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School Leadership: Narratives of Title I Distinguished Middle School Principals

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SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: NARRATIVES OF TITLE I DISTINGUISHED MIDDLE

SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

by

CINDY L. BOYETT

(Under the Direction of Julie G. Maudlin)

ABSTRACT

I began thinking about the topic of this dissertation in 2006 when I entered the world of

educational leadership. I found myself struggling as I transitioned from middle school teacher to

middle school administrator. I knew other novice administrators must be experiencing the same

transition "growth pains" and that they too must be longing for information/stories from other

leaders that have successfully made the transition to successful educational leader. Educational

leaders are under close surveillance as the bar for accountability continues to increase each year

due to measures put forth in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002. Everyone is looking to them

to provide and promote effective educational experiences for everyone within their school

community. What I hope to accomplish with this dissertation is to provide valuable insight into

the everyday life experiences of successful middle level leaders. Through the sharing of life

experiences this study will provide a broad spectrum of administrative experience. It is my desire

that this study serve as a springboard for similar studies that promote the sharing of life

experiences of educational administrators. It is my hope that this study will serve as a valuable

resource for administrators working within counties that do not offer mentorship programs

and/or additional leadership resources for new or ineffective leaders. Through this study and

similar studies middle level leaders can relate to and learn from the experiences of their peers.

INDEX WORDS: Principal, Middle school, Leadership, Principal's narratives, Narrative inquiry,

Transformational leadership, Novice principals, Leadership practices

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my maternal grandparents, Mama Melba and Daddy Babe. Your endless gift of love helped meld me into the person I am today. I miss you both. I will see you soon.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"Leadership is one of the most widely talked about subjects and at the same time one of the most elusive and puzzling" (Cronin, 1993, p. 7).

Leadership in schools has become more complex as administrators struggle with new reform efforts aimed towards student achievement. Over the last two decades, school leadership has been on the forefront as the role of school leader has changed from that of manager to instructional leader (Halliger, 1992). Not long ago it was presumed that the school leader, or, more specifically, the principal was the "independent" leader of the school community. He alone was autonomous and made all decisions affecting the function of the school. In short, administrators were constructed as "herculean" school leaders thought to be capable of managing an entire school independently. They were considered self-disciplined, "take charge" individuals who showed initiative, with determination and persistence in pursuing "his" goals (Murphy, 1988).

Contemporary school leaders are faced today with enormous challenges and need guidance and reflection to help them better understand how to be transformational leaders. Principals in the 21st century are becoming increasingly aware that being or becoming a "herculean, independent" school leader is neither possible nor reasonable. New as well as veteran principals realize that very few educational leaders actually possess "all" of the qualities that great educational leaders are "expected" to have as current reform measures challenge educational administrators to move beyond the outdated Herculean leader era.

Principals must engage themselves in leadership strategies geared towards the involvement of everyone in facilitating school change. Bennis (1993) best describes the manager to leader transition as he notes the key to making the right decisions come from developing the right leadership qualities. He stresses that leaders, not managers are key to the development and success of an organization as he points out the crucial differences between the two:

- The manager administers; the leader innovates

- The manager is a copy; the leader is an original

- The manager maintains; the leader develops

- The manager focuses on systems and structure; the leader focuses on people

- The manager relies on control; the leader inspires trust

- The manager has a short-range view; the leader has a long-range perspective

- The manager asks how and when; the leader asks what and why

- The manager has his eye on the bottom line; the leader has his eye on the horizon

- The manager accepts the status quo; the leader challenges it

- The manager is the classic good soldier; the leader is his own person

- The manager does things right; the leader does the right thing (p. 214)

Constant communication with others, a hallmark of effective leadership, is necessary in order to meet current accountability measures set forth by federal and state guidelines. Under the federal guidelines of the No Child Left Behind Act each state has developed and implemented accountability measures for determining whether the schools are making adequate yearly progress (AYP). AYP is a state's measurement of progress towards a goal set

forth wherein 100 percent of students must achieve the state's academic standards in

reading/language arts and math. AYP sets the minimum levels of proficiency that the state,

schools, and school districts must achieve yearly on standardized tests and other related

academic indicators. The parents of children attending low income (Title I) schools that do

not make AYP over a period of time have the option to transfer their children to another

school or obtain free supplemental educational services (tutoring). To meet these demands

many experienced as well as novice principals are currently utilizing "shared leadership" as

they constantly act and interact with others. This is in direct correlation to Rost (1991), who

posits that leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real

change that reflect mutual purposes. Wise administrators depend upon the experience and

knowledge of others. The conventional description of the "independent" educational

administrator is outdated and many successful leaders have determined the need for a

paradigm shift in the area of leadership. Sashkin and Rosenback (1993) define this as a shift

from "transactional leadership", transactions or exchanges provided to followers as rewards

for doing what the leaders want to "transformational leadership" which involves constructing

organizational contexts that transforms and empowers group members by allowing them to

exercise and expand their capabilities. This new transformational leadership paradigm is

quickly being embraced by new as well as seasoned educational leaders as they come to the

realization that the task before them is phenomenal. Even "Herculean" leaders cannot

transform the schools they are responsible for alone. Leaders are facing huge challenges,

stakes are high, and they need guidance and reflection to help them be effective leaders. This

study is a reflection and sharing of the transformational life experiences of leaders that

participate in shared leadership on a daily basis. Their leadership strategies and reflections are

to be utilized as examples that will prompt and promote shared leadership geared towards helping new as well as seasoned school administrators meet the challenges they are facing today as they become transformational leaders.

Context of the Study

Current school reform measures include a combination of heightened expectations for student performance, aggressive national and state policies for holding schools accountable for improved student performance, and diminishing financial resources. Schools are being asked to do more with less. Schools are expected to not only raise their overall achievement, but to close the gap in achievement between students that traditionally do well in school and those who do not. Middle level leaders/educators must address these reform measures while at the same time addressing the transition needs that occur with adolescents. During their middle level years, middle school students experience rapid physical, emotional, and cognitive changes. The concerns adolescents have with issues such as self-esteem, inquiring minds, and the development of personal and interpersonal relationships make middle level school reform very challenging as middle level educators must address these needs in addition to dealing with accountability measures. Middle level reform efforts including *Turning Points*, *Turning Points 2000*, the National Middle School Association's (NMSA) *This We Believe* and *Breaking Ranks in the Middle* are filled with inspiring messages for middle level leaders. These middle level reform "messages" are lacking a leadership framework that middle level school principals can utilize to foster academic excellence within their schools while also addressing the physical and emotional needs of their middle level learners. For this reason many middle school leaders may fail at reform measures that could ultimately result in higher

student achievement. Thus, the study of effective middle school leadership practice is of vital importance.

Over the years leadership theories in business have become abundant, however, leadership theories addressing school leadership have not evolved as quickly. This is due, in part, to the perception that effective principals are effective only when acting in a "power" capacity. Recently, however, this perception of individual "power" has changed. According to Leithwood (1994), research practices of "transformational" leaders, who share "power" with everyone within the organization, have been identified as being beneficial to overall school success. Because the shared power model of Bass' (1984) and Leithwood's (1994) transformational leadership theory fits well with the demands (mentioned previously), this theory of leadership will serve as the contextual lens for this study of the life and leadership experiences of middle school administrators.

The concept of transformational leadership was first developed by James McGregor Burns in 1978 and later expanded by Bernard Bass (1985), Bass and Avolios (1994), and Kenneth Leithwood (1994). According to Burns (1978), transformational leaders form "a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents" (p. 4). Bass and Avolio (1994) and Burns (1978) describe two domains of leadership, transformational and transactional. "Transformational leaders" provide opportunities for personal growth while "transactional leaders" provide rewards to employees in return for desired performance. It appears transformational leaders have the acquired ability to instill in their employees a sense that individual goals may be attained through organizational success. It is this transformational leadership style that encourages commitment to the organization and the members of the organization. On the other hand,

transactional leadership promotes a "pay for performance" mentality. Although the two leadership theories are interwoven throughout various literature resources it is transformational leadership that best addresses the changes that must take place in order for schools to be successful in the 21st century. These transformations must begin with school leaders.

According to Bass (1985), four factors, referred to as the "Four I's" (Sosik & Dionne, 1997) of transformational leadership, characterize the behaviors of transformational leaders:

- "individual consideration" is portrayed by giving "personal attention to members who seem neglected"

- "intellectual stimulation" is revealed by enabling "followers to think of old problems in new ways"

- "inspirational motivation" is exhibited by communicating "high performance expectations through the projection of a powerful, confident and dynamic presence that invigorates followers"

- "idealized influence," which is characterized by modeling behavior through exemplary personal achievements, character and behavior (Bass, 1990, p. 218).

Leithwood (1994) modified the transformational leadership model so it could be utilized by educational (school) leaders. He posits that the Four I's of transformational leadership are necessary skills for school principals if they are to meet the challenges of the 21st century. He maintains that school leaders who build commitment among faculty and staff members are indeed an asset to any school. Leithwood argues that the outdated "power" mindset of principals will diminish the chance for long range effective change in faculty, staff, parent and student practices.

Leithwood (1994), Jantzi and Leithwood (1996) identified six key dimensions of transformational school leadership. Dimension number one is the acquisition of a vision for the school. Leithwood asserts that school leaders may need to determine which avenue to take in order to help their school establish a vision. Some leaders may choose to promote their own vision, while others may choose to work collaboratively with faculty and staff on the development of the vision. It is the responsibility of the transformational school leader to elucidate the meaning of the school's vision to all members of the school community. Once established, the vision must be continually communicated to the faculty and staff, students, parents, and community members.

The second dimension, according to Leithwood (1994) is that of building consensus among faculty and staff, students, parents and community members around the goals of the school. Consensus building can be accomplished as the transformational leader shares the school vision and goals along with individual goals. The interlinking of personal and organizational goals is the building block of transformational leaders. School leaders must regularly engage their faculty and staff in progress monitoring of both - self and school. The third dimension is the offering of individualized support for faculty and staff. Transformational leaders who get to know their faculty and staff's strengths, weaknesses and interests can support and encourage faculty and staff members as they work together to attain the school's goals. The better the leader knows the staff members the more approachable she will become. This quality enhances communication and commitment which are essential characteristics for school success. By utilizing individualized support for faculty and staff members transformational leaders will become more aware of success and failure so recognition and redirection can be given in a productive and timely manner.

Another dimension is intellectual stimulation. Creating professional exchange opportunities is one way that transformational leaders can support this dimension. Staff development opportunities such as school visits, conferences, collaborative planning, etc. will increase opportunities for intellectual stimulation among faculty and staff members. School leaders that are perceptive of the needs of their teachers can effectively plan meaningful intellectual opportunities that will be viewed as positive learning experiences.

The fifth dimension addressed by Leithwood (1994) is that of "modeling." A transformational leader who is enthusiastic when addressing others will allow the faculty and staff to view them as promoting a great working environment. These leaders are viewed as "hard workers" and are seen as personable and approachable. "Modeling" is a great way for transformational leaders to help faculty and staff members accomplish tasks or interact with others in an effective manner.

The last dimension described by Leithwood (1994) is that of having high expectations for performance. By striving for excellence in all areas within the school, these leaders promote professionalism, great work ethics, and innovative practices. High expectation is a characteristic that transformational leaders must display in order to prompt faculty and staff to obtain the school vision and goals. Expectations must be clearly stated and performance driven in order for those within the school community to determine the areas of strengths as well as weaknesses in order to maximize shared learning experiences for all.

The school culture is ultimately affected by all of these transformational decisions and practices. The school's culture can be positive or negative and is easily detectable simply by entering the school. It can be viewed in every aspect of the school from the morning announcements to academics to extracurricular activities. Transformational leaders who

promote a positive school culture will in turn foster positive learning experiences for students, parents, and educators.

As previously mentioned leadership theories are abundant as are the leaders that have utilized these theories to enhance their leadership practices. While moving from theory to practice may prove difficult and time consuming, more often than not leaders do not have ample opportunities to reflect upon and share these practices. By reflecting upon transformational life experiences school principals can examine their practices, share their experiences, and utilize their life experiences to benefit themselves and others. Principals, especially novice principals, are often influenced by the characteristics that they should possess. An example of the research they could consult is Little and Little (2001). Their list contained 59 essential characteristics, of which only 5 were specific to middle level leaders: "committed to developmentally responsive middle level education," "knowledgeable about middle level curriculum," "understands…young adolescent learners," "interdisciplinary team organization," "understands the nature and needs of older children and young adolescents" (pp. 4-6). Novice leaders may become disenchanted as they strive to display all of these "essential" characteristics. The stress becomes overwhelming for many new leaders and soon they may choose to leave the field or return to the classroom.

In examining the pressures, successes, and failures associated with the roles and responsibilities of middle level leaders one could certainly examine the preparation programs for middle school leaders. According to Gaskill (2002) only seven states currently have certification programs that target middle level administrators. The trend is K-12 administrative licensure with many programs requiring only an internship in a middle level school. This "internship" trend often leaves many middle level administrators with minimal

principalship experience. Since many middle level leaders are facing the demands of accountability coupled with the needs of the adolescents entrusted to their care, and the sharing of life experiences among middle level principals is almost non-existent beyond the county level, this study will provide beneficial information as veteran middle level principals share their daily life principalship experiences.

<div align="center">Research Questions</div>

The purpose of this study is to explore the transformational life experiences of three Title I Distinguished middle school principals in a rural county in Southeast Georgia. By reflecting upon and sharing life experiences, these school principals will examine and share their transformational leadership experiences in the hopes that they can be utilized to benefit themselves and others. These administrators will share how they utilize and personalize the dimensions brought forth by Leithwood and Jantzi, as well as other dimensions they find beneficial to their organizations. This study seeks to answer the following research question: What can be learned from the narratives of Title I Distinguished middle school principals?

<div align="center">Personal Significance</div>

This study evolved from my experience as a struggling novice middle school educational administrator. As other new administrators, I read many studies about the characteristics of leaders however; I am currently seeking information about the lived experiences of transformational middle school administrators. The purpose of my study is to understand the world of middle level leaders involved in transformational leadership practices and how those practices impact every aspect of their educational institution. From this study an intermingling of reflections and practices can evolve as transformational administrators share their

experiences. These experiences can be utilized as building blocks for the incorporation of transformational leadership practices by other school leaders.

Statement of the Problem

Effective middle level leadership experiences are essential as middle level education continues to be under the accountability microscope. As the bar for accountability continues to increase with each year due to measures put forth in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002, principals often find themselves and their practices under close surveillance as everyone is looking to the school leader to provide and promote effective educational skills and practices within their school. Anfara, Roney, Smarkola, DuCette, and Gross (2006) remind us that current school reform initiatives have created a heightened awareness of the importance of effective middle level principals (2006). In order for strong, effective leaders to emerge, maintain, and thrive, reflective practice is crucial. This study will utilize the reflections of transformational administrators to create opportunities for other administrators to utilize and reflect upon transformational leadership practices.

This study will provide valuable insight into the everyday life experiences of middle level principals. The sharing of life experiences of the administrators in this study will provide a broad spectrum of administrative experience as the subjects in the study have from four to thirty-two years of experience. It is my desire that this study serve as a springboard for similar studies that promote the sharing of the life experiences of educational administrators. This type of study is an excellent opportunity for a network of educators to evolve with a common goal in mind - that of effective transformational educational leadership. Studies of this type will help fill in the gap that is present in educational leadership literature – that of life experience. The study will aid administrators working within counties that do not offer

mentorship programs and/or additional transformational leadership resources for new or ineffective leaders. Through this study and similar studies middle level leaders can relate to and learn from the experiences of their peers.

Autobiographical Roots

As I consider this study I cannot help but reflect on the personal transformational life experiences that have led me to a career in educational administration. I have only recently come to the realization that these life experiences were "transformational" but now, in retrospect, I find it amazing that I am writing a dissertation on transformational life experiences of middle school administrators. As I share my story I do so with thoughts of Leithwood (1994) and Jantzi and Leithwood (1996) and their six key dimensions of transformational school leadership.

1) Key Dimension #1 - Vision: I grew up in South Georgia, a third generation factory worker who was raised by hard-working, strict, extremely loving grandparents. My retired grandfathers and grandmothers taught me the importance of spending time with those you love and care for. They gave me the personal attention that I needed. They always saw the best in me even when I was at my worst. They modeled behaviors such as respect for others; equality for all; love for your neighbors; caring for God's creations; and giving thanks for the blessings bestowed upon us.

Although my grandparents had very little formal education, (my grandfather completed third grade and my grandmother completed the ninth) they experienced exemplary personal achievement. My grandfather was a veteran, farmer, painter, police officer and bus driver. For his love and dedication to others he was named "Citizen of the Year" in our small town a few years prior to his death. My grandmother was a prominent figure in our small church. She was

a Sunday school teacher, church treasurer, Training Union director, assistant choir director, seamstress, farmer's wife, mother, aunt, sister-in-law, and grandmother. She was loved and respected by many. I often recall her helping others such as providing a ride to church when they were in need of assistance. She and my grandfather were true humanitarians. They cared for everyone and often worked together to make sure those without family members or food would have a good meal especially during the holidays. I do not recall anyone ever being turned away from our small, wooden, much used and loved kitchen table. It was through my grandparents' love of family and dedication to hard work that I developed a vision for my life. I visualized having a comfortable home filled with children and a great husband. Together, he and I would become pillars of our community, raising our children in church, and teaching them to become responsible adults.

2) Key dimension # 2- Building consensus around goals: As for education, my grandfather, who was also my bus driver, often let this little red-haired, freckle-faced granddaughter get her way when she did not want to go to school. I did not enjoy school. All I had to do to end up at home was to cry on the bus and tell him I was sick. I then enjoyed days lying on the couch watching game shows, and ultimately being brought my "sick day" fudge brownie and coke. Education was not a priority to my family. I was expected to graduate high school, but hard work and a regular job was definitely stressed as a "must" in my home. I grew up in the 1960s and 1970s when it was easy to find a factory job. Since working in the fields had been the past occupations of my grandparents they believed a factory job to be a great career. Together we decided that I would work in a stable job. Although my family had a history of factory work we came to a consensus that any stable job of my choice would be acceptable and would help me reach my goals and vision.

3) Key Dimension # 3 – Individualized support - I began work at the age of fifteen at a local garment factory. I recall getting the job because my mother and grandmother worked there and they were considered excellent employees due to their dedication to the company. My grandmother was extremely grateful for the job in the huge building. She often told me how fortunate we were to be working at the factory as we no longer had to pick cotton for a living. My mother was grateful for a job that helped provide for her family. I never recall hearing either of them complain about work, being too tired to cook a meal when they arrived home, or not having time for themselves. I also recall not being grateful for the job that they were so thankful for and thinking from day one that I would not make it in that dreadful, dull, damp, dark building for even a year. I was wrong. I was there for nine years.

During my nine year stay at the factory I met many people. I worked side by side with my co-workers. The conversations and relationships I developed with them are still with me today. I often think of them and the sharing of our lives via stories. I will forever be grateful for the relationships and support I developed during my stay at the factory. I was still employed there when I got married, at the age of seventeen – while still attending high school.

Soon after graduation I became pregnant with my first child and since my job was our only source of insurance I was stuck in a job that I hated. I loved the friends that I made at the factory but try as I might I could not stand the thought of working forever in that dungeon. I lived for the break bell, lunch bell, and end of the day bell. During the work day I sewed for hours upon end with totally mindless movements. I ultimately purchased and listened to a radio containing television channels during the workday. Sharing the radio with my surrounding friends, I soon became a "soap opera" addict. Trying to stay one step ahead of the actors on the "soaps" were my only means of mental stimulation, other than the sharing of life

stories with my co-workers, as I worked from 8AM until 5PM day after day. I continued working at the factory until I became pregnant with my second child. I was 24 years old. During that pregnancy, I became ill and had to work part time.

The sharing of stories of those I worked with on a daily basis helped me acquire knowledge that would forever be ingrained into my being. The golden rule was present in every situation, every day as others helped me with individualized support. I, as well, helped others as I had been helped to acquire knowledge and skills that would stay with each of us for the remainder of our lives.

4) Key Dimension #4 – Intellectual Stimulation - By the time I became pregnant with our second child my husband had managed to obtain a better paying job that included benefits, one of which was insurance. I welcomed my "pregnant illness" as it gave me an opportunity to stay at home again and enjoy thoughts of my childhood. As I sat in our single-wide mobile home awaiting the arrival of our second child I recalled my work days and the interactions of my friends and family. These thoughts prompted the intellectual stimulation that would soon pay off for my family and for me. During this time our second son was born healthy, thanks to God. During the time I stayed at home with our second child my husband and I began building our first home. One day, while shopping for building materials, my life changed drastically. I met a former classmate who was working at the building material supply store while also attending college. I was surprised to learn that one of my classmates, someone I had known all my life was attending college. This was definitely not the norm as I recall only two classmates attending college immediately after graduation. As always, I made up my mind in a matter of minutes. I would attend college as well. I would become a teacher and teach while my youngest son attended school. My plan was to graduate the year he began

elementary school. I missed my graduation goal by a year due to having to take remedial classes. My intellectual stimulation was about to take a drastic turn from social to academic. The two would mesh beautifully as I thrived on being with "younger" students and sharing my life experiences while attending class at Georgia Southern College.

5) Key Dimension # 5 – Modeling: Prior to attending my first college class, I had been out of school for ten years. I often shared my work experience with others and indicated how grateful I was to have had the work experience that provided me with a great concern for others. I also felt the need to share the importance of a formal education and how much the degree that I was seeking would make a difference for me and my family. I was the first in my family to ever attend college and graduated in the winter of 1993 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Middle Grades education. I taught middle school for four years, in the same building I attended middle school, while earning my Master's Degree in Middle Grades Education in the summer of 1997. It would be many years later that I would earn my Educational Leadership degree and ultimately begin the doctoral program at Georgia Southern University.

6) Key Dimension # 6 – High Expectations: Once again, in the fall of 2006, my life changed drastically when I entered the world of educational leadership as a struggling assistant principal of a middle school in a neighboring town. That was when the idea for this study originated. I had taken all of the educational leadership classes necessary to obtain my degree but no "class" could prepare me for the "real world" experiences I was encountering as an educational leader. The responsibilities I had encountered as a teacher had not prepared me for my newfound career path. I was no longer considered "one of us" (teachers) nor was I truly "one of them" (administrators) due to being in a "new" position, not to mention being in

a "new" school. Needless to say, I struggled through my first year, completing my assigned duties and being left with a sense of emptiness. I realized that I had much to learn and that desire to learn created a fear within my being about where to go and who to seek for help.

It would be during my second year as an administrator that I would be given one of the most wonderful opportunities of my life. A new principal came to our school with 32 years of experience ranging from teacher, to counselor, to special education director, to principal. She would become a wonderful mentor and I would learn so much from her as she shared her experiences, new and old, in a manner that was meant to teach and direct. Her heartfelt love for education and everyone involved in the educational process is evident in each and every move she makes. She is still with us and is one of the participants in my study. Her modeling of practices is very much appreciated and something that I hope to take with me throughout my career.

I have come to realize that my life is an ongoing transformational experience, one that would not be possible without the stories and narratives of the people I have been fortunate enough to share life experiences with. Through this study I have decided to share the stories and narratives of educational leaders. It is through this sharing of experience that I, and others not unlike myself, will have the opportunity to see ourselves in these leaders and these leaders in ourselves.

Methodology

As this study explores narratives of three middle school principals, autobiographical narrative inquiry is ideal for my study because it enables me to interact with the study participants as a middle school administrator. This methodology will be utilized to acquire narratives of the principals who have dedicated their lives to becoming middle level

administrators. I will work collaboratively with the participants, allowing them to share their life stories while also incorporating my voice as a participant in the administrative community. This study searches for commonalities of successful middle school principals. The methodology of autobiographical narrative inquiry is also appropriate because as this study evolves I continue to understand myself as a middle level school administrator. As I place myself in the study in searching for the perfect methodology I ask myself "what research method helps me most as an administrator?" I quickly determine that I utilize narrative inquiry on a daily basis in my interactions with other administrators, teachers, students, parents, and community members. It is through narrative inquiry that I gather information that aids me in providing and promoting the daily educational practices of our school. Autobiographical inquiry focuses on the heart of what this study is about – experience. It will be through autobiographical narrative inquiry that I gather and then share the stories of the participants in the study. These experiences will be shared as a means of providing and promoting proven effective transformational leadership stories.

<div align="center">Challenge of the Study</div>

According to Virginia L. Olesen (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) researchers must always be careful to "attend to representation, voice and text in ways that avoid replication of the researcher and instead display representation of the participants" (p.366). Since the researcher in this study is a practicing middle level administrator, and the study is autobiographical in nature, she must keep in mind what Olsen is implying and be ever mindful of accurate representation. An additional challenge of this study is that the researcher must be conscious of limitations when a study is being conducted. This study is limited to three middle school leaders within the same county. Careful consideration was given to the

incorporation of additional participants and the results of this consideration are presented in the participant selection section of the study.

Significance of the Study

Due to educational reform initiatives the interest in middle school leadership is growing daily. Since the educational leader is considered vital to the success of the educational institution, it is the challenge of the twenty-first century educational leader to provide and promote learning environments that are rich with learning opportunities for everyone within their educational community. While numerous studies have been conducted in reference to effective characteristics, knowledge, and skills of middle school leaders few provide insight into the everyday life experiences of successful middle level leaders. There is much to be gained from studying the experiences of middle school leaders. This study will fill this gap in literature by providing novice middle school educational leaders the opportunity to see themselves in others and reflect upon their successful practices. This study is also significant in that it evolves from the merging of three fields – the theoretical world of Curriculum Studies, the qualitative world of narrative inquiry, and the more quantitative world of Educational Leadership.

Overview of the Study

This study is an autobiographical narrative inquiry into the lives of three middle school principals in Tattnall County Georgia. The experience levels of the three principals range from four to thirty-two years. Two of the participants are male and one is female. Two participants are Caucasian and one is Black. The participants will be interviewed at their perspective schools. Observations will be conducted in the perspective schools as the principals carry out their daily lives as transformational leaders. Additional observations may

occur as warranted if the principals are acting within their professional capacity away from the school setting. The collected data will be presented in a narrative format. The researcher will present research findings to participants prior to publication which will allow opportunities for revision due to human error.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

History of the Middle School

Since this study primarily focuses on middle level transformational leaders, the history of

the middle school and the needs of the middle level learner must be addressed. With the

establishment of the first junior high schools in 1909 in Berkeley, CA, and Columbus, OH,

there has been ongoing research and debate regarding the educational process of young

adolescents or "middle level learners". Researchers George and Oldaker (1985) referred to the

"middle school movement" as "one of the largest and most comprehensive efforts at

educational reorganization in the history of American public schooling" (p.1). Tracing the

history of this movement provides insight into the evolution of leadership strategies designed

to increase the achievement of middle school students.

Early educators John Dewey, Edward L. Thorndike, and G. Stanley Hall presented

developmental theories of adolescence which prompted the development of educational

strategies targeted at young adolescents. Awareness of these theories/strategies also led to the

development of schools designed to meet the specific needs of these learners. According to

Clark & Clark (1994) student dropout rates and variations in learning styles for the middle

level learner prompted the development of educational institutions geared towards meeting

and the emotional, social, physical, and intellectual needs of young adolescents. During the

time period of 1910 through 1925 the organization and establishment of "junior high" schools

continued eventually reaching 10,000 by the year 1947 (Hansen & Hern, 1971). During the

1940s and 1950s these junior high schools offered courses similar to those offered in high

schools. Specialists in subject areas were hired to teach and junior high school students were

ability grouped, or "tracked," in academic core classes (Wright & Greer, 1963). Gruhn and Douglass' (1947), in "Six Functions of the Junior High School," prioritized integration, exploration, guidance, differentiation, socialization, and articulation as the major forces guiding junior high school educators. As the history of the middle school evolved these early educators were providing valuable insight into the priorities that must be addressed by school leaders.

Near the end of the 1950s concerns were presented that the organizational changes associated with "junior high schools" were not adequate in meeting the needs of young adolescents. Researchers Hansen & Hern (1971) and Lounsbury (1954) shared findings that the increase in tracking, the development of junior high departmentalization, and school activities such as formal dances and interscholastic competitions were not conducive to meeting the needs of young adolescents.   By the 1960s William Georgiades created a comprehensive model for "new" middle level schools which included team teaching, advisory groups and an interdisciplinary curriculum (Trump & Georgiades, 1970). Other researchers such as Grambs, Noyce, and Robertson (1961) called for the relocation of the ninth grade to the high school in order to offer college-preparatory courses in one location. Also, Alexander and Williams (1965) proposed changes including homeroom classes and the formation of teacher teams. As new "middle schools" began to emerge, "junior high schools" or "mini high schools" slowly dissolved. The debate of middle school versus junior high school continued over the next two decades.

Since the emergence of the modern middle school, three organizations have worked to define middle level education: the National Middle School Association (NMSA), The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), and the Carnegie Task Force

on Education of Young Adolescents. The terms "middle level school" and "middle level education" were first used by the research team of the Dodge Foundation/NASSP national study of schools "in the middle" (Valentine, Clark, Nickerson, & Keefe, 1981). By the late 1980s these two terms had gained acceptance and were widely used by middle and junior high educators to describe their school settings, procedures, and processes (Lounsbury, 1991). Current middle level education trends and issues address school reform and the effects of reform measures on student achievement (Herman, 1999).

<div align="center">Overview of Leadership</div>

According to Bass (1981), the study of leaders and leadership is an art. Leadership as a topic of discussion dates back many, many years to the works of Plato and Caesar and is a concept that occurs among all people, regardless of race, culture, or location. With much interest in leadership abilities, skills, and characteristics, leadership theories are abundant (Marzano, 2003). Examples of leadership theories include the "great-man" theory which suggests that leaders such as Moses and Churchill were "greatmen" that possessed the leadership skills and ability necessary to save millions from captivity. Also included is the "leadership trait" theory which claims leaders have certain "traits" that separate them from their followers. Regardless of the varying leadership theories, leadership has been linked to the success of establishments and organizations for many centuries.

The current beliefs pertaining to leadership in schools are similar to those pertaining to leadership in other institutions. Studies pertaining to school leadership and the establishment of school missions and goals were conducted by Bamburg & Andrews (1990) and Duke (1982). Researchers Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer, & Wisenbaker (1979) conducted research in the area of school leadership and the leader's role in providing and promoting a

positive school climate. Researchers Cohen & Miller (1980), Eberts & Stone (1988), and Oakes (1989) conducted research in the area of school leadership and its affect on curriculum and instruction. In their research, Valentine, Clark, Hackmann, and Petzki (2004) conclude that leaders who provide effective school-level leadership skills can "transform a school into a high-quality learning organization" (p.93). On that same note, research findings by Cotton (2003), Marzano (2000), Waters, Marzano, & McNulty (2003) indicate that skilled leaders can promote and provide effective schooling experiences for their students.

In an effort to help strengthen current educational leadership programs The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) developed Standards for School Leaders (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996) that were written by representatives from states and professional associations in a partnership with the National Policy Board for Educational Administration in 1994-95. The standards were published by the Council of Chief State School Officers in 1996. Copies may be downloaded from the Council's website at www.ccssoo.org. Additionally, in January of 2002, the Administration (NPBEA) published standards that must be addressed in advanced educational leadership programs. As a result of these published standards Hoyle, English, and Steffy (1998) offer a publication addressing the skills and knowledge they claim are required of potential leaders in order to meet these standards in their book entitled *Skills for Successful 21st Century School Leaders: Standards for Peak Performers.*

Middle School Leadership

School reform for middle level schools coupled with the new federal and state regulations associated with NCLB have had major implications on building-level leaders, particularly middle level leaders. The middle school reform movement has been criticized for placing an

emphasis on a warm welcoming school climate for emerging adolescents and not attending to issues related to improvement of student achievement (Jackson & Davis, 2000; Lipsitz, Mizell, Jackson & Austin, 1997). However Jackson & Davis (2000) in *Turning Points 2000* posit: "The main purpose of middle grades education is to promote young adolescents' intellectual development (p. 10). Middle level leaders must keep student achievement in mind as they implement a middle school program. They must understand that is possible for the curriculum to be appropriate and rigorous (Anfara & Waks, 2001; Clark & Clark, 2003) while maintaining a school climate conducive to learning.

Middle level leaders have experienced changing roles over the years as their role has gradually shifted from manager to democratic leader and then to humanistic leaders of the 1980s, and to instructional leaders of the 1990s (Valentine, Maher, Quinn, & Irvin, 1999). They are currently being challenged to move beyond these leadership practices to those of shared leadership (Leithwood, 1999) which promote the involvement of the entire school community in facilitating comprehensive change. The building leader's role has indeed changed as is becoming increasingly complex and demanding (Louis & Murphy, 1994). Whitaker (2003) summarizes these changes into five areas: local management of schools, school-choice dilemmas, balancing management and leadership roles, and expanded relationships with community members.

According to research, middle schools have not been extremely successful in addressing student achievement concerns, especially in lower-income communities and for students with special needs (Valentine, Clark, Hackmann & Petzko, 2004). On this same note, according to Balfanz & MacIver (2000) poor educational quality in many urban area middle schools have resulted in students unable to experience success upon transition to their high school setting

which is an objective of NCLB. Jackson & Davis (2000) in *Turning Points 2000,* also address this concern as they advocate "equity in outcomes for all groups of students, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, family income, or linguistic background (p. 11).

All of the literature provided contains important data to those currently involved in the world of educational leadership, however, the publications remain void of the actual everyday life experiences of principals. This valuable piece is missing in past as well as current literature. The inclusion of this important component is crucial in providing and promoting educational leaders with experiences that will help them in their quest to aid students in receiving maximal learning experiences. In order to have a more complete understanding of the middle school principal, research presenting the life experiences of middle school principals is essential. Through the sharing of life experiences of middle school principals this study will provide information that is beneficial to new, effective, as well as ineffective middle school principals in their journey to becoming transformational leaders.

Leadership and Student Achievement

In *Turning Points 2000,* the claim was made that no single individual is more important to initiating and sustaining improvement in middle grades school students' performance than the school principal (Jackson & Davis, 2000, p. 157). Accountability is an enormous responsibility for everyone involved however; the middle level administrator is at the front of the line when it comes to student achievement. The school leader is ultimately responsible for providing and promoting a safe, effective learning environment for each student entrusted to his or her care. It is the administrator's job that is on the line each year if student achievement fails to measure up to current accountability standards. As student achievement in schools is the primary means of evaluating administrator effectiveness, many studies have been

conducted in the area of school leadership and student achievement. Walters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) found a positive correlation between leadership and student achievement in a study that involved multiple data collection methods, including interviews and surveys of students, parents, teachers and leaders. Participants were questioned in reference to the leadership practices within their schools and their perceptions of leadership roles and responsibilities in the area of student achievement.

Crawford (1998) shares similar results in his research by indicating that leaders who are driven to succeed have high standards not only for themselves but also for their faculty, staff, and students which ultimately results in an overall increase in student achievement. Cotton's (2003) and Glutthorn's (1997) research correlates this as well. Their research indicates that the role of the principal is significant in promoting school level change, particularly that of student achievement. DuFour (2002) adds to this dimension by emphasizing that principals should be the school's learning leaders. Lambert, Walker, Zimmerman, and Cooper (2002) maintain a constructivist leadership approach when describing reform efforts adding that equity and multiculturalism may be addressed through constructivist-based accountability measures. McEwin (1996) and Trimble (2003) indicate that school leaders must utilize curriculum instructional methods that appeal to young adolescents and that they must be knowledgeable of and proficient with new technology in teaching and analyzing data. Glickman (2002), Fullan (2003) and Blasé (1998) maintain that principals must monitor student and teacher learning gaps and effectively supervise both by utilizing collegial approaches in encouraging them to acquire higher performance levels. This leadership approach was eventually coined "collaborative instructional leadership" by Blase and Blase (1999).

Collaborative Leaders

Collaboration is another important aspect of contemporary scholarship on school

leadership. This is evident in research presented by Doda and Williamson (2002) which

indicates that school districts are failing to ensure that principals have opportunities and time

to collaborate. These researchers posit that principals should be provided the support they

need from others in order to help them become the effective leaders they desire and deserve to

become. Educational leaders are missing this vital link in the learning process. One could

conclude that leaders as learners should be an ongoing effort particularly since current school

reform initiatives require student learning to be the "center of the administrator's role"

(McCarthy, 2002, p. 213). School administrators should collaborate with each other

consistently in an effort to become and remain active collaborative learners as they promote

the same practices within their school settings. Hipp (1997) justifies this need as he indicates

that the principal's role has changed with new accountability reforms which prompt middle

level leaders to transform their schools and in doing so they must become "change agents" in

the era of accountability (p.45). Research findings by Marks and Printy (2003) indicate this as

well by placing emphasis on school leadership as a collaborative process. Researchers

describe collaborative leadership practices as "shared" processes in which principals "share"

their leadership with teachers and others which will ultimately help provide middle level

schools with effective "instructional" leadership (Marks and Priny, p.392).

Mullen, Gordon, Greenlee, & Anderson (2002) and Murphy (2002) present findings of

effective collaborative middle level leadership research in terms of reflective practice. They

discuss leaders as workers with others, indicating that staff members, that keep abreast of

current reform issues. This network of leaders is necessary in order for effective leadership

practices to be defined and refined as on-going effective instructional practices. In this collaborative process principals are called upon to gather with their school community in forming a shared school vision and shared common goals. The importance of collaborative leadership is also stressed by researcher Mullen (2002) as he concludes that instruction focused leaders must work collaboratively with teachers to increase growth.

Brown and Anfara (2002) refer to collaborative leadership in their research findings as the "operant goal" which they define as being "no longer maintenance of the organizational infrastructure but rather the development of human resources and learning organizations aimed at school improvement" (p. 88). This goal is in direct correlation to collaborative leadership practices. Research findings indicate collaborative leadership is effective because the teaching and learning dimensions of the school are shifted and melded into a single teaching and learning organization wherein all educational responsibilities are shared.

Literature provides research in reference to collaborative leaders; however, these studies are void of collaborative life experiences of middle level leaders. There is a definite gap in literature between the characteristics, knowledge and skills of middle level leaders and the life experiences where these things are applied.

Transformational Leaders

Since the term "transformational leadership" was coined by Burns and Bass (1978), many researchers have presented studies of transformational leadership practices. Fullan (2002) sums up the transformational leader as being more effective than the instructional leader due to the limitations associated with instructional leadership. He indicates that the role of instructional leader is limiting and must be expanded so the leader can promote a shift from instruction only to a teaching and learning community. Elmore (1991) explains that

transformational leaders extend their focus from that of individual leader to that of "distributed leader" wherein the transformational leader becomes a team member and learning and instruction are addressed as being a team project. Leithwood (1999), Schlechty (1997), Fullan (1993), Smyth (1996) and Brown and Anfara (2003) share this vision of the transformational and present research findings that indicate transformational leadership is the most effective leadership approach due to its all inclusive approach in promoting change within the entire educational community. Thompson, Davis, Caruthers & Gregg (2003) posit that transformational leaders are "willing and able to ask new questions and create new stories and discourse around change…a different type of leader" (p. 331). Leithwood (1994) also describes transformational leaders as impacting the structure and culture of the school. The structure is governed by "distribut[ing] the responsibility and power for leadership widely through the school" (p.511). This includes involving faculty and staff members in problem solving and decision making processes. The leader makes time for planning to be done collaboratively which includes time for research and decision making.

Transformational leaders focus on the importance of teamwork and comprehensive school improvement instead of simply taking charge and getting things done. According to Sagor (1992), transformational leaders "find a way to be successful in collaboratively defining the essential purpose of teaching and learning and then empowering the entire school community to become energized and focused" (p. 5). Leithwood (1992) supports this leadership approach by indicating a swing from Type A to Type Z leadership practices within organizations and businesses. Type Z organizations and businesses, according to Leithwood (1992) decrease the status between workers and managers and focus on participative management with a basis of "consensual" or "facilitative" power. Participative management

practices promote leadership practices "through" other people instead of "over" them. Transformational leaders differ from instructional leaders because the latter have been viewed as knowledgeable in terms of determining the best forms of teaching and instruction. The problem with the instructional leadership style, according to Poplin (1992) is that great administrators are not necessarily great leaders in the classroom. She also indicates instructional leadership focuses only on the growth of students and overlooks the growth of teachers.

Achieving the goals of transformational leadership is essential to the success of the educational leader. According to Leithwood (1992) there are three goals that transformational leaders pursue:

1. Helping staff develop and maintain a collaborative, professional school culture by talking to staff members, observing each other, critiquing, and planning together. Transformational leaders involve faculty and staff when setting goals. They also work to reduce teacher isolation and share leadership with others by sharing power and constantly communicating the schools vision and beliefs.

2. Fostering teacher development by promoting motivation for development when they are involved in setting their goals for professional development. This is normally fostered through a strong commitment to the school's mission. Transformational leaders involve faculty and staff members in non-routine school improvement issues and make sure goals are not unattainable.

3. Helping teachers solve problems more efficiently and effectively. This stimulates teacher engagement in new things. Transformational leaders tend to help organizational workers work smarter so they don't have to work as hard.

These leaders hold the belief that the school as a group is more capable of developing better solutions than the principal can alone.

These three goals promote organizational engagement which positively affects the entire school community. Transformational leaders do not view themselves as aggressive individuals, independently responsible for the success of the school community, but as team members that can do their part in transforming the instructional institution they are dedicated to along with their "co-workers" not their "employees." This positive transformation of school leader liberates the once dreaded "boss" mentality associated with principals. Upon transformation, Leithwood (1994) posits that middle school leaders that utilize transformational leadership practices will provide the best educational opportunities for the students entrusted to their care by promoting excellent learning conditions for everyone within the school community and beyond.

Gaps in Leadership Literature

With much research and debate concerning the organizational changes associated with the educational experiences of young adolescents and current accountability measures, one could conclude that there would be much research about the real life experiences of middle school leaders. After all, they are the ones ultimately responsible for the daily operation of the educational organizations. In searching for literature pertaining to the studies of middle level leaders this researcher found that many of the studies pertaining to school level leaders have been under the guidance of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and conducted by Valentine and associates (1981, 1993, 2002, and 2004). Due to growing evidence that quality leadership is essential for school performance (Valentine, 1999), numerous studies have evolved, however, most of these studies describe the

characteristics of middle school principals but are void of the life experiences of middle level principals. This is puzzling because as by Cranford (1998) observes, educational reform reports have concluded that "the nation cannot attain excellence in education without effective school leadership" (p. 8). Life experience is significant to attaining excellence in education because reflection and sharing provide excellent learning opportunities.

One of the most recent literature resources for educational leaders is entitled *Action-Oriented Principals: Facing the Demands of External Pressures* and was written by Engelking (2008). Engelking's text is filled with information involving the changes and challenges that educational leaders are currently experiencing. The resource is filled with examples of knowledge, skills and characteristics that Engelking suggests educational leaders must display. In this book Engelking (2008) emphasizes that educational leaders must be "action-oriented…proactive leaders by leading schools into strategic planning and community involvement instead of waiting for things to happen to them from the external communities" (p. vii – viii). This work is particularly significant to this study due to the strong emphasis placed on the transformational practices associated with being actively involved in strategic educational goals and plans which include the entire school community.

Given the virtual absence of research specific to life experiences of middle level principals, more research is needed that provides insight into how educational leaders live their transformational leadership lives. While there is an abundance of literature in reference to characteristics, skills, and practices of transformational leaders (Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer, & Wisenbaker (1979), Leithwood, (1994), Jackson and Davis (2000), Little and Little (2001), Gaskill, (2002), Walters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003), this study will add the

missing "link" which is the actual application of these characteristics, skills, and practices through the lived experiences of the transformational leaders in this study.

Autobiographical Narrative Inquiry

Autobiographical narrative inquiry focuses on the organization and sharing of human knowledge. This sharing of knowledge is more than simply collecting and processing data. Autobiographical narrative inquiry implies that knowledge is valuable and promotes the incorporation of self into research. Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly are the two researchers credited for pursuing and promoting narrative inquiry as a method utilized by qualitative researchers, especially in the area of education. In reviewing literature that provides the historical as well as theoretical significance of narrative inquiry one word always stands out as the "heart" of narrative inquiry – "experience." This word is particularly significant to this research as this study is based on the lived experiences of three transformational educational middle school leaders.

The concept of experience is important to the primary methods of autobiographical narrative inquiry. Clandinin and Connelly (1990) define narrative as a "reconstruction of experience" (p. 245). They are well known for their utilization of narrative inquiry to provide accounts of lived experiences and they refer to narrative inquiry as "the making of meaning from personal experience via a process of reflection in which storytelling is the key element and in which metaphors and folk knowledge take their place" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 16). Autobiographical researchers, as quoted in Connelly & Clandinin (1990), narratively discover the phenomenon of the "multiple I," that is, the self becomes "plurivocal" and "in the writing of narrative, it becomes important to sort out whose voices is dominant when writing 'I'" (p. 9). As this researcher is a middle level leader, it is of utmost importance that

she differentiates between the voice of the participant and that of her own. She must constantly be aware of the dominant voice when telling the stories of the participants. As is evident in the following by Connelly and Clandinin while it is important to determine "whose" voice is being shared when presenting narrative inquiry the ultimate goal of the research is the learning experiences it provides:

> The question of who is researcher and who is teacher becomes less important as we concern ourselves with questions of collaboration, trust, and relationship as we live, story, and restory our collaborative research life….The researcher moves out of the lived story to tell, with another kind of story. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 10).

This researcher must be ever mindful when working with the participants that the development of collaboration, trust, and relationship is a part of the research which must be utilized to enhance the study and not direct it.

The methods of collecting autobiographical narrative inquiry data emerged early in the careers of Clandinin and Connelly as both were involved in educational studies in which they gathered their data in "multiple choice" formats. They spent days breaking their quantitative educational data down in an effort to present their findings in ways that would be accepted within the educational research realm. The two researchers finally came to realize that they were guilty of grouping their data into "manageable, minuscule realities" (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. xxii). While these two were certain that quantitative studies were effective they were insecure in their choice of data presentation in their studies and admitted that they were subduing their personal interests "for the sake of research precision" (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. xxii). They were certain that the quantitative method of data presentation was not and should not be the only acceptable means for researchers to present data,

particularly when researchers are essentially interested in life. Numerous quantitative studies provide statistical data in relation to characteristics, skills and practices of effective school leaders. While quantitative studies are important, "research precision" is not the key element in this study. The key element in this study is lived experience thus a quantitative study would not have provided the complete perspective that a qualitative study allows.

Autobiographical narrative inquiry also perceives the research problem different from quantitative studies that seek to determine a causal relationship. Ultimately, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) saw their research "problem" as "trying to think of the continuity and wholeness of an individual's life experience" (p. 17). This "problem" prompted them to utilize narrative inquiry as a means of collecting and presenting research. Through narrative inquiry the researchers could present research findings in a thorough, complete manner. Like Clandinin and Connelly, this researcher struggled with her choice of data presentation as this study is in a sense a merging of three fields: the theoretical world of Curriculum Studies, the qualitative world of narrative inquiry, and the more quantitative world of Educational Leadership research. While this researcher is searching for commonalities in the lived experiences of the participants she is also searching for differences in these experiences. The quantitative research method and presentation of narrative inquiry will allow this study to be "all -encompassing" of the lived stories of the participants.

While Clandinin and Connelly have certainly had a profound impact on the field of narrative inquiry, the work of other scholars created a foundation on which for them to build. Prior to Clandinin and Connelly's claim that lived experience was missing in research, Lagemann (1996) discovered something lacking in the studies conducted by educational researchers. He asserted that educational research was not the same as other types of studies

that were more conducive to the presentation of data by statistics. It appeared to Lagemann that educational researchers continued utilizing statistical research presentation methods because statistics appealed to government agencies and policymakers. In an effort to include the complete lived experiences of the participants this researcher chose to utilize a methodology that will not limit the study but enhance it. Narrative inquiry will allow this study to include statistical data but not be limited to it.

Clandinin and Connelly (1994) would continue quantifying for many years, however their interest in and of experience remained embedded in their minds. Eventually narrative inquiry became not only a way of understanding life but also a preferred way of presenting it as is evident by the following statement:

> People live stories, and in the telling of these stories, reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones. Stories lived and told educate the self and others, including the young and those such as researchers who are new to their communities (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994, p. xxvi).

Clandinin and Connelly often made reference to John Dewey while researching and writing their research results. Dewey was an educator who commonly utilized narrative inquiry in his work as he shared stories of lived experience. Dewey often metaphorically referred to life as education. As this study is about the life experiences of middle level leaders the stories shared will allow others to share in these experiences. The participants may choose to utilize images, descriptions, illustrations, and metaphors as these promote comprehension and application of their stories. As Dewey, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) utilize metaphors. Often they utilize metaphors as they indicate how learning and teaching take place. This is evident as they posit that "the leading out of different lives, the values, attitudes, beliefs,

social systems, institutions, and structures….[these] areas [are] all linked to learning and teaching" (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. xxii). In positing life as education Clandinin and Connelly (2000) also utilize a metaphor as they refer to those involved in teaching and learning as "educators" or "social scientists"… "interested in observing, participating with, thinking about, saying, and writing the doings and goings-on of our fellow humans" (p. xxii). According to Clandinin and Connelly, everyone is involved in the process of life, and life is education, therefore everyone is a teacher and a learner. Since "life is education" this researcher chose to use both general life and leadership experiences of the administrators in order to include all of the educational experiences that led them to become the leaders that they are.

Many other researchers currently utilize narrative inquiry as a research methodology as well as a means of presentation. Ming Fang He (2003) is one such researcher. In her book *A River Forever Flowing* (2003) He utilizes metaphors in her narratives as she presents the story of her life. He's utilization of metaphors within her study adds aesthetics to her story as she metaphorically describes her life as a river that eventually settles into a delta which is filled not only with the water (her physical being) but of sediments (life experiences and the remains of those experiences) that have accumulated during the history of the river (her life). Her metaphorical work is one of multiculturalism and cross-cultural border crossings as she was born in China and has since lived in Canada and the United States. She utilizes autobiographical narrative inquiry as she incorporates her own story with the stories of two others who experience cross-cultural changes. Her research provides in-depth accounts of what it is like to shift from one culture to another. The participants in her study share reflections of struggles, both within and outside of themselves as they struggle to hold onto

and even enhance their identities through the cultural changes they experience. Ultimately

they become not only Chinese or American but a melding of the two…a cultural "delta." Not

unlike He, the participants in this study may utilize metaphors in their reflections of struggles,

both within and outside of themselves in becoming transformational leaders.

Michael Connelly and JoAnn Phillion are also multicultural researchers currently

utilizing narrative inquiry. In *Narrative & Experience in Multicultural Education* (2005)

Connelly and Phillion join with He in sharing their personal multicultural experiences. These

researchers have found a methodology that will enable them to be comprehensive as they

share what they care about in life. Just as He, Connelly and Phillion were instrumental in

utilizing and promoting the use of narrative inquiry in the field of multiculturalism to share

what they care about, the leaders in this study will have an opportunity to share what they care

about in life.

Mary Catherine Bateson is another researcher that used narrative inquiry in helping with

the development of her field. Bateson utilized narrative inquiry by writing an overview of her

life as an anthropologist. In *Peripheral Visions* (1994) Batson offered stories of her life that

prompted self revision. Her narrative of her life long learning process stressed that revision is

indeed a life long process. As the participants in this study share their stories they will be

prompted to reflect upon their practices. While sharing the overviews of their lives, self

revision may become a part of their stories. The reflective process of the study may promote

self revision.

Another anthropologist Cliffort Geertz (1995) is also credited with being instrumental in

promoting the use of narrative inquiry in the field of anthropology. Geertz utilized instability

and change in his anthropological narrative inquiries. He carefully observed and gathered data

in a variety of texts (stories) in the field so accounts of lived experience connections could be established. His narrative methodology embraced the capturing of change over time. No one currently involved in the field of education is more aware of change over time than current educational leaders. Although the participants in the study have varying years of experience, change over time will most assuredly be addressed.

In the field of psychiatry, Robert Coles (1989) utilized narrative inquiry as he encouraged his readers to listen and trust the teachings in life and to trust the stories they experienced through others. In *Call of Stories* (1989), Coles' narratives promoted trust in life and in the relationships developed throughout life. Coles posited he learned about life (death, marriage, morality, etc) from his patients. Throughout his career Coles has emphasized learning through relationships. In his narrative works, he indicated that good listening skills and effective communication are the key to life long learning. Just as Coles recognized the importance of relationships through good listening skills and effective communication, educational leaders also recognize the importance of relationships. As the participants share their stories they may choose to share the relationships they have developed with others throughout their lives.

Another researcher, Hogan (1988) also stressed the importance of the development of relations between and among participants and researchers as he indicated "empowering relationships develop over time and it takes time for participants to recognize the value that the relationship holds. Hogan (1988), as well as Coles, posited that there is power in relationships He indicates feelings of "connectedness" are developed in situations of equality, caring, mutual purpose and intention" (Hogan, 1988, p.12). This study will promote the development of powerful educational relationships with and among middle level educational

leaders. As the leaders share their stories they will allow others to gain insight into their actions, intentions, and purposes.

Noddings (1986), in addition to Coles and Hogan also recognized the importance of empowering relationships in research. She indicated that "too little attention is presently given to matters of community and collegiality and such research should be construed as research" (Noddings, 1986, p. 510). She indicated that the researcher and the participant must work collaboratively to realize the value of the research. Additionally, Elbow (1986) realized that collaboration was extremely important. As an educational autobiographical narrative inquirer, Elbow indicated that educators should place themselves in their participant's stories, come to know their story, and give them voice. This "coming to know" is known as "the believing game" and it is a collaborative effort between the researcher and the participant. Collaboration is key in this study as the researcher will place herself in the participants stories, come to know their story and give them voice. Collaboration is of utmost importance since this study is "bridging the gap" between the characteristics, skills, and practices of educational leaders and the actual sharing of the application through lived experience.

The history and development of autobiographical narrative inquiry indicates the importance of utilizing human knowledge as a means of collecting, processing, and sharing data. This method of sharing of knowledge implies that knowledge is valuable and promotes the incorporation of self into research. Many researchers have utilized and promoted narrative inquiry especially in the area of education. This methodology is particularly significant to this research as this study is based on the lived experiences of three transformational educational middle school leaders.

Curriculum Theory: Currere

Autobiographical inquiry, according to Pinar and Grumet (1976) was initially introduced as an autobiographical theory – that of currere. Currere, according to Pinar and Grummet (1976), "is a reflexive cycle in which thought bends back upon itself and thus recovers its volition" (p. 130-131) and prompts students to include their relations among school, life, and intellect. Students differ, Grummet (1981), as they experience self-transformation in their attempts to "reveal the ways that histories (both collective and individual) and hope suffuse our moments and to study them through telling our stories of educational experience" (p. 118). As a middle level leader, the researcher has chosen to add autobiography to the study. As the study evolves the researcher will constantly be involved in a reflexive cycle as she experiences self-transformation in an effort to become an exceptional transformational middle level leader. As this is an autobiographical narrative inquiry, the researcher will include her story (or bits and pieces of her story) in the study.

The reconceptualization of curriculum studies in the 1970s opened many doors for curriculum inquiry. In *Understanding Curriculum* (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 2002) Pinar describes autobiographical and biographical research as being comprised of four streams: "teachers' collaborative autobiography [Butt and Raymond, 1987]; personal practical knowledge [Clandinin and Connelly, 1990]; teacher lore [Shubert and Ayers, 1992]; and studying teachers' lives [Goodson, 1989]" (p. 553). Leadership is an area not normally associated with autobiography or curriculum and is often viewed as a separate entity in itself. Leaders are often perceived as "them" or "the other" and many times viewed as a voice that should be heard only when giving directives. Educational autobiographical and biographical research must include educational leaders in order to effectively address the four streams

mentioned above due to the issues that educational leaders face on a daily basis which directly impacts teacher's and student's lives.

John Dewey claimed that people learn best when involved in purposeful activities. He also posited that people should be allowed to share with others while learning. On that note, all learners have life situations that create interests and those interests can and should be utilized in individual and group learning. Learners relate to "real-life" situations and view learning as purposeful when given the opportunity to share life experiences. Social interaction plays a major part in the learning process. The sharing of experience provides and promotes connections among experiences because according to John Dewey (2000) "perhaps the greatest of all pedagogical fallacies is the notion that a person learns only the particular thing he is studying at the time" (p.114).

Knowledge, according to George Counts (1932), is more than information and skills. As is evident in the title of his book, *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?*, Counts (1932) encourages educators to unite, share, and plan so their schools can take the lead in creating a new and better social order. He claims that educators cannot interact with students without sharing live experiences and maintains this sharing process must be used to benefit students. Unification and sharing prompts the acquisition of knowledge not only among teachers and students but learners of all ages, in all areas.

According to Maxine Greene (1988) knowledge of self is gained via world experiences including dialog with others. Greene maintains that knowledge is gained via questions and exploring answers. She asserts educators are responsible for encouraging learners to question and ponder the realities of the world. This encouragement is viewed as a stepping stone for helping learners determine their individuality. Paulo Freire (1972), also professes knowledge

is gained via dialogue and communication in and with the world of which they reside. He alleges dialogue is very powerful. Nell Noddings (1992) also promotes the sharing of lived experiences as a means of acquiring knowledge as she indicates caring relationships are necessary when addressing individual as well as societal problems of interest. This study will allow leaders' voices to be heard in relation to themselves and others, thus bridging the gap between autobiography, curriculum and leadership.

Each of these philosophers made contributions to narrative inquiry, curriculum, and leadership. Although each ultimately added new dimensions to the field(s), the ultimate dimension remained the same – the presentation of lived experience. As is evident from the literature presented in this study, narrative inquiry is a methodology that allows people to capture how they make sense of their world. Through this study the participants will share their life experiences with others allowing collaboration opportunities and relationships to develop as others gain meaning of the experiences through the process of sharing life experiences with the researcher. Through narrative inquiry educational life experiences can be shared. Human experience provides, prompts, and promotes education. The learning and learned self melds into a total educational journey that is never-ending. In the area of curriculum studies experiences are shared. The ways experiences are shared are as important as the experiences themselves. Educational leadership research is filled with statistics and virtually void of life experiences. Through this study, educational administrators and curriculum theorists can experience the mingling of voices that ultimately result from an intermingling of narratives of experience – a true educational experience. Within this study there is a melding of autobiography, curriculum, and leadership.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Autobiographical Narrative Inquiry

Autobiographical narrative inquiry is a qualitative research methodology wherein the participants and the researcher share lived experience. Researchers utilizing narrative inquiry do so to provide accounts of life through personal experience and reflection via storytelling. Educators utilize autobiographical narrative inquiry on a daily basis as they interact with other educators, students, parents and community members. Narrative inquiry provides valuable information about the students entrusted to their care. Educators gather and utilized the information they gather to provide the best educational experience for their students. Barthes (1975) realized the importance of these interactions as he describes the importance of narrative inquiry by the following:

Narratives and stories are powerful instruments for ordering human experience. Narrative can be expressed in oral or written language, pictures, still or moving, gestures, and an ordered mixture of all those substances; narrative is present in myth legend, fables, tales, short stories, epics, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, pantomime, paintings, stained glass windows, movies, local news, conversation. Moreover, in this infinite variety of forms, it is present at all times, in all places, in all societies; indeed, narrative starts with the very history of mankind; this is not, there has never been anywhere, any people without narrative;… (p.240)

As the quote indicates narrative has been around throughout the history of mankind. It is present in every imaginable form, at all times. Narrative is a powerful form of interaction and information.

The autobiographical narrative inquiry approach utilized in this study is a reflective approach that will open up possibilities for understanding the little explored actual life experiences of educational administrators. The autobiographical narrative inquirer will conduct interviews and observations with the participants. Once the data has been collected the participants will be given copies of the data in an effort to check for accuracy. Once the data is determined to be accurate it will be presented. The researcher will interact with the participants and include her voice as a middle level leader. This approach is a melding of two inquiry methods (autobiography and narrative inquiry) and is intended to enable others to search for new narrative inquiry possibilities in administrative educational research.

Role of the Researcher

The use of autobiographical narrative inquiry will allow the researcher to participate in and conduct a study about educators. The narrative inquiry methodology utilized will provide the researcher an opportunity to get to know veteran middle level leaders thus prompting reflective practices as a middle level leader. An autobiographical narrative will be rewarding and personally fulfilling as it promotes the utilization of individual lives as the primary source of data. It allows for narrative of the "self" as a location from which the researcher can generate critique and advocacy, and ultimately it allows for deconstruction of the "self" by encouraging the researcher to generate alternate, complex understandings of those who are being studied. Autobiographical narrative inquiry will leave the researcher and others forever changed in positive ways.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the transformational life experiences of three middle school educational administrators in a rural county in Southeast Georgia. This study

seeks to answer the following research question: What can be learned from the narratives of Title I Distinguished middle school principals? This study evolved from my personal experience as a struggling new middle school educational administrator. Literature pertaining to characteristics, skills, and practices of leaders are abundant however, there are gaps in the literature about the life experiences of transformational middle school administrators and how these life experiences have helped them provide and promote maximal learning experiences for the students entrusted to their care. The purpose of this study is to present the life experiences of successful Title I Distinguished middle school leaders. Through this study one can experience the lived stories of administrators, commonalities and differences. Through the utilization of shared experiences novice leaders may incorporate the leadership knowledge, expertise, trials, and accomplishments of others as they seek to become effective leaders within their educational organizations.

<div align="center">Participant Selection</div>

I chose the three middle school principals in my study due to their years of experience which ranges from four to thirty-two years and for their reputation as being "successful leaders" by their employers, employees, cohorts, students, and community members. Each of them has been instrumental in either leading their school to Title I Distinguished school status or maintaining that status. The participants will be the current middle school principals in the Tattnall County school system. The table below shows Tattnall County's middle school profiles for the 2006-07 school year:

TABLE 1: 2006-07 Tattnall County Middle School Profiles

School	Total Students	Economically Disadvantaged Students - %	Students with Disabilities - %	English Language Learners - %
Collins Middle	211	62	12	3
Glennville Middle	311	64	12	6
Reidsville Middle	291	68	19	6

Source: www.gadoe.org

As the data indicates, Reidsville Middle School (RMS) has made AYP for four consecutive years. The current principal is Mr. Garrett Wilcox. Mr. Wilcox has been principal at RMS for five years. The current principal at Collins Middle School (CMS) is Mr. Chris Freeman. Mr. Freeman has served as principal for CMS for four years. CMS has made AYP for the past five years. The current principal at Glennville Middle School (GMS) is Mrs. Lisa Trim. Mrs. Trim has served as principal at GMS for two years. GMS has made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for four years consecutively. All three of Tattnall County's Middle Schools are Title I Distinguished Schools which is a great accomplishment as a school must maintain AYP status for three consecutive years in order to earn the title of Title I Distinguished. The leaders of these middle schools have proven themselves as strong school leaders, leaders that have been successful in taking and or keeping their schools at award winning status. Due to their varying years of experience and proven continued success, these leaders have been chosen as participants in this study.

Initially, as the study began the consideration was given to conducting research utilizing all Title I Distinguished middle schools principals within 1st District RESA. As data was gathered about schools within these districts it was determined that only one county/school district within First District RESA , having more than one middle school (grades 6,7 and 8),

had all middle schools attain and maintain Title I Distinguished status – the Tattnall County
school system. It is for this reason that the researcher chose to conduct a study utilizing the
stories of Tattnall County's middle school principals. The following table shows the schools
within First District RESA in Georgia attaining AYP and the consecutive years AYP has been
maintained:

Table 2: 1ˢᵗ District RESA Systems/Schools - Consecutive Years – AYP

System:	School:	Consecutive Years (AYP)
Appling	Appling Co. Middle School	4
Berrien	Berrien Middle School	3
Brantley	Brantley Co. Middle School	3
Bulloch	Southeast Bulloch Middle School	5
Bulloch	William James Middle School	5
Chatham	Mercer Middle School	3
Chatham	Shuman Middle School	3
Cook	Cook County Middle School	4
Emanuel	Swainsboro Middle School	4
Evans	Claxton Middle School	3
Glynn	Needwood Middle School	4
Liberty	Snelson-Golden Middle School	4
Long	Walker Middle School	3
McIntosh	McIntosh County Middle School	3
Pierce	Pierce County Middle School	3
Screven	Screven County Middle School	4

Tattnall	Collins Middle School	5
Tattnall	Glennville Middle School	4
Tattnall	Reidsville Middle School	4
Vidalia City	J.R. Trippe Middle School	3
Ware	Waycross Middle School	4

Source: http://publicdoe.k12.ga.us

Data Collection

Following a thorough review of available literature concerning narrative inquiry, transformational leadership practices, and curriculum, the researcher developed the interview questions. The questions begin with generalizations and then focus on Leithwood (1994) and Jantzi and Leithwood's (1996) identified six key dimensions of transformational school leadership. The interview questions are:

1. Tell me about your school.

2. What, in your opinion, is your role as your school's "leader?"

3. Tell me about the development of your school's vision and goals.

4. How did you build consensus around your school's vision and goals?

5. Do you foster participative management in your school? If so, who do you encourage to participate?

6. How do you foster the development and maintenance of a professional, collaborative school culture?

7. How do you promote the individual professional growth of your staff members?

8. How do you promote the collective growth of your school community?

9. In what ways do you help teachers effectively solve problems?

10. What types of opportunities/activities do you provide for your staff in efforts to promote their intellectual stimulation?

11. Do you "model" desired professional practices for your staff? If so, how and will you provide examples?

12. Tell me about your expectations for your school community.

13. Is there anything you would like to share about your life experiences that have helped you become a successful middle school administrator?

The interview prompts are designed to allow participants the freedom to share their experiences as transformational middle school leaders. Interviews will be conducted on-site, at the individual schools of the participants. All interviews will be tape-recorded with informed consent. Upon completion of the interviews, all data will be transcribed and a hard copy produced. All data will be stored in a secure location. Each participant will be given a copy of the transcribed interviews in an effort to check for accuracy and eliminate human error.

Data Analysis

The researcher will read interview transcripts, many times to become familiar with the data. She will utilize note cards to determine commonalities and differences in the lived experiences of the participants. The narrative process and presentation of this study will promote the inclusiveness of the lived stories of the participants. Analysis and presentation methods utilized by autobiographical narrative inquirers include interviews and stories of lived experience. This researcher will utilize autobiographical narrative methodology and presentation similar to those utilized by previous scholars in the field, including but not

limited to stories of personal and professional relationships (including stories of self reflection

and self revision).

CHAPTER 4

REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

Stories from Principals of Title I Distinguished Middle Schools

This chapter presents the participants' leadership experiences in the public school system in Tattnall County, Georgia. The first section of this chapter is a brief profile of each school represented in the study to provide background information. The second section is the presentation of the narratives and how the principals' experiences are indicative of the utilization of Leithwood (1994) and Jantzi and Leithwood's (1996) key dimensions of transformational school leadership. Each of the participants chose to use their given name. Following the principal's responses to the interview questions are the connections from those responses to practices of transformational leaders. These connections are in italics.

Schools – Demographic Profiles

Reidsville Middle School (RMS) is a Grade 6 through 8 school with a current enrollment of two hundred fifty-nine students. According to the numbers released in the *2006-2007 Georgia Public School Report Card,* approximately twenty-six percent of the students at Reidsville Middle School are Black, nineteen percent Hispanic, fifty percent White, and five percent Multi-racial. Approximately eighteen percent of the students at Reidsville Middle School have disabilities, six percent are limited English proficient, seventy-six percent are eligible for free or reduced meals and seven percent are migrant. RMS has a principal, an assistant principal, and a half-time intervention specialist, half-time graduation coach. There are twenty-two teachers at RMS, a full time media specialist, a school nurse, and a counselor.

Collins Middle School (CMS) is a Grade 6 through 8 school with a current enrollment of one hundred thirty-three students. According to the numbers released in the *2006-2007 Georgia Public School Report Card,* approximately nineteen percent of the students at Collins Middle School are Black, eleven percent Hispanic and seventy-one percent are White. Approximately fifteen percent of the students at Collins Middle School have disabilities, two percent are limited English proficient, sixty-two percent are eligible for free or reduced meals and ten percent are migrant. CMS has a principal and a part-time intervention specialist. There are 7 teachers at CMS, including a special education teacher. CMS shares a full time counselor, media specialist, school nurse and exploratory teachers with Collins Elementary School, who also share the school campus.

Glennville Middle School (GMS) is a Grade 6 through 8 school with a current enrollment of three hundred ten students. According to the numbers released in the *2006-2007 Georgia Public School Report Card,* approximately thirty two percent of the students at Glennville Middle School are Black, fifteen percent Hispanic, fifty-two percent White, and one percent Multiracial. Approximately eleven percent of the students at Glennville Middle School have disabilities, six percent are limited English proficient, sixty four percent are eligible for free or reduced meals and seven percent are migrant. GMS has a principal, an assistant principal, and a half-time intervention specialist, half-time graduation coach. There are twenty-three teachers, including three special education teachers, a full time media specialist, a school nurse, a migrant intervention specialist, three paraprofessionals and a counselor at GMS.

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Three Participants: **Mr.** Garrett **Wilcox** (RMS), **Mr.** Chris **Freeman** (CMS), and **Mrs.** Lisa **Trim** (GMS)

Prior to becoming the Principal at RMS, Mr. Wilcox served as a Physical Education teacher and Coach for a total of seven years. He taught/coached at Griffin High School, Metter High School and Tattnall County High School. He was Assistant Principal at Reidsville Middle School for one year prior to moving into his current position. He has both, a Bachelor of Science degree and a Master's degree in Health and Physical Education from Georgia Southern University, an Education Specialist degree in Leadership from Lincoln Memorial University and is currently pursuing his doctorate degree from Argosy.

Prior to becoming Principal of Collins Middle School Mr. Freeman served for two years as a Health and Physical Education teacher in Irwin County. He began working at CMS in 1996 as a Coach and Physical Education teacher. He became principal at CMS the 2005-06 school year. He has a Bachelor of Science degree in Health, Physical Education and Recreation from Brewton-Parker College. He also has a Master's degree and Education Specialist degree in Administration from Cambridge College.

Prior to serving as principal at Glennville Middle School, Mrs. Trim taught at Tattnall County high school for seventeen years. During her teaching career she taught World History, U.S. History, Citizenship, Economics, Remedial Math and Reading, Health/Physical Education, and Single and Family Living. Following her teaching year she was a High School Guidance Counselor for six years. She then served as Assistant Principal at a K-8 school for one year. She served as principal of Reidsville Middle School for three years and Special Education Director for the Tattnall County School system for four years. She has three Master's Degrees from Georgia Southern College/University – Social Studies, Counseling

and Administration. She has remained in the Tattnall County School system for the duration of her thirty-two year career.

<p align="center">Principals' Interviews and Researcher's Responses</p>

Tell me about your school. (Note: this interview prompt is not included in Leithwood and Jantzi's six key dimensions of transformational school leadership, it was utilized as an opportunity for the participants to relax as they settled into the interview mode as well as an opportunity for them to share general information about their school).

MR. WILCOX: We typically have around 300 kids, grades six through eight and typically about twenty-two to twenty-three teachers at any given time. There is only one team per grade. The teams individually teach a math, language arts, reading, and science class. We "swing" social studies. We are about 50% white, 30% African American, a little better than 20% Hispanic. We are probably the only school of 300 that has a subgroup of White, African American, Hispanic, special education and economically disadvantaged. I would be willing to bet that we are. We have made AYP, including this year, for 6 years. This year will be the only year that we will not have a special education group. I have been here for five years as principal. The first year I was principal here we came "off the list" (Needs Improvement) and we had to make it (AYP) for two years running. We were one of the schools that got caught with attendance. We currently have two Title I Distinguished School signs in our front entry area. We have been Title I Distinguished for two years running hopefully this year will make three years.

MR. FREEMAN: We are a very small school. We have 136 students right now. We have five core subject teachers, really we have six, seven, if you count special education. We are currently focusing on improving our math scores. We have looked at plans from other schools

and formulated something similar to theirs that will fit our need. We shaved some time off of each subject in order to come up with another period during the school day so we now have six academic periods, with seventh period being exploratory. Exploratory classes are physical education and band. We do offer technology for a nine week period. We added technology mainly for our sixth graders because they didn't have many technology related skills coming into the middle school. We currently have two math classes which consist of a regular math class and a math workshop. Each student gets the two math classes per day. We also have an extra math in the afternoon which is part of our exploratory as well so it is possible for some of the students to end up with 2 hours and 45 minutes of math instruction per day. Our math content teachers are teaching the exploratory math. Our social studies, reading, language arts, math, and science teachers each teach all three grade levels, six, seven, and eight. We also have a part-time teacher that provides our math teachers with a planning period so they can teach the exploratory math. Math is something we had to work on so we had to re-vamp what we did here. We meet with our entire math team each Monday to discuss any issues that need to be dealt with but mainly to make sure we are all "on the same page." I also go in and observe in each of the math classrooms as much as possible.

MRS. TRIM: Our school, as of today, has 331 students. We have grades 6-8. We are a rural school in a small community with a close knit community and a close knit school family. We are fortunate to have lots of parent involvement. We are also located near a military community. Our school children, staff and parents have a great deal of school pride.

What, in your opinion, is your role as your school's "leader?"

MR. WILCOX: My number one role is being an instructional type monitor. I really feel like my role is to provide support for the teachers as we continue the process of re-vamping units

and lessons and things of that nature. I don't feel like I do it from a "mandating" type standpoint, I mean we are perpetuating evaluation, I guess is the way I like to put it. I hope that what has happened over time is that self-evaluation has taken place within the teachers which is more of a driving force than any evaluation that I can give them. There are obviously other pieces that you have to manage from certified staff matters to things such as supervising ballgames, but I would hope that my number one role is that of instructional monitor.

MR. FREEMAN: A school leader now is more than just a disciplinarian. School leaders have to deal with academics and student safety. Safety is very important to everyone. If the students feel comfortable in their environment they will produce results. If they are afraid they won't be productive. I make myself visible. I am with the students every day during break. They see me. I am in the classrooms. I do lunchroom duty. If they have a problem they can always come to me. I always make myself available and I always engage in conversation with them, the students and the teachers, and the parents. Each time I meet with any of them I engage in conversation because I want to project an approachable demeanor. I want them to feel they can come to me at any time.

MRS. TRIM: It is my goal to become an instructional leader. I try to lead by example. I have high expectations of myself and others. It is my desire for all of us to be the best that we can be. We should know what the standards are and work diligently to meet those standards. I like to think that I am an encourager to teachers and students regarding setting the bar high and working to achieve.

Each participant indicated in his/her interview response that one of the major roles as their school's leader included a responsibility for instruction, however none of the participants indicated this was his or her only role. One of the participants identified himself

as an "instructional monitor" which is indicative of his responsibility to academics for the students as well as his responsibility for the growth of his teachers. Another participant indicated her "goal" was to become an instructional leader, indicating that she did not view herself as such. Fullam (2002) sums up the transformational leader as being more effective than the instructional leader due to the limitations associated with instructional leadership. Transformational leaders differ from instructional leaders because the latter have been viewed as knowledgeable in terms of determining the best forms of teaching and instruction. The problem with the leadership style of instructional leader, according to Poplin (1992) is that great administrators are not necessarily great leaders in the classroom. Each of these transformational leaders indicated their focus is not primarily that of "instructional leader" which is indicative of transformational leadership practices that include a teaching and learning community (Fullan, 2002).

Tell me about the development of your school's vision and goals.

MR. WILCOX: I'm going to be honest with you; I don't know that I have played a big part in that. Our mission statement was developed a few years back. I really don't put a whole lot of stock in developing a vision statement either. I think our mission from the standpoint of what we believe is that we want to be successful. We want the students to be successful. We want to put students in situations where they can be successful. At the middle school level this is the trick to overall school success. As we learned from one of our book studies, a school's mission has to be measurable. It should not be just a "fluffy" wonderful thing. I don't believe our mission statement is really driving anything on a daily basis and that is the truth. I don't put a whole lot of stock in sitting around with a group of people putting a sentence on paper and saying this is our mission statement. Basically, our number one goal is to put students in

situations where they have a chance to be successful. I think this is the driving force in each classroom here on a daily basis. The teachers facilitate learning in everyday situations they want their students to be successful. If a student is not being successful in a particular environment, we try to find one that he or she will be successful in. Everyone here knows this is our ultimate goal which is probably the reason we have been able to make AYP for the past few years.

MR. FREEMAN: Well a lot of that has been handed to us by No Child Left Behind. Our vision here is to see every child, Pre-K through 8th grade graduate. This is our vision and our goal. We want each one of our students to become a productive member of society…a productive, respectful, member of society.

MRS. TRIM: Our vision and goals were developed collectively by our school staff and parents. Our vision is for students to meet or exceed accountability measures. Basically, we want each one of our students to succeed in school and beyond.

The first dimension of transformational school leadership, according to Leithwood (1994) and Jantzi and Leithwood and Jantzi (1996) is the acquisition of a vision for the school. Leithwood indicates that school leaders may need to determine which avenue to take in helping with the establishment of the school's vision. Some may promote their own vision, while others work collaboratively with faculty and staff on the development of the vision. Either way, transformational leaders clarify the meaning of the vision within their school community and once established, the vision is continually communicated to the school community. Each of the participants in the study indicated their school community had worked collectively in developing a vision and/or mission statement and had set goals for working towards acquisition of the school's vision. All of the participants in the study

indicated the "key" to developing the mission/vision was that everyone in the school community entered the process with "success" in mind and that once the vision was established it is continually communicated (written and/or verbalized) throughout the school community.

How did you build consensus around your school's vision and goals?

MR. WILCOX: Consensus has been an ongoing process as we all work together to make sure our students find success.

MR. FREEMAN: It is pretty easy because of the teachers here. When you walk around and talk to them they are pretty much discussing the same things. I guess around five or six years ago when I was visiting with the teachers we would discuss things like students being in the newspaper (they had broken the law) and it would break our hearts. We want better for our students. We do everything in our power to set the right path for them, but it is ultimately up to them to take that journey.

MRS. TRIM: We have a caring school community and our staff and parents embrace the goals. I believe this is because they helped to develop them.

According to Leithwood (1994) the second key dimension of transformational leaders is to build consensus among faculty and staff, students, parents and community members around the goals of the school. He indicates that building consensus may be accomplished as the leader shares the school vision and goals along with individual goals. He indicates that the interweaving of personal and organizational goals is the building block of transformational leaders as school leaders must regularly engage their faculty and staff in progress monitoring of both –self and school. As was indicated by all three participants in the study they have their own goals as school leaders to accomplish and they share their goals along with the school's

vision in an effort to build consensus around the school's vision and goals. Each participant indicated that "togetherness" (working together for success, verbal sharing of vision and goals, embracing the vision and goals) is key to reaching consensus around the school's vision and goals.

Do you foster participative management in your school? If so, who do you encourage to participate?

MR. WILCOX: I think the way we handle the group as a whole, by doing away with the design team a while back, and not putting "a group" on a pedestal is helpful. Each team meets once a week, each Wednesday and I meet with them. Participative management is fostered in the weekly team meetings. We handle everything we need to the handle through these weekly meetings. We discuss everything from book studies, to standards to essential questions. We talk about where they are with their standards, time management, how we're going to handle upcoming things. For example, the last three weeks prior to spring break we add a "different piece" where I allow the teachers to make the decisions and facilitate how things are being done during that period. Yes, I make suggestions, but we've worked together over the years and the piece I have come to believe is that if they don't have "say so" or "buy in" you don't get the same results so I hope I'm fostering that leadership with everyone in the building. From the standpoint of management roles, I guess I'm not really assured they have those opportunities, but as far as leadership roles within their team, within their grade, they do have those opportunities.

MR. FREEMAN: Yes, I do foster participative management. I encourage all the teachers to participate in managing our school. When their door is closed, they are in charge of their classroom. If they cannot lead and be the leader of the classroom we are all failing our

students. I cannot manage this school by myself. No principal can. You have to have the support of your staff. You must trust them with tasks. You can divide it up among them allowing them to participate in what they feel is an area they are strong in. They are ultimately the ones making a difference, and I tell them that. I tell them that I can't make it without them. They make a difference in their students' lives everyday. For example, if we have a student in need of glasses, we will do everything we can to make sure the student gets glasses or we'll find a program that will help. Many times things of this nature are taxing on our parents. We are probably the poorest area in the county. The other cities in the county have more businesses to provide jobs than we have. We all realize this and help out whenever and wherever we can.

MRS. TRIM: Yes. We have a design team that serves as representative group of our entire staff. Design team members are asked to talk and work with members of their teams or work areas and represent them as we meet together as a leadership team.

Elmore (1991) posits that transformational leaders extend their focus from that of individual leader to that of "distributed leader" wherein the transformational leader becomes a team member and learning and instruction are addressed as being a team project. Each participant indicated that he/she fosters participative management. One participant indicated he fosters participative management by breaking his faculty into teams and meeting weekly with each team. He posited that by doing this it enables him to do away with "a leadership group" which he claims could be put a certain group "on a pedestal" which would interfere with all faculty members assuming some leadership responsibilities. Another participant indicated he "trusts" his staff with tasks and allows them to participate in areas they are "strong" in. He indicated that he "cannot manage this school by himself" and he tells his

faculty and staff that they are the ones making a difference. Another participant indicated the

utilization of a "design team" wherein the design team members work together as a group, as

well as separately (with their work area team) in addressing the needs/goals of the school. As

is indicated in all of the responses these transformational leaders do not view themselves as

being independently responsible for the success of the school community. They view

themselves as "team members" doing their part to benefit their school community. They are

dedicated leaders who work along with their "co-workers" in an effort to liberate the

dreaded "boss" mentality once associated with principals. This leadership approach,

according to Leithwood (1992) reduces the differences in status between workers and

managers, thus emphasizing participative decision-making with a basis of "consensual" or

"facilitative" power that is manifested through other people instead of over other people.

How do you foster the development and maintenance of a professional, collaborative school culture?

MR. WILCOX: I hope we're accomplishing that each week. During the weekly meetings I would say the first three minutes pertain to what I call "faculty meeting" stuff. We discuss when and what things are due but this really doesn't dominate the agenda. There are pieces that need to be mentioned, "reminders" are what I like to call them, but I don't try to designate a specified amount of time for the meetings, when we get finished, we're done. I hope what we have accomplished over the last three weeks in our meetings is that we have a plan. They have determined how they want to handle things and how these things will be facilitated. I always tell them that if they don't like how it is being done or has been done in the past, then make a suggestion. That's really what Wednesdays are all about. Another thing

I've done is to try to get away from just having a "program" for PTO (Parent Teacher Organization). I want the parents to actually get to see student work. An example would be that we have one grade level completing student portfolios and at PTO those parents get to look at their child's portfolio. We normally have three PTOs per year and they are usually held on Tuesday nights. We were sharing Thursday night PTOs with the elementary school but we changed that. Since the change our attendance has increased. The programs were long and the parents were tired. We are still in the learning/transitioning phase on this. It is a work in progress. I want PTO to be an opportunity for the parents that don't get to come to school during their workday to be able to meet with the teachers. That is what I rather it would be than just an "agenda meeting". The different grades presenting different pieces have been good. I would hope that on Wednesdays the staff has opportunities to constantly collaborate. Another thing that we at RMS do is all of the teachers do an observation once a week. That is one of the more beneficial things we have done. They send me a report on their observation. They are not in there to critique each other. Nine times out of ten they go out of their way to complement the other person. I always forward the complements to the person that they have provided the observation for. They get to choose who they observe as we are a small school. We started with only content observations but probably 90% now comment that they like the way someone is doing something in their classroom. They can always find something beneficial to them during the observation and most of them go in with that mindset. The observations are supposed to be 20 minutes in length and most of the teachers stay that long. The observations really help me keep up with what is going on in the classrooms. I don't get into the classrooms as much as most principals because sometimes I feel like I'm a distraction. It's my sheer personality to cut up with one of the students, sometimes I worse

than they are, asking questions, making comments. I feel like I'm more distracting and in the way in the classrooms, not necessarily to the teacher but to the students. At least ten students will tell you "hey" when you walk into the classroom. The observations have been positive.

MR. FREEMAN: I meet with the teachers. No one person is going to have the magic answer every time. If you get into a "one-track" mind, meaning you think you have all of the answers, you are going to fail. I cannot do that to our school. As far as fostering this, our beliefs are shared. When a student must leave our school and they do not want to it makes us feel like we are doing our job. We don't want them to leave either, it is a mutual feeling. We are like family; this is school wide – elementary through middle. You make the connections with the students and parents and you know who they are, what their needs are, what their family situation is and that goes a long way in the educational process of the students. Having students in this school ranging from elementary through middle really helps everyone come together, to get to know each other.

MRS. TRIM: It has been communicated to all staff members that they are expected to present themselves professionally at all times. It is our desire to serve with a smile. My motto, of which I always share with faculty and staff members, is W.O.R.K. which means "wonderful opportunity to reach kids." Our Design team and PLC meetings are avenues for collaboration. Also, I promote and maintain an open door policy for faculty, staff, parents, students and community members at all times.

According to Leithwood (1992) one of the three goals that transformational leaders pursue is helping staff develop and maintain a collaborative, school culture by talking to staff members, observing each other, critiquing, and planning together. Each of the participants in the study indicated that communication is "key" in maintaining a professional, collaborative

school culture. Participants shared how observations and planning takes place at their respective schools. One participant indicated she promotes and maintains an open door policy at all times. Another participant indicated communication occurs at his school in team meetings, where "discussions" involving strategies and plans for growth take place. He, as well as the other two participants indicated the utilization of PTO meetings as avenues of communication to parents. All three participants shared they meet often with their teachers. These administrators indicate these meetings range from informal to formal and involve all staff members. One participant indicated his school is like a "family" having shared beliefs. He stressed the importance of making "connections" with students, teachers and parents and indicated this "goes a long way in the educational process of students." Another participant explained how his teachers are required to participate in weekly observations where they observe each other in the classroom setting. He explained that upon completion of observations faculty members are encouraged to share teaching strategies they found helpful in the weekly meetings. He indicated this sharing process is part of weekly planning and that approximately 90% of his staff members comment positively on teaching strategies utilized by their cohorts.

How do you promote the individual professional growth of your staff members?

MR. WILCOX: That is a good question. We constantly meet as groups and I hope individual professional growth is happening through the groups as different people will grow from different things. We have probably done seven different book studies in four years including topics such as successful strategies to differentiation. I constantly give the teachers articles that some may find interesting. At times we discuss the article as a group and sometimes we don't. It's amazing, and I never know who it is, but someone always "takes" to the

information in the article. This information is not something that is "forced down their throat" and they seem to know that and enjoy what is being shared. One of the last articles that I shared dealt with a middle school that has done away with grades. I always keep a copy of each article in a notebook (he shows me a 4 inch notebook filled with articles). Lots of times I will place an article in the teacher's boxes on Friday and sometimes I just take them to a team meeting with me. We don't have really have lots of time for reading. I think the combination of all of this provides opportunities for individual growth. I really think that some of them have a hard time sharing "why I did this or this is why I did that" but by sharing their experiences others will have opportunities and be motivated to try different things, which is important. It is amazing to see how much we have evolved over the past five years. Some teachers have become attached to this and others to that but I don't think anybody that has been teaching longer than five years would indicate they are doing things like they use to.

MR. FREEMAN: We send out professional development opportunities. This serves as a source of self-evaluation for them. I will also look for needs. For example, at the end of the year we will look at the number of discipline referrals to check for classroom management issues. If you look at test scores you can tell what is missing academically. The data will speak for itself.

MRS. TRIM: Staff members are strongly encouraged to participate in professional development opportunities that are offered in the summer, during preplanning, or on teacher work days.

According to Leithwood (1992) transformational leaders promote motivation for individual professional growth by involving teachers in determining professional development opportunities. By getting to know the teachers' strengths, weaknesses, and interests, the

transformational leader can support and encourage individual as well as school growth. The participants shared they constantly communicate with their staff members in an effort to improve the school community including professional development. Through discussions and observation, these leaders indicated their ability to determine teachers' strengths, weaknesses, and interests. One participant targets interests by sharing articles and books with his staff and then involving them in discussions pertaining to the information that has been shared. Another participant indicated he informs his staff of professional development opportunities in an effort to promote "self-evaluation." Another participant shared that she encourages staff members to participate in learning opportunities that are offered throughout the year. As is evident from their narratives these transformational leaders realize the importance of individual professional growth.

How do you promote the collective growth of your school community?

MR. WILCOX: I don't think we have any set process. We go through things like processing data. We all participate in putting the school improvement plan together. I may type the final copy but we all work together.

MR. FREEMAN: We have an annual fall festival here where every business and every parent participates to make sure it is successful. We are small but they show up. They are honest, hard working people that really care about their school and their community. Our staff and our parents also attend PTA (Parent-Teacher Association). They are wonderful. Our PTA meets three times a year. We have student focused activities such as Beta Club initiation that parents want to be a part of. This fosters the collective growth of our entire school community.

MRS. TRIM: We, at GMS, offer many opportunities for parent involvement in our school community. We hold PTO meetings three times per year. We have a Winter Carnival in which everyone is invited and encouraged to participate in. We have an active School Council that meets to enable us to share what is going on at GMS. We also have a great Athletic Booster Club that helps with everything from sports to educational needs. We allow the use of our School Facilities for community events. Each year we have a Veteran's Day celebration wherein we invite Veteran's and their family members and honor them for their dedication and service to our country. Our students and staff are involved in many community events such as the city's annual Onion Festival, Tattnall Productions (a community based talent show), Relay for Life activities, C.A.R.E. S. (Cancer awareness and prevention), annual Homecoming activities, and other community oriented events.

The participants promote the collective growth of school community by sharing what is happening in their schools with parent and community members. This sharing takes place during PTO/PTA meetings which are held throughout the year. The participants indicated that school data (AYP presentations), upcoming events/activities, and student work are examples of fostering collective growth of the school community. All participants indicated communication is extremely important as school and community events are merged to promote the collective growth of the entire community.

In what ways do you help teachers effectively solve problems?

MR. WILCOX: The biggest piece with this is the mindset that teachers have with not being able to impact how a student does if he or she is not in their classroom. Nine times out of ten, unless a student has been overtly disrespectful, when a teacher has to refer a student to the office the first thing they say is "I'm sorry." They are not apologizing to me. I think they

understand that the student needs to be in the classroom. At RMS we give students different opportunities for behavior improvement ranging from sitting in the office for a set amount of time to other measures. I'm not indicating that we have a "utopia" here, we don't. We have behavior issues just like anyone else but over the past five years we have cut our referrals by more than one half. I use to check it the figures but I don't anymore. If a teacher has a problem, he or she doesn't have to have an appointment. They may simply come by and talk. If it is something I can solve I will to take that burden off of them, but if I can't solve it I will help them find an answer.

MR. FREEMAN: Well first, I give advice when they ask about things to try. In dealing with student discipline they don't normally write a student up for every little thing. I tell them that they want the student to respect them and not just the office. I stress that the office is for incidents such as fighting, incidents that an office referral is mandatory for. If the student is cutting up such as talking or being off-task there are things can be done instead of an office referral such as recess detention or silent lunch. They are encouraged to try these things before office referrals are done. Any time a classroom disruption occurs the effects are felt by everyone in the class. I tell them that I want students in the classroom but they must behave like everyone else.

MRS. TRIM: As I mentioned previously I have an open door policy. I also promote constructive discussions as often as possible. These take place throughout the school day, at lunch, break, during planning times, after school. I enjoy helping teachers and many times I ask questions that prompt them to think about how they know something is a problem, and if it really is a problem, how we can work together to make it better. I always encourage

teachers to think about what is best instructionally for the student as opposed to what would be better for the teacher.

These leaders indicated their willingness to "help" teachers solve problems ranging from discipline issues to issues with instruction. Two of the participants discussed the importance of students remaining in the classroom and how they work with teachers to ensure that students involved in discipline issues are allowed to return to the classroom and/or stay in the classroom as much as possible. They indicated the utilization of time-outs, lunch and break detentions in an effort to help teachers solve discipline issues. One of the participants indicated involving teachers in constructive discussion as much as possible incorporating questions that prompt them to think about whether or not something really is a problem and if so, how the teachers and school leader can work together to solve the problem.

What types of opportunities/activities do you provide for your staff in efforts to promote their intellectual stimulation?

MR. WILCOX: The articles and the book studies are activities/opportunities for promoting their intellectual stimulation. I go out of the way to provide them opportunities like that. We constantly forward information, share things, and talk with each other, which also promotes intellectual stimulation.

MR. FREEMAN: Well, the middle school conference is excellent opportunity for intellectual stimulation. I try to prompt them to go. I don't force them but I explain what a great opportunity it is. Anything else that I can include them in I do so. Also, we are going to try to take our Beta Club members to a college. We are going to walk them through registration and let them sit in the actual college classrooms with college students. We will even eat there. College is just a word to some of our students. They don't know anything about the process or

the environment. Some of our staff members will be participating in this as chaperones which will certainly promote intellectual stimulation due to the nature of the questions the students will ask. They know that the teachers have been through this and they will have questions for them.

MRS. TRIM: One of the ways that I prompt intellectual stimulation is at every preplanning meeting I play games with them. For example, at our last preplanning meeting we played games involving Bloom's Taxonomy, Maslow's Hierarchy, and our Standards Based School Rubric that is utilized in our classroom "pop-ins." Our teachers were to begin this year incorporating Bloom's Taxonomy into their lessons as one of our goals was to add more rigor to our lessons and activities. The teachers were rewarded for participating. They never know what will be asked of them in our meetings. Sometimes they will be given assignments pertaining to the information shared in the meetings. I also encourage them to constantly be on the lookout for ways of strengthening their lessons and many times they will share what they have found or what they plan on utilizing. I also love being in the classrooms and often will participate in the lesson, if by no other means, I will question the students to make sure they are on-task and that they can verbalize what the lesson is about. I believe all of these things prompt intellectual stimulation for the teachers as well as for the students.

According to Leithwood (1992) the fourth dimension of transformational leadership is intellectual stimulation. Creating professional exchange opportunities is one way that transformational leaders can promote intellectual stimulation. Staff development opportunities such as school visits, conferences, and collaborative planning will also increase opportunities for intellectual stimulation among faculty and staff members. School leaders that are perceptive of the needs of their teachers can effectively plan meaningful intellectual

opportunities that will be viewed as positive learning experiences. Each of the participants indicated different ways of promoting intellectual stimulation opportunities/activities for their staff members. One participant indicated the utilization of book studies and professional articles. Another participant indicated the utilization of school conferences as well as school visits. One participant indicated the utilization of games with the faculty and staff wherein she incorporates information that will be beneficial to the teachers and enable them to add more rigor to their lessons.

Do you "model" desired professional practices for your staff? If so, how and will you provide examples?

MR. WILCOX: I hope I model professional practices everyday just in the way I carry myself. I don't know from the standpoint of going into a classroom and modeling how I would handle a situation, I don't know that I hold myself in that high regard but I do teach a class and it has been interesting for me to comment on how to do differentiated things. My class is only thirty minutes long, but the teachers will come in there to observe my class. I teach a class and I also keep a group of approximately sixty students in the cafeteria in the mornings for a "mini" math class. This "mini" class started out as help with multiplication but has grown into a five-problem session. I provide a worksheet for the students daily. I now have help from my graduation coach as well as four to five 8th graders that come in and help out. I have told them that they can stop at any time they want. I'm not going to make anyone help. The students in the "mini" class know to automatically pick up the sheet. I hope by doing these two things I am modeling constant improvement. I always tell the students "it's not about you getting the answer right, it's about you knowing how to do it."

MR. FREEMAN: I model through conversation with my staff. We all do as administrators. You model all day, I mean if you are ten minutes late for school and you tell your staff to be on time the probability of them showing up on time is going to be slim.

MRS. TRIM: I always try to follow the rules that are set forth for my faculty and staff. I pitch in whenever and wherever I'm needed. If we need a sub, I'll sub. If the lunchroom floor needs cleaning, I clean it. If the entryway to the school needs sweeping, I sweep it. I don't expect my staff members to do anything that I am not willing to do. I always try to be positive. I love coming to work and I share this often with staff members as well as community members. I also refrain from criticism.

Two of the participants indicated they either teach a class themselves or they substitute for a teacher when needed. By doing this these leaders allow the teachers to view them in a teaching capacity which promotes a "personable" approach to them as a co-teacher. One participant indicated he models professional practices through conversation with staff members. Two of the participants indicated they model professional practices by following the rules that are set forth for faculty and staff such as promptness. One of the participants indicated she "pitches in" wherever she is needed such as subbing, sweeping, picking up trash, etc. She indicated she models by always being positive and refraining from criticism. Leithwood (1992) posits that transformational leaders who are enthusiastic when addressing others will allow the faculty and staff to view them as promoting a great working environment. These leaders are viewed as "hard workers" and are seen as personable and approachable. He stresses that "modeling" is a great way for transformational leaders to help faculty and staff members accomplish tasks for interact with others in an effective manner.

Tell me about your expectations for your school community.

MR. WILCOX: My expectations are for the students, faculty and staff to be here. Everyone needs to show up and work hard everyday. I don't walk around with a whip wanting people to think I'm looking over them every two seconds but I hope there is a general sense of wanting to be successful and do well. I make no bones about telling everyone this including the students. Most times when students have been absent X number of times I call them in to my office and tell them about AYP and what it means for them and for the school when they are absent. I give them ownership. I pull attendance every two weeks. For two years running I checked on certain students daily to see if they were at school and if they were not I would call and check on them. I would also make home visits.

MR. FREEMAN: I expect us to grow and I expect us to change with the core value in mind that you can always be respectful and always do your best. I stress that we are not to give up regardless of what the outcome looks like. In the long run what you put in is what you get out. That is the way I look at it. If the students are working hard and you have your expectations from day one after while they will rise to your expectations.

MRS. TRIM: I encourage positive participation in everything we do here at GMS. As was previously mentioned I have an open door policy. I encourage all of my staff members to keep me informed of improvement opportunities. I also encourage input form parents and community members. Improvement here is not limited. We can improve in all areas and I expect my faculty and staff to keep this in mind at all times.

The participants in the study shared a range of expectations for their school community including showing up daily and working hard to high expectations for change and growth. One participant indicated that hard work and high expectations will encourage student to rise

to the expectations. Another participant indicated that she stresses that improvement is not limited and she expects her faculty and staff to keep this in mind at all times. According to Leithwood (1992) that by striving for excellence in all areas within the school, transformational leaders promote professionalism, hard work, and innovative practice.

Is there anything you would like to share about your life experiences that have helped you become a successful middle school administrator?

MR. WILCOX: I think the success comes from just being good to people. I praise the students and staff when they do well and pat them on the back when they do poorly. I let them know there is always a next time. I think the way you treat people in general is the key to success.

MR. FREEMAN: I think my life experiences allow me to really relate to these kids. I was from a family of eleven. Money was always an issue. I came from a single parent home. My mom was an only parent. I also have a sensitive area for kids that are being picked on. This happened to me when I was in school and it didn't feel good. I am very sensitive to that. I always address issues when kids let me know they are being picked on. I don't forget about it. You have to "nip it in the bud" as soon as possible. Back to the college deal, I made pretty good grades in high school, but I didn't think college was really on my plate until I started playing basketball and I started getting letters from colleges. I will never forget the words that my high school counselor during my ninth grade year said, they were "Chris, what are you going to do when you get out of high school?" "You know you have to have a plan if you don't make the NBA." She was just as frank as she could be. She wasn't being funny. She was serious. I love her. She sat me down and we talked and it hit me. When I left out of her office, I thought, man, I got a long time to decide about that. I'm telling you it went from my

sophomore year to my junior year, and I started receiving calls from colleges due to playing basketball. They wanted me to go here and there. Our team made it to state and we won. After that, the colleges were looking at me but I didn't know that. My first plane flight was down to Tallahassee. I had never been out of Georgia. They sent me a plane ticket and I went. I walked around the college. It was a business college and a lot of the students were going over seas and I thought that would be "cool." They offered me a four-year deal if I signed with them and I said "let me think about it." As I was leaving for home I talked to some of the guys on campus. I actually walked up on a conversation about a student getting his brains blown out and I knew right then that wasn't for me. I wasn't going to school there. Brewton Parker and Georgia called me. Also a school in Wyoming called me. I knew, because of that plane flight, hitting those air pockets that I told God that if he helped me get back home I wouldn't get on another plane. That kind of shaped my decision. This is going to sound weird but I had a dream that I passed this certain "thing." On my way to visit Brewton Parker, I looked to my left and there was this fire tower looking thing with a beacon. I dreamed about that "thing" for three days. When I passed that thing going to visit Brewton Parker I knew that was the place I needed to go. It was like God was showing me that. That is where I went. It was a wonderful school. I had fun there.

MRS. TRIM: I would say that being hearing impaired and having a speech impediment have proved some challenges throughout my life. However, supportive parents and teachers saw potential and put forth the same expectations for me as for my siblings. My participation in 4-H and the speeches that I gave as part of district project achievement helped me build confidence in my ability to communicate. The leadership opportunities that I had in 4-H and at my high school helped me develop my leadership skills. When I was in college I was

initially denied admission to the college of education program because of my speech impediment. My 4th grade teacher and the superintendent of schools (when I was in school and at the time I was trying to get into education) contacted the college I was trying to gain admission to and told them that if the law would allow it they would hire me that very moment without any formal post secondary education training. One of my former principals and a former superintendant modeled effective leadership practices and mentored me as I became an educational leader. I gained so much from the modeling and sharing of information that these great leaders shared with me. Due to these experiences it is my desire to share stories and information with other leaders that I am fortunate to enough to work with.

When given an opportunity to share the life experiences that have helped them become a successful middle school administrator, the responses given ranged from being good to people, to childhood environment, to successful mentorship experiences. Each participant openly shared transformational experiences and how those experiences impacted/impact their work as administrators.

Summary

Upon receiving permission for the research from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Georgia Southern University the researcher obtained permission to conduct the study from the superintendent of the county in which the participants are employed. The researcher also obtained permission from the participants and then scheduled the interviews with the three Title I Distinguished Middle School principals. The participant interviews were scheduled at a time and place convenient for each participant. Each chose to be interviewed in his or her office, at his/her respective school. Two of the interviews were held before school hours and one was held after school hours.

The role of the researcher in the study included determining which Title I Distinguished Middle School principals were selected to participate in the study, gathering consent from the superintendent and from the participants selected to participate in the study, interviewing the participants, gathering school demographics and participant information, analyzing the responses of the interviews, relating the responses of the participants to the reviewed literature, and presenting the study data.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND

CONCLUSION

Summary

This chapter is a summary of the study, analysis and discussion of the findings, implications, recommendations based on the analysis of data, and conclusions based on the findings. The researcher's principal interest in conducting a study of this nature was for growth and transformation purposes for herself and others not unlike her including novice, struggling, or aspiring middle school leaders in the midst of major educational reform initiatives. Since the educational leader is considered vital to the success of the educational institution, it is the challenge of every twenty-first century educational leader to provide and promote learning environments that are rich with learning opportunities for everyone within their educational community. Much can be gained from studying the actual experiences of successful school leaders. The purpose of this study was to discover how successful middle school leaders utilize transformational leadership practices to lead their schools to award winning status and maintain that status. This study was warranted due to a gap in literature (narratives of school administrators). It provides novice middle school educational leaders an opportunity to see themselves in others as they reflect upon this "sharing" of successful leadership practices.

The study was completed through structured interviews which allowed the researcher to gather and analyze information through the narratives of the principals. The participants chose to use their own names in the study. The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed by the researcher. The demographic profiles of the schools gave an overall view of the schools the

participants work in. The research design was qualitative in nature which permitted the researcher to provide accounts of lived experiences.

The population of the study consisted of three Title I Distinguished Middle School principals in Tattnall County, Georgia. The years of experience for the three principals range from four to thirty-two years. Each principal in the study is known for his/her reputation as being an effective, successful leader by leading and/or maintaining his/her school to a Title I Distinguished status as determined by Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) which is a component of the No Child Left Behind Act. These leaders are also known as being effective, successful leaders by members of their school community. The study addresses the following research question: What can be learned from the narratives of Title I Distinguished Middle School principals?

Findings

The data for the study was collected by the researcher in March 2009 at the participants' respective schools. The structured interviews allowed the researcher to gather rich qualitative data. Each participant was asked thirteen interview questions. By interviewing the participants personally, at their respective schools, the researcher was able to observe the principals' enthusiasm as he/she shared the narratives.

The narratives shared in the study were indicative Bass's (1985) theory of transformational leadership and of Leithwood (1994) and Leithwood & Jantzi's (1996) six key dimensions of transformational school leadership. This information is important to novice as well as ineffective school leaders, aspiring school leaders, school boards, state officials, teachers, parents, and community stakeholders. The researcher will communicate the findings to these individuals through publications and presentations.

Upon analyzing the study data I discovered various transformational leadership practices producing four emerging themes: (1) inspiring the school community to adopt an attitude of continuous improvement, (2) the importance of group and self-evaluation, (3) high expectations for self, students, and teachers, and (4) working to create a positive school climate. Since this study is an autobiographical narrative inquiry I kept in mind throughout the interview process that I would be participating in the study not only as a researcher but also as a participant. Following each of the four themes I have incorporated, in italics, how the narratives have helped me and how I plan to utilize them as I transition from novice to successful transformational leader.

<p style="text-align:center">Theme #1: Adopting an Attitude of Continuous Improvement</p>

As I interviewed the Title I Distinguished Middle School principals I discovered all of the participants felt that one of their roles as their school's leader was to inspire the entire school community to adopt an attitude of continuous improvement. Mr. Wilcox indicated this as he stated that his "number one role is being an instructional type monitor." Mr. Freeman shared his desire to become known as more that a disciplinarian. He indicated he works to help his school community improve in academics as well as overall student safety. Mrs. Trim indicated she promotes continuous improvement in many ways, from having a goal of becoming an instructional leader to stressing that improvement can and should be made in all areas within the school community. Mr. Wilcox, Mr. Freeman, and Mrs. Trim realize the importance of their role as instructional monitor/leader which was also deemed important by DuFour (2002) when he emphasized the importance of the school principal being a learning leader. On this same note McEwin (1996) and Trimble (2003) indicated that middle school leaders must utilize curriculum instructional methods that appeal to adolescents and they must

be knowledgeable and proficient with new technology. As each of the participants indicated their desire to promote and provide optimal learning opportunities for their middle school students it was evident they understand the importance of utilizing instructional methods that are appealing to adolescents.

All of the participants in the study indicated they continually stress the importance of success for students as well as teachers. As a method of improvement all of the participants indicated they often engage their faculty and staff members in discussions (either as a group or on an individual basis) geared toward continuous school improvement. This correlates to research conducted by Glickman (2002), Fullan (2003) and Blasé (1998) as they maintain principals must monitor students and teacher learning gaps and effectively supervise both by using collegial approaches and encouraging them to acquire higher performance levels.

Throughout the interview process each participant shared and emphasized the importance of adopting an attitude of continuous improvement. As I transcribed the narratives I did so with thoughts of continuous improvement for myself as well as for others within my school community. I realized how practices geared towards continuous improvement can and will take people out of their "comfort zone." I thought about how change is difficult for some people. I also thought about how others have the ability to adapt well to change. From the narratives I learned that everything can be improved no matter how "great" things may appear. I also gained some valuable insight as to how to address areas of continuous improvement within the school community in a positive, non-threatening manner.

Theme # 2: The Importance of Group and Self-Evaluation

The participants in the study indicated that group as well as self-evaluation plays an important part in school success. Mr. Wilcox indicated this as he shared that he and his staff

"perpetuate evaluation." He maintained that he doesn't "mandate" evaluation but that he provides support for the teachers according to needs. He also indicated that self-evaluation for him as well as the teachers has happened "over time" and "self-evaluation" is more of a "driving force" than any evaluation he could give them. He indicated that he allows his teachers to make decisions when new practices are warranted and that they are the ones evaluating the practices during weekly team meetings. Mr. Wilcox verbalized "if they (teachers) don't have "say so" or "buy-in" you don't get the same results. This parallels research findings by Marks and Priny (2003) which describe shared processes of "collaborative leadership" where principals share their leadership with teachers and others which will ultimately help provide middle schools with effective instructional leadership. Mr. Freeman indicated that he encourages all of the teachers at his school to participate in the management and evaluation of the school. He indicated that principals must have the support of their staff and they must trust them with tasks by allowing staff participation in areas of their strength. He indicated that teachers are the ones making a difference and that he tells them so. The importance of collaborative leadership practice was also posited by Millen (2002) as he concluded that instruction focused leaders must work collaboratively with teachers to increase growth. Mrs. Trim indicated utilization of collaboration by means of a "design team" approach to overall school management and evaluation. The design team works with individuals and team members while implementing new practices as well as when evaluating the new practices. Each of the participants shared ways they have involved faculty and staff members in "shared leadership" (Leithwood, 1999). According to Leithwood (1999) the shift to shared leadership promotes the involvement of the entire school community in facilitating comprehensive change.

In addition to group evaluation, Mr. Wilcox's responses were indicative of opportunities for self-reflection for himself as well as for his staff. He maintained self-reflective practices prompt individual professional growth. He shared that he utilizes book studies, the sharing of educational articles, and group discussions to provide and promote opportunities for individual growth. He posited the "sharing of experiences" that take place during the meetings (as well as outside the meetings) motivate teachers to try different things, which is important. On that same note, Mr. Freeman and Mrs. Trim indicated they inform teachers of professional development opportunities which, according to Mr. Freeman, "serves as a source of self-evaluation for them (teachers)." Mr. Freeman shared that he encourages participation in educational conferences as a means of self-evaluation and intellectual stimulation. Mrs. Trim shared that she utilizes games consisting of information geared towards self-evaluation and intellectual stimulation. She mentioned the incorporation of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (1956), Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) and Standards based instruction into the games to aid the teachers in planning student lessons involving rigorous activities. She shared that she often visits classrooms and that while in the classroom she participates in the lessons and/or utilizes a rubric geared towards teacher self-reflection and improvement.

Prior to beginning this study I must admit that I had not put forth enough thought about how important group and self-evaluation is in education. As an administrator, I evaluate teacher performance and in doing so I often incorporate comments aimed towards teacher improvement. Thanks to the participant's narratives this "evaluative" process has new meaning as evaluations, self and group, should be on-going and not just conducted at certain "points" or directed towards certain "things" throughout the year. As is evident from the

narratives of the successful administrators we, educators and teachers, must constantly

evaluate ourselves and each other and share our evaluations in a positive, productive

manner. As the narratives in this study indicate, there is much to learn from each other about

how to evaluate personal as well as professional practices. I plan on verbalizing and

stressing this as often as possible in my interactions with others within my educational

community. It is my desire to instill in my school community the importance of group and self-

evaluation. By learning through the narratives of the participants I can now turn the

evaluative process into something to look forward to instead of something "dreaded." The

evaluative practices shared by the participants in this study will become valuable tools that I

will utilize often.

Theme #3: High Expectations for Self, Teachers, and Students

During the interview process it was evident that each participant held high expectations

for themselves, their teachers, and their students. Mrs. Trim indicated high expectations as she

shared her desire for "all" to be the best they can possibly be." She spoke of "setting the bar

high" and working towards achievement. Crawford (1998) shares this belief in high

expectations as he indicated that leaders who are driven to succeed have high standards not

only for themselves but for their faculty, staff, and students. Cotton (2003) and Glatthorn

(1997) correlate this as well as their research indicated the role of the principal as being

significant in promoting school level change, particularly that of student achievement. Mr.

Wilcox shared that at the middle school level the "trick" to overall school success is putting

students in situations where they can be successful. He shared that his school community's

number one goal is to put students in situations where they have a chance to be successful. He

went on to add this is probably the reason they have been able to make AYP for the past few

years. He indicated that he promotes "hard work" on a daily basis. Mr. Freeman posited his expectation is for "each" student to "become a productive member of society." He added that he expects growth and change and that he strives to project an "approachable demeanor" in an effort to promote growth and change for himself as well as for his school. Mrs. Trim spoke of meeting and exceeding accountability measures as her school's vision which is evidence of high expectations for the entire school community. She made reference to "setting the bar high" for everyone. She maintained that her desire is for "all" to be the best they can possibly be. Her goal of becoming an instructional leader indicated the high expectations she has for herself. She posited the belief that improvement is not limited and she added that she promotes "constructive discussion" as much as possible as a method of promoting improvement. According to research, (Valentine, Clark, Hackman & Petzko, 2004) middle schools have not been extremely successful in addressing student achievement concerns, especially in lower-income communities and for students with special needs. Also, according to Balfanz & MacIver (2000) poor educational quality in many urban area middle schools have resulted in students unable to experience success upon transitioning to high school. According to Walters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) there is a positive correlation between leadership and student achievement. As these successful leaders shared high expectations for themselves, their teachers and students, their leadership practices add to the research findings indicative of positive correlations between leadership and student success. As was evident in the stories of all of the participants, student success is a priority on their school's agenda. These transformational leaders realize the importance of student success and they strive to make sure each student finds success.

The participant responses leading to the overarching theme of high expectations for self, teachers, and students has made a lasting impression on me. As each of the participants shared his/her expectations it was evident that these leaders will never be content with being "mediocre." They are not "average" leaders and their school community is not "average." There is no doubt in my mind that their schools have been successful due to their push for "excellence." These leaders have high expectations not only for themselves but for everyone within their school community and they share these high expectations continuously. As I work with others within my school I will do so with "excellence" in mind having been inspired by these exceptional leaders.

Theme # 4: Working to Create a Positive School Climate

One of the overarching themes that surfaced in the data was that of creating a positive school climate. Transformational leaders who work towards acquisition of a positive school climate will foster positive learning experiences for everyone within their school community. The participants in the study often referred to the importance of collaboration with and among members of the school community. Numerous opportunities surfaced within the data as to how these principals promote positive interactions. Mr. Wilcox indicated that he supports the teachers in a non-mandating manner. He indicated that everyone at his school works together to achieve success and that he takes care in making sure certain groups are not put "on a pedestal." He indicated that he encourages teachers to make decisions and facilitate change. He indicated how he provides opportunities for constant collaboration. He noted that he is careful to share complements of and among his teachers. He also makes home visits in an effort to create an overall positive school community. Two of the principals shared opportunities such as PTO meetings, school and community festivals, and celebrations within

their school community as a means for promoting and creating a positive school climate. Mr. Freeman indicates the promotion of school safety. He indicated that he visits classes often and that he stresses to his staff that he cannot "manage" the school alone. He maintains his school is a "family" and that he is always making connections with students and parents in an effort to promote a positive school climate. Mrs. Trim indicated that she always strives to be positive and refrain from criticism. She described herself as an "encourager" and added that she "pitches in" where and when she is needed. She indicated that she works in a "caring school community." Although the middle school reform movement has been criticized for placing an emphasis on a warm welcoming school climate for emerging adolescents and not attending to issues related to improvement of student achievement (Jackson & Davis, 2000; Lipsitz, Mizell, Jackson & Austin, 1997) the participants in this study share that it is possible for the curriculum to be appropriate and rigorous (Anfare & Waks, 2001; Clark & Clark, 2003) while maintaining a positive school climate that is conducive to learning.

Leithwood (1994) posits that middle school leaders that utilize transformational leadership practices will provide the best educational opportunities for the students entrusted to their care by promoting excellent learning conditions for everyone within the school community and beyond. The findings in this study correlate with the overall school success that Leithwood and other researchers attribute to transformational school leadership.

Each of the participants in the study shared how they work to create a positive school climate so the students, teachers, parents, and community members will want to be a part of the school family. Their responses have provided me with excellent resources in trying to improve the school climate within a school community. By promoting collaboration with and among school members the participants shared how they have achieved success in this area.

I, as did the participants, will take care in making sure everyone has an opportunity to participate in the school in various ways. I have gained many ideas as to how to reach out to school community members. I will always be mindful of the times members can participate in activities and offer activities and opportunities that will prompt participation and collaboration. I will take the practices shared by these transformational leaders and meld them into practices that will work for my school community.

Implications

According to the research and findings of this study the following implications surfaced. As school reform is inevitable and accountability measures increase, a "reform" of leadership practices is inevitable as school leaders must effectively lead their school to meet and/or exceed accountability measures. As school leaders "transform" from autonomous leaders to transformational leaders the overall success of the school may improve as the entire school community shares the "ownership" of "their" school. School leaders need to realize the importance of transformational leadership practices and what these practices may mean to the success of their school community. Much is to be learned from the experiences of successful transformational education leaders. As leaders make the transition from autonomous to collaborative leadership, self-evaluation and collaboration are key elements in "transforming" educational leadership practices for the leaders as well as for the entire school community.

Recommendations

This study will add to the minimal amount of research currently existing on narratives of middle school principals. The findings suggest that narratives shared by successful principals can impact the potential for successful middle school leadership. Further research should be conducted utilizing narratives of successful elementary as well as high school principals. This

research would support the findings of this study and provide additional perspectives. The network of stories that this study provides should prompt other studies of this nature. The intent of sharing these findings is to facilitate a renewed interest in and dedication to the sharing of leadership stories. To increase the sharing of stories, researchers need to invest more time in gathering qualitative data that focuses on life experiences of school administrators. This researcher believes that sharing effective transformational leadership practices will benefit novice, ineffective, novice, aspiring and veteran school leaders. Additional research is needed that supports the experiences of successful transformational leaders.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

Successful school leaders have utilized transformational leadership practices to help their schools acquire and/or maintain award winning status. The narratives of the successful Title I Distinguished Middle School leaders were shared in interviews and reported in this study. Based on the narratives of the participants, the following conclusions were drawn: transformational school leaders adopt an attitude of continuous improvement; they realize the importance of group and self evaluation; they have high expectations for self, teachers, and students; and they work to create a positive school climate.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your school.

2. What, in your opinion, is your role as your school's "leader?"

3. Tell me about the development of your school's vision and goals.

4. How did you build consensus around your school's vision and goals?

5. Do you foster participative management in your school? If so, who do you encourage to

participate?

6. How do you foster the development and maintenance of a professional, collaborative

school culture?

7. How do you promote the individual professional growth of your staff members?

8. How do you promote the collective growth of your school community?

9. In what ways do you help teachers effectively solve problems?

10. What types of opportunities/activities do you provide for your staff in efforts to promote

their intellectual stimulation?

11. Do you "model" desired professional practices for your staff? If so, how and will you

provide examples?

12. Tell me about your expectations for your school community.

13. Is there anything you would like to share about your life experiences that have helped

you become a successful middle school administrator?

APPENDIX B

Letter to Superintendent

February 26, 2009

Superintendent of Tattnall County Schools,

I am currently in the process of completing my doctoral degree in Curriculum Studies through Georgia Southern University. In my study, I am focusing on narratives of Title I Distinguished Middle School Principals. In order to complete the study, I am asking your permission to interview each of the middle school principals in Tattnall County. These interviews will take place during a convenient time for the principals and will not interfere with any school activities.

Thank you in advance for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Cindy Boyett

APPENDIX C

Letter to Principals

Dear Middle School Principal:

My name is Cindy L. Boyett. I am a Doctoral student currently enrolled at Georgia Southern University. As part of the requirements to complete the Doctoral program I am conducting a study that will present narratives of Title I Distinguished Middle School Principals.

This letter is to request your assistance in gathering data through a structured interview. I will ask you questions regarding your leadership practices. If you agree to participate in the study, I will tape record and transcribe the information after the interview. Data that is collected will be compared for similarities and differences and will be included in my dissertation in narrative form.

If you have any questions about this study please contact me at 557-6860 or 654-1467. You may also e-mail me at cboyett@tattnall.k12.ga.us.

Your participation is greatly appreciated. The narratives and findings will be valuable to novice as well as experienced school administrators, school systems, and aspiring school leaders.

Respectfully,

Cindy Boyett
Assistant Principal
Glennville Middle School

APPENDIX D

| Georgia Southern University |
| Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs |
| Institutional Review Board (IRB) |

Phone: 912-478-0843		Veazey Hall 2021
		P.O. Box 8005
Fax: 912-478-0719	IRB@GeorgiaSouthern.edu	Statesboro, GA 30460

To: Cindy Boyett
263 E. Brazell St.
Reidsville, GA 30453

Julie Maudlin
P.O.Box 8134

CC: Charles E. Patterson
Associate Vice President for Research

From: Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

Date: March 11, 2009

Subject: Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

After a review of your proposed research project numbered:H09214 and titled "School Leadership: Narratives of Title I Distinguished Middle School Principals", it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable.

Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research.

This IRB approval is in effect for one year from the date of this letter. If at the end of that time, there have been no changes to the research protocol; you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, whether or not it is believed to be related to the study, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator prior to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,

Eleanor Haynes
Compliance Officer