because most folks don’t raise
their hand to become middle school counselors. The end all of life is to become
one or the other two and if you can’t get one of those, well then you get middle.
Okay. So I think that has another level of responsibility to it. In this district,
partly because of my superintendent and partly because of my other experiences,
I think I also care a little bit more—I don’t know if it’s responsibility,
opportunity, whatever it is. With regard to the district message as a whole, I
have a very, very warm, positive relationship with all of the school board
members which is not usually the case for a person at the principal level. You
may know who they are and you may know who your parents are—but I have a
working relationship with these folks. So, I have, I guess it’s an opportunity to
support J. and the kinds of things that he’s doing to make sure that I’m another
set of eyes and ears for him. If there is something going on in the community
that he needs to know for the good of the district—you know, whether it’s budget
presentations or doing the dog and pony show for the referendum or whatever it
is, I find myself being asked to do a lot of those kinds of things. Part of it is
because, you know, I’ve known J. for a long time. Part of it is that I do bring
something a little different to the middle school principalship. I didn’t like being
superintendent.

**Question 3.2** Do principals of effective middle schools exercise different behaviors
than principals of effective elementary schools or effective high schools?

I think they do. I think they do but I’m not sure that it should be different.
Okay. My sense is, and this is one that I guess characterizes the principal’s as
well. If you want to be loved you work in an elementary school. If you want to
be respected you do a high school. If you want to be needed you do a middle
school. I think that elementary principals tend to be more like elementary
teachers. There’s more isolation, you know the teachers go in a room and they
close the door. They’re more directed, you know they have their two meetings
or their three meetings and they meet and they’ve got their this committee and
they’ve got their that committee and whatever. High school principals get pulled
more by the collegiate, particularly in our community, by the collegiate demands.
Sports demands. There’s something to so about sport as long as it’s not football.
I think there is a different pressure on the high school principal in terms of
judging their performance by accomplishment of the kids. So obviously if you
are going to be judged differently by your clientele, you behavior in part is going
to be modified by that. My job is to provide that bridge between the two walls.
But not a holding tank, because some middle school principals feel that their only job is to just keep them safe until high School gets them. Some other middle school principals think that they need to be high schools for short people. I think that we have a different set of behaviors, colloquial—you’re going to have teams or—I function with a series of teams. Even just the relationship between me and my assistant. I made a proposal to J. which so far he has been ignoring, but I’ll remind him about it. I would like to create a co-principalship here. Not just because of my health issues. But because of how M. and I have divided the tasks that we do. That continual communication. So, I think that an effective middle school principal leadership style should mirror the organizational style middle school. At the same time, we only have teams in the six and seventh grade. I un teamed the eighth grade because I wanted a transition experience for the kids. Okay. Now some of my diehard middle school friends were about to expel me from the club. My job is to shape this educational stuff to meet the developmental needs of the kids. I don’t think elementary schools have to do that. They just have to make sure they can read and write and do math. It’s okay that they don’t finish in first grade they can get it in second grade. I have to have them ready. When they leave me, and they arrive at the high school, they not only have the basic content—cause this is last change saloon for content, but they also leave prepared to be students. That studenthood thing is a big part of what this is all about whether it’s note taking, assignment pads, turning stuff in on time, being able to work independently, work with a group, whatever that happens to be, because the high school is not going to take time to teach them math. They have important stuff to teach. That’s not their mindset. K. tells me that in the last couple of years, they’re getting a better prepared ninth grader. Now the teachers haven’t changed. So evidently something else did. The staff is pretty much the same as what it was when I came. So something else has changed to help those kids to be better prepared for high school. I think it’s a mix, teachers’ willingness to do is the other part of the mix.

Question 4.1 If you were advising a committee searching for a candidate to become the new principal of their effective middle school, what would you tell them to look for?

A sense of humor. A non-egotistical person. If you think being an administrator of a middle school means that you’re the boss, you’ve got it wrong. The word administrator means to serve and so the good middle school principal should know how to serve the various constituencies. Obviously, personal division,
should be able to tell you what their school will work like. Our school revolves around three words, respect, responsibility and excellence. Those three words pop up everywhere. If you were interviewing a candidate I would ask them, if you could only have three words to shape our school what would those three words be? Because that would tell you a great deal about how this person looks at the kids and the whole educational package. When I'm sitting on a search committee, I'm a little bit of a snob, I like to see snug, I like to see good grades, I like to see a diversity of experiences. I'm a whole lot better now than I was before the superintendency, but I was a better principal then than some of the colleagues that came up through the ranks because between my assistant principalship in [District A] and my being a principal in [District B], there were 15 years of content, curriculum, county-wide supervision—I worked in [a central New Jersey county] for awhile. So, you want somebody that is done something other than the strict career package. Because the diversity of the middle school both in terms of where the kids are and the variety of means that they have—if you haven't been anywhere else how do you see that. Obviously, it wouldn't hurt for them to have been mentored by somebody who knew what they were doing.

Principal #15

Question 1.1 How long have you been in your current assignment?
Since this past August.

Question 1.2 How many years have you worked as an educator?
I've been in education since 1975. A few years off in-between cause of children, but been on boards of education since 1975.

Question 1.3 What positions in education did you have prior to your current position?
Before this I was a vice-principal in a middle school and before that I was a district coordinator and going back years before that I was a teacher.

For the next set of questions - I want to tell you that you are being asked your perceptions as they pertain to the job of principal of an effective middle school. Therefore, when the word "principal" is being used in a question, it is understood that it refers to a principal of an effective middle school.
Question 2.1 In your opinion or perception, what is principal’s role with regard to communicating the mission of the school?

That’s critical. You have to live it, breathe it, constantly reinforce it, it’s in every conversation that you have when you are talking with a teacher, you’re talking to a parent or you’re talking to a student. We have to push, you just have to let everybody know what you’re about and what the school’s about and continually remind of that. It’s a way you get the extra edge. You take time in every conversation and remind people what we’re about.

Question 2.2 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to managing curriculum and instruction?

I think it’s more critical than the content supervisors. You need to know all content areas. When I was a content supervisor, I knew one area and when I was a teacher I knew one area. But I think the principal needs to know all of these areas and needs to be in all the classrooms and know what’s going on and know what resources are available for teachers and make those resources available to the teachers. So it’s really important to know all of the content areas.

Question 2.3 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to supervising teaching?

That’s critical also. You have to be a supervisor, a mentor, to be available, you need to be in the classrooms. I know some people think, can you be an evaluator of teachers and also be their mentor? I think you can be both. That’s what I try to be to my teachers here.

Question 2.4 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role in regard to student progress?

Well, there are lots of ways to look at student progress. I’m not sure what you mean. I think that you have to know the data. You have to know what all the assessment shows about all the students. What is it teachers say in the report cards about students and how are they performing there? What do PAC committees say about individualized students? Look at standardized test scores. Those are very important. If there is progress and strengths you need to support that and keep people going in that direction. If there are weaknesses, how do you know those weaknesses and how are you going to address them, what strategies are you going to devise. So, it’s really important for the principal to
monitor student progress in all of the ways that it can be known and then look at ways to support the strengths and strengthen the areas that may be weak.

**Question 2.5** In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to promoting an instructional climate?

That’s critical also. That area is all about relationships. What’s a principal’s relationship with the community, with parents, principal’s relationship with teachers, with students? What’s the school culture and how does the principal communicate that school culture? It’s also important to share leadership. The principal can’t do everything by him or herself. The principal has to work with team leaders and know the key teachers in the building who can be effective in leading other teachers and to share that leadership and empower those people. I think that’s how you spread the culture throughout the building.

**Question 2.6** In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to organizational management?

You have to be organized - that’s important. But, beyond the sense of organization the principal can’t organize everything by him or herself. The principal needs to have others help with that organization. So, I count on my vice-principal and supervisors, also, to organize things in the building to take care of things so that I can spend time working on areas that I think are important in terms of instructional leadership, but also keep myself organized and make sure that others are organized in the building.

**Question 3.1** Does the middle school principal have essential areas of responsibility and/or behaviors other than the ones you have already described?

Well, it’s really important to communicate to the community what a middle school is all about. They don’t always know that. As a matter of fact, they don’t usually know that. It’s important they know the middle school is different. It’s not as just a smaller high school or a junior high school or a high school for smaller people, younger people. You need to constantly communicate knowing what the middle school is about. But you also have to communicate the idea that we’re constantly going to get better. No matter how good you are, if you just stay satisfied with that you think you’re all buttoned up, then you stop growing and evolving. You need to work with teams, you need to work with communicating to the public the idea of the middle school and you need to constantly reexamine how your middle school is operating and how it can get better.
Question 3.2  Do principals of effective middle schools exercise different behaviors than principals of effective elementary schools or effective high schools?

Yes, I think so. I think the main difference is in shared leadership. The principal of a middle school isn’t the only leader but shared leadership with the teams of teachers that operate in the building. You have to run schools within a school. You need to know how to balance when you are the single leader and making decisions with shared leadership. You need to be a good collaborator and a team builder. You need to exercise good relationships. Relationships in the middle school are more critical to the success of the middle school than I think they are at the elementary school or the high school and that’s shared leadership relationship.

Question 4.1  If you were advising a committee searching for a candidate to become the new principal of their effective middle school, what would you tell them to look for?

I think you’d tell them to look for a person who can establish relationships, establish relationships with the community, establish relationships with teachers, establish relationship with administration and establish relationships with students. I think that’s the critical factor in finding a person who will be a successful and effective middle school principal.
Appendix E

Synopsis of Principal Interviews
SYNOPSIS OF PRINCIPAL INTERVIEWS

Principal #1

Background Information

Principal #1 had been employed in the educational field for 32 years. Previous positions held included: industrial arts teacher at the middle and high school levels, assistant principal at the middle school level, and elementary principal. He has held his current position as middle school principal for the past five years. The school has an enrollment of 665 students.

Question 2.1 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to communicating the mission of the school?

This principal responded that this was the principal’s primary role, and required a clear view of the mission, and well as leadership by example. The role also required consistent reminding of what the school is trying to accomplish.

Question 2.2 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to managing curriculum and instruction?

This principal responded that the role was highly variable and dependent upon the management structure and size of the particular school. The principal should influence curriculum and instruction decisions in a way that is consistent with the mission of the school.

Question 2.3 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to supervising teaching?

This principal responded that the principal’s role is dependent upon the size and management structure of the school, but that regardless of the size of the school, it is the most important thing the principal does. The principal’s job is to work with and coach teachers, know teachers’ styles, and “send the message about what the middle school is.” This area was more important than curriculum and budget. It is important to “find good people,” coach them, keep them on a consistent message, and provide “lots of strokes.”

Question 2.4 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to student progress?

This principal responded that it depended on the size of the school. Principal scrutiny of pupil progress would be difficult to maintain in a middle school with an
enrollment of 2000 students, other than "the most extreme case." "It becomes a little more intimate" in a medium-size school, and the principal should then be directly involved in student progress, especially when there is a lack of student progress. Examples of direct involvement include conferencing with students and parents, and being a part of guidance and academic team meetings, to send out a message about student progress as well as about the social and emotional issues. A decision is to be made as to when the principal is directly involved, or when it's done by the team leaders and guidance counselors. The students need to know what the principal knows. Examples include identifying students who have demonstrated growth or improvement and providing praise. Students like this acknowledgement, and the message is conveyed.

**Question 2.5 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to promoting an instructional climate?**

This principal responded that is impossible to separate the philosophy and overriding concept of the middle school - its mission, with instruction. Instruction and climate are "what the middle school is." The middle school is the most difficult to define because it has "such a wide range of developmental problems, and emotional levels and cognitive levels." "Middle school is a unique place," and instruction and approaches to students are different. "There really is a middle between elementary and high school." This principal also stated a personal preference for hiring experienced elementary teachers as opposed to experienced high school teachers, because of the middle school instructional approach.

**Question 2.6 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to organizational management?**

This principal responded that it was conditioned on the size of the school and the administrative hierarchy. Whenever possible, the principal sets the tone for everything, including the structure and function of the school. Examples include what types of committees are established, what long-term plans are made, "what is in the works to be examined," who gets included in the process, and how decisions are really made. Principals also act as a buffer and liaison between the school and the board of education, superintendent, and parents, and absorb "an awful lot of heat that never gets radiated into the classroom."

**Question 3.1 Does the middle school principal have essential areas of responsibility and/or behaviors other than the ones you have already described?**

This principal responded that the middle school principal's primary responsibility is the coalescence, the bringing together of all areas to make sure that there aren't any great contradictions in the message that is sent out. That there is
consistency in instruction and programs. That grouping of students is "consistent with the social pieces we put in place. The message must be consistent and constantly filtered, to make sure everyone is hearing the same thing and is headed in the right direction.

**Question 3.2** Do principals of effective middle schools exercise different behaviors than principals of effective elementary schools or effective high schools?

This principal responded that he could not give the full perspective of a high school principal. However, "it's very different between middle and elementary schools."

The principal is a parent figure in the elementary school; more time is spent counseling because "everybody cries at an elementary school." At the elementary level, "They all tend to be well-directed and pretty much know what to do. The curriculum is more structured. They know what's expected." More intervention is needed at the middle school level, and the principal "has to be a more pro-active person in virtually everything."

**Question 4.1** If you were advising a committee searching for a candidate to become the new principal of their effective middle school, what would you tell them to look for?

This principal responded that "First would be a sense of humor. That would be the number one thing." In addition, a primary consideration would be previous teaching experience with the middle school age group and an understanding of the staff. "There's a certain lunatic fringe to teaching at the middle school level. You have to have a little bit of craziness, and it is distinct... People tend to be a little flaky and a little quirky, and you have to be able to accept that in people." Flexibility and "the ability to kind of roll with things" is needed. What's needed is someone who can recognize that there are many ways to accomplish the same task. The person would need "a good sense of what the mission is," someone "who can carefully define what a middle school should be... with some degree consistent with what the community wants but it also should be consistent with what we know about developmental levels of kids and the emotional ranges that the kids are in and how variable they are, and this is such a volatile age group."

**Principal #2**

**Background Information**
Principal #2 had been employed in the educational field for 32 years. Positions held included: high school teacher, director of athletics, vice principal, elementary principal and high school principal. He has held his current position as middle school principal for the past three years. The school has an enrollment of 800 students.

**Question 2.1** In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to communicating the mission of the school?

This principal responded that this was a primary role, and required a vision “in terms of what a middle school should look like and how to accommodate the needs of the middle school child.” Also involved were effective communication and developing a shared vision: “I think an educational leader has to be a visionary. You have to have a clear sense of who you are as a person, who you are as a professional, or what your charge is in education.” “You have to engage all members of the community in this very important role of educating children.” The principal must go beyond providing opportunities for children to learn and assure that every child can learn. This includes “meeting the needs of each and every child,” including students with special needs as well as the “top academic achievers.”

**Question 2.2** In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to managing curriculum and instruction?

This principal responded, “I don’t think the principal plays as critical a role as he or she once did in curriculum development.” The principal should ensure that the school exceeds the basic frameworks of the state’s core curriculum content standards, and provides the best instructional quality, “so that curriculum can be taught effectively and efficiently and thoroughly and creatively to ensure that kids are critical thinkers and problem solvers.” An administrative focus should be on “the assessment piece,” having teachers write better classroom assessments through professional development. The role involves monitoring the effectiveness of instruction and monitoring the assessments the teachers use. This principal collects on a quarterly or semester basis at least one test from each teacher to see if those tests are clearly representative of the types of questions that students will be expected to answer on state tests. He feels that student achievement within a curriculum is assessed through the preparation of quality assessments.

**Question 2.3** In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to supervising teaching?

This principal responded by referencing the district’s “obligatory evaluation program process,” for tenured, non-tenured and alternate route teachers, which must be a “priority” for “an effective or efficient” middle school principal. “A principal is an
instructional leader," and should ensure that teachers know what it is they are teaching. Monitoring lesson plans is important. This principal had developed a lesson plan framework which addressed the elements and quality of instructional planning.

**Question 2.4 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to student progress?**

This principal responded that "the principal has to have a vision." The vision should be put in writing, with the involvement of the school and general community, "in terms of a mission." The principal helps students "in so many ways indirectly and directly," through curriculum, instruction, assessment. "We’re not in the classroom necessarily teaching every lesson, but we are providing the organization which is well-conceived and well-designed and well-communicated and monitored for efficiency." "There’s a lot to be said for principals teaching classes on maybe not an assigned class everyday, but as a guest teacher on occasion. To kind of set the example, be a coach so to speak."

**Question 2.5 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to promoting an instructional climate?**

This principal responded that the most important thing is "to provide for the safety, health, and welfare of kids, ... and a very, very tight organization in terms of establishing the highest standards and expectations for social responsibility and high expectations for academic engagement." The principal must provide a social climate "where kids feel safe," in order to provide a "quality academic ... instructional ... or learning environment." "It’s nurturing in a caring environment and it provides a very positive type of climate which is conducive to learning." A student reward and recognition program should be established, to recognize appropriate behavior academically and socially. Support services for students need to be developed and provided, and examples include engaging the community by having an open door policy, and bringing the resources of the community into the school. "It’s quite dynamic."

**Question 2.6 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to organizational management?**

This principal responded that the principal needs to both a leader and a manager. The principal should be a leader, a visionary, a communicator, and should set the example. The principal should also have "some real clear business managerial skills." Since his middle school of 800 students send to the high school of 2000 students, this principal stated that "the key in my mind is to make a big school small. In order to do that you really need a clear direction of how to manager a big school in a small way." This involves teaming, personalization, every student and teacher knowing one another,
a connection inside and outside of the classroom, as well as a connection among guidance, parents and teachers. "And breaking grades down into teams so that they have a common planning time in order to provide a very pliable interdisciplinary program, as well as providing the type of individual support or the type of support that individual kids need from a team of teachers as opposed to having teachers work with kids in isolation is powerful. And that's management." Management relates to setting up the school instructionally with the teaming concept, developing a master schedule to allow the curriculum to be taught within the team structure in an efficient way. "You have to be a technician as well as a practitioner." It is analogous to being a coach who is a motivator as well as a technician. "A good principal is an excellent leader and an excellent manager."

**Question 3.1** Does the middle school principal have essential areas of responsibility and/or behaviors other than the ones you have already described?

This principal responded, "I think you have to be a kind of a jack of all trades as well as the master unfortunately of all trades, and that is pretty difficult." This includes engaging all of the people affected by discussions with parents, and working together as a team. It also involves "a political dimension" of awareness of what's occurring within and without the school, in the district's elementary and high schools, in the community and in other school districts. The principal is an educator, and should refer to others as the educational leaders, "because everyone has a role which is most important. No one has a role which is less important." Principals also "have to be cheerleaders and psychologists to a degree."

**Question 3.2** Do principals of effective middle schools exercise different behaviors than principals of effective elementary schools or effective high schools?

This principal responded that while there are some common aspects such as leadership, different aspects include approach to curriculum (the middle school works backwards from the high school curriculum), knowledge of teaming, interdisciplinary instruction, and personalization. The principal should also know the pre-adolescent child, "because of the significant changes they are going through in every aspect of their life," as well as the elementary child and the dynamics of the elementary program.

**Question 4.1** If you were advising a committee searching for a candidate to become the new principal of their effective middle school, what would you tell them to look for?

This principal responded that interviewers ought to look for a person who has a vision, a true understanding of the mission of the middle school and what a particular middle school does. The candidate would need to know how to open the middle school to a community, how to keep parents engaged and how to improve upon parent
involvement and participation. The candidate would also need to know that parents have boundaries and that parents need to know what those boundaries are. The committee should look for someone who is an instructional leader. “The key thing is the person has to have a personality,” and be a communicator with substance. “You want a person who has substance and a person who has a powerful presence.”

Principal #3

**Background Information**

Principal #3 had been employed in the educational field for 31 years. Positions held included: junior high school math teacher, junior high school math department chairman, K-12 supervisor of math, educational programs manager, elementary principal, middle school principal. He has held his current position as middle school principal for eight years. The school has an enrollment of 740 students.

**Question 2.1 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to communicating the mission of the school?**

This principal responded that the principal “has to lead the charge.” He cited his own experience as an example, of forming a committee comprised of staff and parents, to develop the mission statement of the school. While the principal doesn’t “have to be an expert in everything,” he or she must lead in terms of the tone, the culture, deciding what is important to the middle school, and the difficult choices that govern the decision-making.

**Question 2.2 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to managing curriculum and instruction?**

This principal responded that he has had a variety of roles. The principal has to be the instructional leader, and be involved in instructional decisions. As the school becomes larger, the principal “gets pushed” into more of a management role, making it more difficult to maintain “a central position.” This principal stated that he has had to allow his department supervisors to be the instructional leaders in their areas, and that he strives to “bridge and use their expertise” to ensure that “what we do in the classroom is current.” “It’s a hard area for principals.” This principal chairs the special education department. The principal must at least be a facilitator, if he or she cannot be a leader in this area. Elementary principals have more control in this area.

**Question 2.3 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to supervising teaching?**
This principal responded that as schools get larger supervision becomes more difficult, but time should be invested in non-tenured staff, with mentoring activities. The most important thing a principal does in this area is hire staff. Find the very best people, help to cultivate them, and help them develop into outstanding educators. One way of doing this is through an alternative teacher assessment process, for example, allowing them to be assessed in other activities, such as action research. This principal observes staff in his role as chairperson of the special education department, and feels that it allows him to observe teachers collaborating in the classroom, and puts him in a position to gain community support to place two teachers in a classroom for in-class support. This principal observes all first, second and third year staff. His assistant conducts more observations than he does.

**Question 2.4 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to student progress?**

This principal responded that student progress “ultimately all ends up with the principal,” and that the principal must communicate with the staff as to how well the students are doing, using all of the different kinds of assessments available. For example, the principal participates in discussions of results from standardized tests such as the GEPA and the IOWA, and then works with supervisors to see to it that they implement any necessary changes, or they study and discuss. The principal must pay attention to the standardized tests to see if trends are developing, “where we are starting to slide, what do we need to pay more attention to.” “I think it’s my job to know how many of my kids are getting to algebra in eighth grade. It’s my job to know what percentage of my class is going to take the honors test for the high school...” This principal maintains and reviews grade distributions from every teacher, to address such issues as grade inflation, and compares one team to another. He also reviews individual student cases, where students are receiving Cs, Ds, or Fs, and meets with guidance personnel to discuss these cases. He looks at every report card.

**Question 2.5 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to promoting an instructional climate?**

This principal responded that teacher must see the principal as being “very current” in what he or she expects of them, by attending workshops and being aware of latest research in instructional practices. Principals’ observation reports should talk about applications of technology. Lesson plans should be checked to verify the application of cooperative learning because of the research supporting this as a good instructional practice at this age level. Teachers’ professional improvement plans should
be addressing instructional practices. The principal should support teachers’ efforts to improve in an area.

**Question 2.6** In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to organizational management?

This principal responded that “I have to be sure that what takes place out there is organized.” Examples include, doing the master schedule to allow for creative and different things to happen, organizing resources, developing the teacher manual, develop yearly calendar schedule. In order to do this, certain other tasks are delegated, such as discipline. Other tasks include meeting with representatives from the teachers’ union on a regular basis. The management aspect is very important, and it is difficult to balance the responsibilities of instructional leadership and management.

**Question 3.1** Do principals have essential areas of responsibility and/or behaviors other than the ones you have already described?

This principal responded, “Well, I think that the tone of the building can be established when I walk in the door.” The principal sets the daily tone for the building. The principal must convey to the staff that he or she will work equally as hard as the staff. The principal must make clear the mission of the school, balance the needs of parents and community, and protect teachers from unreasonable parents.

**Question 3.2** Do principals of effective middle schools exercise different behaviors than principals of effective elementary schools or effective high schools?

This principal responded that it’s very important for the middle school principal to understand the emerging adolescent, and be aware of current research that supports how schools should organize effectively to meet the needs of the emerging adolescent. He stated, “The middle matters... and we are the last great hope.” This principal resists community pressure to group or track students in the middle school: “I tell them that we’re going to set the bar real high and we’re going to work real hard to make everybody meet that bar. Everybody is unequal... We’re going to do whatever we can but we are not going to group... because research doesn’t support it... as soon as you group a kid in a low track, you withhold programming. If you withhold programming, they fall further behind. I have to fight sometimes the community perception of what a middle school is because they think the middle school is a junior high. And I think I have to maybe act a little bit differently in this role to keep doors open for kids a little bit longer.”

**Question 4.1** If you were advising a committee searching for a candidate to become the new principal of their effective middle school, what would you tell them to look for?
This principal responded, "Find somebody who wants to be here." The person should be excited about the school and should know what the school is about. The person should have knowledge of the emerging adolescent, because middle school students have different needs.

Principal #4

Background Information

Principal #4 had been employed in the educational field for 25 years. Positions held included: Middle school teacher and vice principal, elementary school principal, and intermediate school principal. He has held his current position as middle school principal for six years. The school has an enrollment of 496 students.

Question 2.1 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to communicating the mission of the school?

This principal responded that this was one of the most important roles of the principal. The principal must reinforce the school's mission every year to parents, students, and teachers. This can be communicated in different ways; for example, through letters and annual themes.

Question 2.2 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to managing curriculum and instruction?

This principal responded that in his personal experience, he was initially "a very good manager of buildings and people," but "wasn't as good a manager of curriculum." He stated that the state department of education's core standards and testing requirements have "pushed" him into being more aware of curriculum, and that he has "come to be a real leader in curriculum through necessity."

Question 2.3 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to supervising teaching?

This principal responded that as a result of retirement incentives in his middle school, he currently has a new, younger staff. He stated that he'll work hard with a new person and will do anything to help them improve, utilizing district resources such as content area coordinators. But if the staff member does not perform, they are not retained. For those who "show the promise," resources and time are made available to make them "as close to master teachers as possible before we get to the point of proving them as someone who gets tenure in the district." Instead of spending time getting
teachers "out of a rut," time is spend in training and guiding young people, and having them "buy into the mission."

**Question 2.4 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to student progress?**

This principal responded that, because the school's grading system is electronic, he can access all necessary information on an individual student. "Our whole middle school philosophy is the child," and that "we schedule every single child individually." The principal should "individualize with students, know what they're doing, know their grades." He stated that he reviews every child's grades, because he gives a "Principal’s Award" for grades and effort. He speaks individually with students about their progress and about how they feel about what they've done. The principal should be involved with the students' academics.

**Question 2.5 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to promoting an instructional climate?**

This principal responded that, "in each case, it is going to be leadership... Every part of the program here has to touch my desk." He cited examples of his involvement in testing preparations, special activity days, the sports program, recreation, and club activities. He also attends sports events and club. "I do the announcements every single day so the children know that everything that happens in the school is approved by me."

**Question 2.6 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to organizational management?**

This principal responded that in a smaller school district, the middle school principal gets added jobs or responsibilities, so "organization becomes important." The principal must oversee a complex master schedule at the middle school, and organize the levels involved with the schedule. Building maintenance is another responsibility. It is "just crucial" to be organized with teachers, programs, "and everything else."

**Question 3.1 Does the middle school principal have essential areas of responsibility and/or behaviors other than the ones you have already described?**

This principal responded that in his district, because of its relatively small size, he is responsible for the Titles I, II, IV, and VI federal programs. Depending upon the size of the district, all middle school principals are given other responsibilities. He stated that he is also the liaison to technology, science, and all middle school special areas; he determines school closings for snow days and is also responsible for hiring.

**Question 3.2 Do principals of effective middle schools exercise different behaviors than principals of effective elementary schools or effective high schools?**
This principal responded that “any good administrator” has to have an “inner core of beliefs and skills,” that include organization, leadership, direction, goals, goal setting, and “maybe a little bit of firmness.” In a “focused middle school,” the middle school principal also has a different set of roles. Public relations skills have become important for the middle school leader: “Everything from test scores to the programs we run to allowing the parents to be a part of the whole piece . . . is all public relations.” Examples include sending home a monthly newsletter to keep parents informed. . . (parents) know that we really plan well.”

Question 4.1 If you were advising a committee searching for a candidate to become the new principal of their effective middle school, what would you tell them to look for?

This principal responded, “I think we just named it – jack-of-all-trades.” “The smaller the school, the more you do.” In addition, personality is “so crucial.” “I can’t tell you how I see people who are very effective in terms of their organization and maybe even in their curriculum, who will lack that ability to just speak with people. They rub people the wrong way, and they aggravate the populace.”

Principal #5

Background Information

Principal #5 had been employed in the educational field for 32 years. Positions held included: social studies teacher, director of guidance, and middle school principal in three other districts. He has held his current position as middle school principal for the past 5 years. The school has an enrollment of 567 students.

Question 2.1 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to communicating the mission of the school?

This principal responded that one of the principal’s primary responsibilities is to maintain the mission focus and continually refine the focus, so that people understand. Within the generic mission statement are specific goals, and the principal has to make sure that everyone understands that resources are committed toward those goals, and that everyone agrees with the same goals and ideas.

Question 2.2 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to managing curriculum and instruction?

This principal responded that “Principals need to be educational leaders.” In many cases education has been about managing the building and the schedule, but “Our prime goal . . . is educating children.” It is very important for the principal to
understand the curriculum as it applies to the building, because “It’s the greatest vehicle for delivering the service that we’re supposed to be delivering from the beginning.”

**Question 2.3** In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to supervising teaching?

This principal responded that this is a primary responsibility, and that the principal must ensure that the teachers are implementing the curriculum in an appropriate manner, taking into account learning styles and differentiated instruction. The principal must “be there” to see and guarantee the “delivery of education.”

**Question 2.4** In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to student progress?

This principal responded that, “If students aren’t making suitable progress, then all of the other things don’t really matter.” However, he stated that “high stakes testing” is not a real measure of student progress; “We spend a lot of time here talking about what kids know now and what they’re going to know at the end of the year. And how are we going to get them from where they are now to where we want them to be . . . the ideas of good teaching, a sound curriculum. So that’s what I mean by student progress.”

**Question 2.5** In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to promoting an instructional climate?

This principal responded that it is the principal’s responsibility to “set the tone” in the building. The principal needs to send a message that there’s a balance between the need to relax and celebrate, and the need to teach the curriculum.

**Question 2.6** In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to organizational management?

This principal responded that while well-organized and well-managed buildings tend to operate effectively, instruction and supervision should be the principal’s primary focus, not building management.

**Question 3.1** Does the middle school principal have essential areas of responsibility and/or behaviors other than the ones you have already described?

This principal responded, “Middle schools are different places, and I’m not sure that everyone recognizes that. Certainly parents don’t. I don’t know that boards of education do either.” The middle school principal must recognize that middle school students are distinctly different from the elementary and secondary students; they grow more, they change more; “they absorb more than any other time than the first year and a half or two years of a child’s life.” The school must reflect that and the principal must
know who these children are. Discipline must be implemented with a middle school philosophy that every student is an individual with different needs. "The most defensible thing we do is to treat everyone as individuals." The middle school principal must "make that message clear that it's a different place than where your children came from and where your children are going. And that we are going to treat them as individuals and we're going to run a school reflective of who they are and try to do things that are appropriate for them."

Question 3.2 Do principals of effective middle schools exercise different behaviors than principals of effective elementary schools or effective high schools?

This principal responded, "Oh I think so, very definitely," due to the social development stages of the students, and the emotional and behavioral extremes the students demonstrate. The middle school principal can't take everything very seriously, needs to be flexible and responsive. "If you can't laugh, you can't work here."

Question 4.1 If you were advising a committee searching for a candidate to become the new principal of their effective middle school, what would you tell them to look for?

This principal responded that they should look for someone "who is serious about student achievement," and who "genuinely likes middle school kids." He added that the person should be "someone who has a sense and a scholarship about middle schools, who can articulate why they're different, who understands the act of teaching middle school students."

Principal #6

Background Information

Principal #6 had been employed in the educational field for 39 years. Positions held included: Algebra teacher, junior high school vice principal, junior high school principal, and middle school principal. He has held his current position as middle school principal for the past 25 years. The school has an enrollment of 540 students.

Question 2.1 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to communicating the mission of the school?

This principal responded that this is "probably one of the most important things that the principal does." The principal first "assemble(s) . . . a group of top flight professionals" and then the job is "to continually keep them motivated." "I think the things a principal does each and every day, whether they are very formal things or informal things, contribute to setting the tone of the building, and transmitting some of those organizational goals to the teachers." The principal should meet with new staff as frequently as possible to set examples with them, because "they are the people who are
going to transmit the (teaching) culture of the building. So to me that’s one of the most critical roles the building principal plays.”

Question 2.2 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role in managing curriculum and instruction?

This principal responded that his district had a large number of instructional supervisors, but that “Principals can get involved to any degree.” He stated, “I don’t play a tremendous role in curriculum.”

Question 2.3 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to supervising teaching?

This principal responded it was “very, very important.” “The teacher should recognize the building principal as their primary evaluator.” He stated that in his building, they exceed the minimum required number of evaluations for teachers, and he consults with the supervisors and is personally involved with every evaluation. “I really always want my teachers to feel that I am in their corner and that I know what is going on in their classrooms.”

Question 2.4 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to student progress?

This principal responded that he feels it is “very important.” He stated that he reviews every report card, and notes those students who have received a D or an E. He speaks to those students and meets with their teams and/or guidance counselors. “We address the kids that are getting the failing grades, but I’m always concerned with the kids who gets the D. They’re not failing. They’re not staying back. And they’re not a discipline problem. But how many years can you go through school being that ‘D’ student? It has to have an effect. So I like to focus on those kids, and see what we can do to augment, to address their programs. . . Just don’t let them get that perennial ‘D’.”

Question 2.5 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to promoting an instructional climate?

This principal responded that “the instructional climate goes hand-in-hand with the building. . .(and) with the building tone.” Teachers are expected not to just maintain an invigorating classroom, but to also be willing to try new things, so the principal must do professional reading and disseminate articles and research that would be helpful to teachers. By taking the time for daily professional reading and disseminating that information, the principal is modeling a desired behavior for the teachers.

Question 2.6 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to organizational management?
This principal responded that it was "an important part," and involved scheduling and staff utilization. "You've got to have your organization tight. You've got to have it up and running. It almost has to sustain itself." This is done in part by being able to delegate responsibility to people.

Question 3.1 Does the middle school principal have essential areas of responsibility and/or behaviors other than the ones you have already described?

This principal responded that communication with the parents and community is very important. He stated that his school has a very active PTA group.

Question 3.2 Do principals of effective middle schools exercise different behaviors than principals of effective elementary schools or effective high schools?

This principal responded that although he had never worked in either elementary or secondary schools, there must be "some degree" of difference in principal behavior, due to the nature of the middle school student. These students "undergo some of the most dramatic changes of their entire life during that four year age span." The principal needs to be "a bit more attuned to the young people and to the change process that they're going in." The principal needs "to reflect some different values and some different postures."

Question 4.1 If you were advising a committee searching for a candidate to become the new principal of their effective middle school, what would you tell them to look for?

This principal responded that he would tell them to look for "number one, someone who values the contributions that the teaching staff make to the building," someone who "really feels education is significant and important," and who can transmit that enthusiasm to the teaching staff, students and parents. The candidate should be someone who "values the understanding of the inter-personal skills that weave throughout the building. "I would look for someone that recognizes the human qualities that have to be exercised every day in operating the small city that's here." "You have to be a bit of a social scientist."

Principal #7

Background

Principal #7 worked for 34 years in education. During that time he held positions as a teacher, guidance counselor and assistant principal. He has served in his current assignment of middle school principal for four years. The school has an enrollment of 1800 students.
Question 2.1 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to communicating the mission of the school?

This principal responded that it is very important for the principal to be an effective communicator of the mission of the school and to be an instructional leader. “I feel I am not an effective instructional leader, simply because of the other tasks that are involved in the position. And I rely a lot on the district supervisors to provide that curriculum leadership for me.” While supervisors may provide leadership that is specific to a task, overall leadership comes from the top down.

Question 2.2 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to managing curriculum and instruction?

This principal responded, “Manage is the appropriate descriptive,” and that he attends curriculum meetings (e.g. writing and mathematics) which are run by district supervisors. He learns what is going on in different curriculums, and manages them in terms of deciding ‘who does what and when.’ But the district supervisors provide the leadership in this area.

Question 2.3 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to supervising teaching?

The principal responded that it is important to be very proactive in supervision of teachers. Getting into classrooms does this. “Education doesn’t happen in this office; it happens in those classrooms.” It is one of the most important roles for the principal to evaluate teachers and assist them in improving their instructional practice, by providing workshops, reading materials, etc.

Question 2.4 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to student progress?

This principal responded that the principal is held accountable for student progress. The superintendent “looks to the principal” for student progress and the principal “looks to the supervisors,” but “it all comes back to the principal.” The principal is regarded as the primary motivator and provider with regard to test scores.

Question 2.5 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to promoting an instructional climate?

This principal responded that promoting an instructional climate is an important role of the principal. The principal needs to be active in monitoring and evaluating staff and in providing staff with feedback. The principal must convey to the staff an interest and concern with test scores, to affect teacher performance in the classroom.
Question 2.6 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to organizational management?

This principal responded that the principal becomes the manager. The principal manages building operations. The principal manages schedules. The principal “trouble shoots” daily problems, so that the building runs effectively. This is an important role, because “things flow” from being an effective manager.

Question 3.1 Does the middle school principal have essential areas of responsibility and/or behaviors other than the ones you have already described?

This principal responded that the middle school principal needs to be “visible.” He needs to shake students’ hands; this is important, it adds to the climate. The principal needs to be a “good listener.” He is a “Father confessor” to his staff, and has to be available to his staff.

Question 3.2 Do principals of effective middle schools exercise different behaviors than principals of effective elementary schools or effective high schools?

This principal responded that it makes no difference. “Kids are different,” but principals’ behaviors are the same.

Question 4.1 If you were advising a committee searching for a candidate to become the new principal of your effective middle school, what would you tell them to look for?

This principal responded that he would tell them to look for a principal who cares about kids. The candidate should be a “people person.” The candidate should have a vision and be a motivator. The candidate should be knowledgeable about middle school children. The candidate should also get along with all constituencies and be a good listener. The candidate should be an educational leader.

Principal #8

Background

Principal #8 has been in education for 29 years. During that time he has served as a teacher, guidance counselor, head of a guidance department and as an assistant principal at a high school. He has been in his current assignment of middle school principal for six years. The school has an enrollment of 950 students.

Question 2.1 In your perception or opinion, what is the principal’s role with regard to communicating the mission of the school?

This principal responded that the principal has to have and believe in a vision for the school. More specifically, the principal has to have a vision of what a middle school
should be. This vision needs to be communicated and promoted with staff, parents and students by the principal.

**Question 2.2 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to managing curriculum and instruction?**

This principal responded that the principal has to be the leader in curriculum and instruction. His school district has curriculum personnel that work with curriculum development, but the principal has to be the instructional leader of those people, or else staff and parents won't "buy-in."

**Question 2.3 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to supervising teaching?**

This principal responded that this is a primary role of the principal, but that it is difficult to find the time for it. This principal also stated that he had to do more observations of teachers because this is a most important role of the principal and it needs to be a priority. "You really can't talk to teachers about instruction... unless you've been in the classroom watching."

**Question 2.4 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to student progress?**

This principal responded that this is a primary responsibility for the principal, who has to take an active role in monitoring and maintaining student progress. All areas of curriculum and of student assessment (i.e. Grade Eight-Proficiency Assessment, standardized test scores and student report card grades) should be continuously monitored looking for areas that need to be strengthened.

**Question 2.5 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to promoting an instructional climate?**

This principal responded that the principal has to have the vision and the full scope of what a middle school should be. He has to "maintain the aura of what it's all about." He has to have a belief in middle school mission and philosophy, and promote it in all that he does. He must be consistent in everything, including educational decisions, and the decisions should promote the vision and the mission.

**Question 2.6 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to organizational management?**

This principal responded that the principal is the director, and sets the format. The principal has to empower the staff. He meets weekly with his "cabinet" - the assistant principal and team leaders - to work in the organization. He has a
management style of modeling how to work with others. The principal picks strong professionals and then models how he expects them to work with others. This works from the “top down” – from administration to teachers, teachers to students and parents.

Question 3.1 Does the middle school principal have essential areas of responsibility and/or behaviors other than the ones you have already described?

This principal responded that the budget is a least enjoyable but important responsibility of the principal. It most affects what the principal can accomplish. Through the budget priorities are set and this principal’s priority is for personnel in that he would not let finance interfere with programs. He would cut materials before personnel and programs.

This principal also stated that parental communication was very important to help “keep them on your side.” A strong parent teacher organization helps the middle school be perceived as “our” middle school.

This principal further responded that the principal is part of a district administrative team and has responsibilities district wide to work out issues together with other members of the team. The principal also attends board of education meetings from time to time to present information to the board.

Question 3.2 Do principals of effective middle schools exercise different behaviors than principals of effective elementary schools or effective high schools?

This principal responded that all three types of principals have some common general responsibilities; however, they have a different clientele and a different atmosphere. He went on to say that middle school is the “toughest” because there is need for a little bit of everything. There is a need to be warm and caring while being strong on discipline. Students are in a “turmoil.” Middle school is so important because it helps wean students away from elementary school and prepare them for high school. Students go through two major transitions in three years. High school is more about management. In middle school there are big social differences. There are “kids playing with cars while others are dating girls.”

Question 4.1 If you were advising a committee searching for a candidate to become the new principal of their effective middle school, what would you tell them to look for?

This principal responded that the committee should search for a candidate that had a vision and an understanding of what middle school is. It should be someone who enjoys and likes middle school kids. It should also be someone who is strong, dedicated
and knows curriculum. This principal also stated that when kids know that the principal is fair and caring, then they’d accept his decisions.

Principal #9

Background

Principal #9 has been in education for 30 years. During that time he served as teacher and a language arts supervisor. He has been in his current assignment as a middle school principal for 11 years. The school has an enrollment of 850 students.

Question 2.1 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to communicating the mission of the school?

This principal responded that in communicating the mission of the school it was important to start that communication with the faculty and then extend it to the parents. The principal is seen as the “keeper of the flame.” This particular middle school went through a transition from a junior high school. This was done through a community-based committee that helped develop the middle school concept. It is important for the principal to remind stakeholders of the concept.

Question 2.2 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to managing curriculum and instruction?

This principal responded that “the principal is responsible for everything,” including curriculum. The principal needs to get involved with district administration to have articulation about curriculum issues. The middle school curriculum “gets complex,” and requires that the principal give special attention to working with supervisors and assistant principals in the articulation, development and implementation of curriculum. In I and J districts, parents have high expectations, and “they want a solid curriculum,” so this principal holds frequent curriculum discussions.

Questions 2.3 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to supervising teaching?

This principal responded that, “It’s fairly complicated,” and has to do with observing delivery in the classroom, providing appropriate staff development, evaluation, feedback, and conferencing. Classroom observations and evaluations are very important, especially of non-tenured teachers. It is also important to have a manageable ratio of teachers to supervisors/observers/evaluators.

Question 2.4 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to student progress?
This principal responded that student progress is related to curriculum, and that therefore the principal should view student progress based on individual student needs and delivery of the curriculum. He felt that measurement should be part of the curriculum, and that based on measurements of student progress such as standardized testing and the Grade Eight-Proficiency Assessment, those students in need of help should be identified. Teacher-based assessments should also be utilized. These assessments serve to identify students who will need help in high school.

**Question 2.5 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to promoting an instructional climate?**

This principal responded that the principal models behavior, and must handle discipline in such a way that teachers feel supported in their efforts to create classroom atmosphere. The principal also needs to be accessible, be out in the building “actively involved in working with kids somehow,” and have “kid contact.”

Since the inclusion requirement gives teachers more students with behavioral needs, staff development must be provided to help teachers deal with more special education issues. At the middle school, it is critical to meet the social needs of students.

**Question 2.6 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to organizational management?**

This principal responded that the principal needs to have a handle on all levels of support services that reflect on the school. It is important for the assistant principals and secretaries to understand the way people are greeted and the way the telephone is answered. Transportation and maintenance are major support service issues as well. If a building is not well maintained or if there is a bus accident without appropriate communication to the parents, this can all reflect negatively on the school. The principal must rely on many different people if the organization is going to work well.

**Question 3.1 Does the middle school principal have essential areas of responsibility and/or behaviors other than the ones you have already described?**

This principal responded that the principal needs “empathy for kids at this age level,” because middle school student needs are different than those at the elementary and high school levels. The principal needs to be a good “people person” with teachers, parents and students. It is important to identify and recruit good teachers.

**Question 3.2 Do principals of effective middle schools exercise different behaviors than principals of effective elementary schools or effective high schools?**
This principal responded that the behaviors are not different. The difference is the sense of purpose and the mission. Perceptions and pressures are different. At high school the pressure is to get into college. At middle school the pressure is academic.

**Question 4.1** If you were advising a committee searching for a candidate to become the new principal of their effective middle school, what would you tell them to look for?

This principal responded that the candidate should have patience and energy. The candidate should also have a sense of curriculum and a sense of middle school students and their needs and be able to articulate all of this. The candidate should have experience working with teachers and know their needs and how to meet these through staff development. The candidate should be a good communicator both verbally and in writing. The person should not focus on operations, but leave that to other support staff. The candidate needs to be able to plan.

**Principal #10**

**Background**

Principal #10 has been in education for 41 years. During that time he served as a teacher, a principal of an elementary school and a principal of an intermediate school. He has been in his current assignment of middle school principal for 13 years. The school has an enrollment of 1040 students.

**Question 2.1** In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to communicating the mission of the school?

This principal responded that the principal needs to have a clear vision and communicate that vision to all staff, students and to the community. The principal and these constituencies need to understand the mission and how to achieve it. The mission is built through meetings with teachers and community, not through just the principal alone.

**Question 2.2** In your opinion or perception what is the principal's role with regard to managing curriculum and instruction?

Principals should be involved in the design, implementation and modification of the curriculum, as it affects teaching assignments and the structure within the school. In the past, he used to chair curriculum committees and had more control over the curriculum. Now, supervisors have greater responsibility in managing the design, and principals have less control.
Question 2.3 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to supervising teaching?

This principal responded that the principal's role should be that of an instructional leader. His major responsibility is to improve instruction and ensure that the curriculum is implemented. The principal should "help teachers become better teachers." To do this, the principal needs to spend much time in the classroom observing instruction and talking with teachers. The principal should also work with supervisors, as all supervise teachers, and should do many "walk-throughs."

Question 2.4 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to student progress?

This principal responded that the principal assumes responsibility for the whole school. "(Student progress) falls back to the principal assuming the responsibility for everything that happens within the school. With the principal's emphasis on improving instruction, instruction and assessment go hand-in-hand. As instruction improves, so does assessment, and the principal is responsible to see that this takes place. The principal must be aware of how the students are progressing, and must provide leadership, initiative, and guidance.

Question 2.5 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to promoting an instructional climate?

This principal responded that this is a key ingredient to the role of principal. The principal's personality is reflected in the climate of the school. If the principal is open and honest, then teachers will be open to taking risks. The principal's philosophy permeates the building.

Question 2.6 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to organizational management?

This principal responded that the principal plays a key role as he consults with the assistant principal and supervisors. The effectiveness and efficiency of the school organization reflects the organization of the principal. This is very important so those things "don't fall through the cracks." It is important for the principal to balance his time between the instructional area and the organization-management area. Management is important, because it involves ensuring the safety of students, which is paramount.

Question 3.1 Does the middle school principal have essential areas of responsibility and/or behaviors other than the ones you have already described?
This principal responded that the middle school principal has to constantly advocate for middle school education and middle school students. The developmental needs of middle school students are unique and teachers need to understand those needs. The principal should encourage teachers to go to workshops and national conferences on middle school education and middle school children and the principal should do so for himself. The principal needs to know about teaming and common planning time.

**Question 3.2 Do principals of effective middle schools exercise different behaviors than principals of effective elementary schools or effective high schools?**

This principal responded that some behaviors are the same and some are different. The middle school principal needs to be highly committed to middle school students. He needs to be highly organized yet flexible and adaptable. The middle school principal needs to like middle school kids and advocate that feeling for staff.

The principal needs to balance social and academic instruction. Instruction should be exploratory. The principal needs to be visible, to shake students' hands, share lunches and to show that he is involved in the entire school program.

**Question 4.1 If you were advising a committee searching for a candidate to become the new principal of their effective middle school, what would you tell them to look for?**

This principal responded that the candidate should have middle school experience as a teacher or administrator. The candidate should know middle school philosophy and be well read, enthusiastic and energetic. The person should also understand middle school students and curriculum. The candidate should be decisive and flexible and be a person who is a good communicator. This person needs to be a candidate who can build relationships with all individuals and groups.

**Principal #11**

**Background**

Principal #11 has been in education for 16 years. During that time he has served as a teacher, band director, dean of students and a middle school assistant principal. He is in his first year in his current assignment of middle school principal. The school has an enrollment of

**Question 2.1 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to communicating the mission of the school?**

This principal responded that communicating the mission of the school is a role of the principal. The principal needs to be an instructional leader and provide a better
instructional setting for students. This principal first thought that the principal’s role would be that of a manager of time, but has more recently shifted the focus to instructional leadership which includes teaching teachers how to present materials.

**Question 2.2 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to managing curriculum and instruction?**

This principal responded that the k-12 supervisors are more directly involved with the management of curriculum and instruction. The principal provides input and requests. The principal identifies a problem or problems and the supervisors are responsible to solve them. An example cited was that the principal had reviewed statistics and found students had a problem with reading comprehension. The supervisors were then given the responsibility to address that problem.

**Question 2.3 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to supervising teaching?**

This principal responded that as instructional leader, it is a primary role of the principal to supervise teachers. The principal needs to teach teachers to teach better. An example cited by this principal involved showing teachers how to use technology in the classroom for the instruction of students.

**Question 2.4 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to student progress?**

This principal responded that it is the principal’s role to identify needs and trends through test score analysis, which is done with input from teachers and team leaders. When a problem is identified, it is the principal’s job to effectively research it and communicate that to the people around him. This information is then used to improve curriculum, instruction and student performance.

Students experience drastic changes in social growth. There is a need to give students opportunities to grow socially. If the principal does not have the skills to “give the kids the avenues to express themselves and their needs,” then a consultant should be hired “to do those things.”

**Question 2.5 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to promoting an instructional climate?**

This principal responded that the principal needs to understand the pulse of the building and who are the formal and informal leaders in the school. The climate is established by building consensus. The principal should exercise site-based management. This means that committees determine the needs of the school. Because
of their involvement in the committees, teachers are then motivated to carry out the work identified by the committee.

**Question 2.6 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to organizational management?**

This principal responded that the principal needs to set the example for the assistant principals and team leaders. This includes examples of how to effectively manage time and how to organize for effective leadership. When the principal finds that staff is not effectively organized and efficient in time management, the principal takes time to “remediate and assist those people.” This principal also stated that it is good for the organization to hire people with different strengths.

**Question 3.1 Does the middle school principal have essential areas of responsibility and/or behaviors other than the ones you have already described?**

This principal responded that the principal has responsibility for scheduling and to move the building forward in technology. He also has district responsibilities for setting an example for the district and responsibilities in the evaluation of supervisors, budget development and carrying out whatever the superintendent directs to be done which includes grant writing. It is also important for the principal to “keep the pulse of the community.”

**Question 3.2 Do principals of effective middle schools exercise different behaviors than principals of effective elementary schools or effective high schools?**

This principal responded that yes, the middle school principal’s position was different. He likened the high school principal to be more like a mayor, more in the public light and esteemed to be at a higher level. This principal went on to say that the middle school principal needs more patience with parents and to spend more time educating parents. Middle school students have different needs socially, physically and academically and that needs to be understood. The middle school principal needs to work more with teachers to teach middle school students and to generate a cooperative attitude in the classroom. This includes teaching teachers to use less of a lecture format and generating more student discussion through teachers’ use of an anticipatory set for the lesson.

**Question 4.1 If you were advising a committee searching for a candidate to become the new principal of their effective middle school, what would you tell them to look for?**

This principal responded that the committee should search for a candidate who was up to date with advances in technology and curriculum for middle school students. This person should also know the typical middle school student and the difference in the
students at each grade level. This candidate should have a sound knowledge of transitions and know different instructional delivery strategies between schools. The candidate should also have up to date hiring practices.

Principal #12

Background

Principal #12 has been in education between 26 and 27 years. She has been a teacher, a special program counselor in mental health and an assistant principal. She has been in her current assignment of middle school principal for six years. The school has an enrollment of 490 students.

Question 2.1 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to communicating the mission of the school?

This principal responded that it is a primary role of the principal to communicate the mission of the school to the community. The principal is the lead person in developing the mission of the school and having a vision for the school. This should include a set of principles that all live by. Teachers, administrators, parents and community members mutually develop these principles. It is the principal’s job to see that all adhere to these principles. The principal also worked with these constituencies to develop a strategic plan for the school, which encompassed everything from facilities and technology to student achievement and support services. This became part of the vision.

Question 2.2 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to managing curriculum and instruction?

This principal responded that in a small district the principal is responsible for everything. The principal is very important both in the development of curriculum and in overseeing its implementation. A principal chairs every curriculum committee.

Question 2.3 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to supervising teaching?

This principal responded that supervising teaching is how the principal should spend the most time. She said that the principal should not just be the evaluator, but also a mentor and a lead teacher to teachers. The principal should get into the classroom frequently and give teachers much feedback about their performance. It is especially important to be a mentor to new teachers.
Question 2.4 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to student progress?

This principal responded that it is important for the principal to know where the students are with their achievement as seen in the test results of the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment and other standardized test results. These assessments should be analyzed to determine where there are weaknesses and strengths in student performance.

This principal also thought that in setting classroom expectations, it was important for there to be a balance of teachers who were teaching under an elementary teaching certificate and teachers who were teaching with a secondary teaching certificate. The principal thought that because of different teacher training backgrounds they would have different expectations for students and it was important to balance these expectations. This principal thought that it was also important to monitor student grades, making sure that teachers were not just giving A’s to students to please their parents.

Question 2.5 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to promoting an instructional climate?

This principal responded that this is an area that is especially important when mentoring new teachers. When mentoring them, the principal is talking about instructional delivery and developing lesson plans. The principal should provide opportunities for staff development by providing “in-house” in-service courses and after school courses. It is the principal’s responsibility to secure people to teach staff development courses (e.g. staff development on technology).

Question 2.6 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to organizational management?

This principal responded that this is what the principal does most of the time. This is the first and most comfortable role for this principal. Management is everything we do such as scheduling every student into every course. Middle school scheduling is unique.

Question 3.1 Does the middle school principal have essential areas of responsibility and/or behaviors other than the ones you have already described?

This principal responded that the principal has counseling responsibility everyday, so he or she should have some background in counseling. She tells parents that students are experiencing the greatest social and emotional changes equal to their
first year of life. This causes principals and assistant principals to have the need to take on the role of counselor.

This principal draws the distinction that the middle school principal makes the schedule but that a high school principal does not make the schedule.

The principal also spends time promoting and publicizing the school, and therefore needs public relations skills. “We do everything.”

**Question 3.2 Do principals of effective middle schools exercise different behaviors than principals of effective elementary schools or effective high schools?**

This principal responded that the middle school principal is a very different job than the elementary school principal. The middle school schedule is very different from that of the elementary school.

The elementary school principal gets to work more one on one with teachers. There is less chance to do this for the middle school principal. The middle school principal spends more time with student discipline and with students in general.

The middle school principal job more resembles that of the high school principal, although the high school principal has more evening responsibilities and middle school principal has more afternoon responsibilities.

**Question 4.1 If you were advising a committee searching for a candidate to become the new principal of their effective middle school, what would you tell them to look for?**

This principal responded that she would tell them to look for a candidate who was very knowledgeable about middle school and the middle school child. The person should also understand curriculum and a variety of instructional strategies such as how to address multiple intelligences. The candidate should also have a tremendous work ethic with an ability to work nights and weekends. During the school day the principal should have the office door open to students, teachers and parents and not do paperwork during the school day.

The candidate should have a strong commitment to the job and be a good manager. This principal also suggested that teachers have a nurturing quality that principals can not always have when they see a need for change. Principals need to be able to supervise teachers.

Principal #13

**Background**
Principal #13 has been in education for 24 years. During that time he served as a teacher, an assistant principal and an elementary school principal. He has been in his current assignment of middle school principal for one year. The school has an enrollment of 625 students.

**Question 2.1 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to communicating the mission of the school?**

This principal responded that the principal has to be the most verbal cheerleader for the school and the most articulate for setting forth the vision for his/her school. What the principal says must be supported by what he does. The principal values students first, then teachers and then invites community support for this vision. When all constituencies hear what the principal believes this creates an environment for effective leadership. Principals should take a stand in stating their beliefs and not vacillate.

**Question 2.2 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to managing curriculum and instruction?**

This principal responded that the principal works with the superintendent and the assistant superintendent for curriculum in the area of curriculum and instruction. The principal chairs the curriculum revision committee. A curriculum leader is identified from among the teaching staff and that person studies a particular curriculum area for a year and then works with administration to develop the curriculum. The principal learns the k-12 perspective in a subject area and contributes to the curriculum committee as an instructional leader. Through this type of principal input to the committee, teachers come to recognize the principal as an instructional leader.

**Question 2.3 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to supervising teaching?**

This principal responded that it is important to exercise “management by walking around.” The principal should be out of the office and make frequent visits to the classrooms, staying anywhere from five minutes to an hour. This is part of making formal and informal observations. This helps put teachers at ease and keeps the principal’s fingers on the pulse of the school.

**Question 2.4 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to student progress?**

This principal responded that the principal, assistant principal, counselor, child study team and nurse have weekly meetings. This group develops a list of student names about which one or more of the group has concerns. They then review data about
the students (e.g. progress reports, parent reports and requests, report cards) and then brainstorm ideas about how to help the students. The principal also meets with parents, teachers and “everyone else associated with kids” to mediate their issues and bring them to resolution.

**Question 2.5 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to promoting an instructional climate?**

This principal responded that the principal sets high expectations and that life in a middle school is like “life in a fishbowl.”

Students are dedicated learners and 90% or more go on to colleges. Because students have these expectations for themselves, it is easy for teachers to press them to high levels of achievement. “There is academic press here.”

**Question 2.6 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to organizational management?**

This principal responded that principal’s role with regard to organizational management is everything. The principal gathers information and studies changes that will need to be made. The principal talks about changes with teachers and parents and makes changes slowly by grade level. The principal is accountable for all that goes on in the school.

**Question 3.1 Does the middle school principal have essential areas of responsibility and/or behaviors other than the ones you have already described?**

This principal responded that this middle school was a unique place in that it had three grade levels and three different sets of schedules. Sixth grade is like fifth grade with the schedule allowing for flexible time. The seventh grade is more like a traditional middle school schedule based on four core academic subjects (“quads”). The eighth grade schedule more closely resembles a high school schedule. This principal states that these schedules are “frighteningly effective.” He cites high student and teacher attendance as proof of this.

**Question 3.2 Do principals of effective middle schools exercise different behaviors than principals of effective elementary schools or effective high schools?**

This principal responded that middle schools are more complex than elementary schools but less than high schools. The most effective middle school principal appreciates the complexity of the high school but deals with people more like in elementary school. At the elementary school the students’ primary relationship is with one teacher. This principal believes it is important for the principal to know the name of every student and to let the students know they are “one person out of one, not one out
of 650.” It is vital for students to know that there is some connection. The principal is not removed from the students and knows that they are going through a lot. It is important to know each student. It is also important for students to know there are consequences for their behaviors and these consequences are consistently and fairly applied to all students.

**Question 4.1** If you were advising a committee searching for a candidate to become the new principal of their effective middle school, what would you tell them to look for?

This principal responded that the committee should look for a person with a great heart. “The rest can be learned.” It is a vital component for administrators to have empathy for teachers and for teachers and administrators to have empathy for parents and students. The educational process is personalized for all constituencies.

**Principal #14**

**Background**

Principal #14 has been in education for 33 years. During that time she served as a teacher, a supervisor, a middle school principal and a superintendent. She has been in her current assignment of middle school principal for three years. The school has an enrollment of 835 students.

**Question 2.1** In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to communicating the mission of the school?

This principal responded that the principal should be the school’s major cheerleader. The principal needs to understand the client (i.e. the student) and appropriate teaching strategies for middle school students. This principal states that everyone has an agenda for middle school students and the principal needs to understand those agendas to be a cheerleader. The principal must provide leadership and have a vision for what the school is all about. The principal, as one person can make a difference. The principal’s optimism translates to staff and students and is a most important role of the principal.

**Question 2.2** In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to managing curriculum and instruction?

This principal responded that the principal has to be active in planning the curriculum, the selection of materials and the delivery of instruction. This is done in conjunction with supervisors. It is important to ask the question, “Is the content what it
should be?” It is also important to observe instruction, give teachers feedback and cause them to reflect upon their teaching practice.

**Question 2.3** In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to supervising teaching?

This principal responded that supervision of teachers is the most important role on the list of principal’s duties. The principal is the “principal teacher” and must be a teacher of teachers. In assuring that teachers are learning the principal fulfills a collegial role. The principal may have to cause some teachers to leave teaching. The principal needs to make sure every teacher is for “my kid.”

**Question 2.4** In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to student progress?

This principal responded that the principal makes academic decisions about grouping and placement of students. The principal monitors report cards, talks with parents and listens to child study team concerns. The principal monitors students’ social and emotional development through connections with the child study team and the guidance department.

The principal also makes sure the school atmosphere is safe, pleasant and a desirable place for students. The principal interacts with students by walking around the building.

**Question 2.5** In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to promoting an instructional climate?

This principal responded that the principal should be a model for others. This principal states that Maslow’s Theory is practical and should be taught to the staff by the principal. The principal practices the kinds of interactions that lead to safety and security for all. “You need to laugh.”

**Question 2.6** In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to organizational management?

This principal responded that organizational management is important. “If you don’t do it, you don’t have a school.” The principal should return parents’ calls within 24 hours, meet schedules and deadlines, handle mail once, budget wisely and not argue with the superintendent. The principal must be efficient and not get bogged down. The principal should be a model of efficiency for staff with a mindset that the principal is in control. The staff has freedom of time in how teams can control time. The priority order for dealing with issues is kids first, then teachers, parents and paperwork last.
Question 3.1 Does the middle school principal have essential areas of responsibility and/or behaviors other than the ones you have already described?

This principal responded that the middle school principal has the difficult job of acquiring and maintaining parent support and keeping parents involved. This is done through education of the parent community by the principal.

This principal states that the middle school principal also has the expectation of creating the next cadre of middle school principals. The principal also has the responsibility of carrying an image for the school district And maintaining a relationship with the Board of Education.

Question 3.2 Do principals of effective middle schools exercise different behaviors than principals of effective elementary school or effective high schools?

This principal responded that yes, the role of the middle school principal is different, but maybe it shouldn’t be. She says that if you want to be loved, be and elementary principal; if you want to be responsible, be a high school principal; but, if you want to be needed be a middle school principal.

This principal went on to say that the elementary principal works with teachers and committees. The high school principal works with sports, clubs, etc. The middle school principal provides a bridge but not a holding tank for students. The middle school has collegial function with teams of teachers working with each other and with the principal. The effective middle school principal should exercise a leadership style that reflects the organization of the middle school.

Question 4.1 If you were advising a committee searching for a candidate to become the new principal of their effective middle school, what would you tell them to look for?

This principal responded that the committee should look for a candidate with a sense of humor and one who is not egotistical. The person should also the purpose of administration is to serve, not to be the boss. The candidate should know how to serve all constituencies. This principal emphasized three words as values in her middle school: respect, responsibility and excellence.

This principal also stated that the candidate should be smart, have good grades, have a diversity of experience and have been mentored by someone with good experience.

Principal #15

Background
Principal #15 has been in education between 25 and 26 years. During that time she has served as a teacher, a district coordinator and an assistant principal. She has been in her current assignment as middle school principal for six months. The school has an enrollment of 715 students.

**Question 2.1 In your opinion or perception what is the principal's role with regard to communicating the mission of the school?**

This principal responded that this is a critical role of the principal. The principal has to live and breathe the mission of the school and constantly reinforce it. It's in every conversation. The principal has to push the mission more to “get the extra edge.”

**Question 2.2 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to managing curriculum and instruction?**

This principal responded that the principal has a more critical role than content supervisors do. The principal needs to know all content areas. The principal is in the classrooms all of the time and needs to know the resources available for instruction.

**Question 2.3 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to supervising teaching?**

This principal responded that this is also a critical role of the principal. She states that a balance needs to be struck when supervising teaching in the dual roles of evaluator of teachers and mentor to teachers.

**Question 2.4 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal’s role with regard to student progress?**

This principal responded that the principal has to know the data. Data is gathered from teachers, pupil assistance committee meetings, and standardized test scores. It is very important if student progress is not up to expectations for the principal to serve as a resource.

**Question 2.5 In your opinion or perception what is the principal’s role with regard to promoting an instructional climate?**

This principal responded that promoting an instructional climate is also a critical role of the principal. It's done through relationships within the school culture. The principal shares leadership with key staff members.

**Question 2.6 In your opinion or perception, what is the principal's role with regard to organizational management?**
This principal responded that the principal has to be organized. The principal gets help from the assistant principal, office staff and technology. The principal can not run the entire building and needs to rely upon others.

**Question 3.1 Does the middle school principal have essential areas of responsibility and/or behaviors other than the ones you have already described?**

This principal responded that an important responsibility of the principal is to maintain community communication regarding what a middle school is all about. The principal also constantly works with teams of teachers seeking to continuously improve their educational efforts.

**Question 3.2 Do principals of effective middle schools exercise different behaviors than the principals of effective elementary schools or effective high schools?**

This principal responded that the middle school principal does exercise different behaviors in the way leadership is shared. This shared leadership runs schools within a school. The middle school principal needs to know how to balance shared leadership. This person needs to be a good collaborator, team builder and establish good relationships.

**Question 4.1 If you were advising a committee searching for a candidate to become the new principal of their effective middle school, what would you tell them to look for?**

This principal responded that the committee should look for a candidate who can establish good relationships with the community, with teachers and with administration.