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**PERCEIVED ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS  
OF URBAN AT-RISK STUDENTS**

**by**

**BETSY BENNET-COSTI**

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of**

**DOCTOR OF EDUCATION  
in  
EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP:  
ADMINISTRATION AND SUPERVISION**

**Portland State University  
©1993**

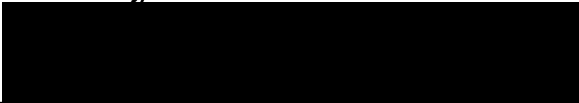
TO THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES:

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF Betsy Bennet-Costi for  
the Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership:  
Administration and Supervision presented July 13, 1993.

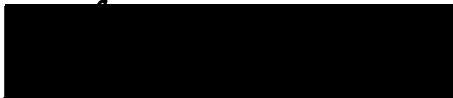
Title: Perceived Administrative Support for Teachers of  
Urban At-risk Students

APPROVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE DISSERTATION COMMITTEE:

  
Kenneth D. Peterson, Co-chair

  
Thomas G. Chenoweth, Co-chair

  
Robert B. Everhart

  
Douglas F. Sherman

  
Robert C. Liebman

The purpose of this study was to investigate effective  
administrative support for successful teachers of urban  
at-risk students. The main difficulty in studying  
administrative support is that it comes in so many ways.

Johnson's (1990) theory of workplace variables and Butterworth's (1981) social exchange theory were the basis for this study.

Failures of at-risk students threaten the well being of public schools and have become a generally recognized social problem of national priority. This study explores how principals act to influence the success of teachers as they work with at-risk students. It is grounded in the following four assumptions:

1. Administrators significantly influence workplace satisfaction (Butterworth, 1981; Sergiovani, 1991).
2. Workplace satisfaction directly affects quality of performance (Johnson, 1990; Lortie, 1975).
3. Teachers have a moral right to a satisfying workplace (Goodlad, 1984).
4. At-risk students are, in important ways, unique in their educational needs (Capuzzi & Gross, 1989; Chenoweth, 1993).

Collection, analysis, and evaluation of data were guided by three research questions focusing on how uncommonly successful teachers of urban at-risk students perceive their administrative support, what these teachers recommend regarding administrative support and what these teachers recommend regarding preparation for teachers to teach at-risk students.

The teachers were deemed successful by a combination of parental, student, teacher, and administrator evaluations (Peterson, Bennet, & Sherman, 1991).

Thirty-nine teachers who had been recommended by their peers, parents, students, and building and central office administrators were sent letters inviting them to participate in this study. The first 18 who responded were interviewed using a 15 item protocol. Three were elementary teachers, 10 were middle school teachers, and 5 were high school teachers. Four of the 10 middle school teachers were from one middle school but the others were from a variety of schools.

The elite interview technique proposed by Marshall and Rossman (1989) was used because it was felt that surveys do not elicit the depth of information desired and a single case study would not give enough breadth. The interview responses were analyzed both as individual documents and also an analysis by item was conducted. Twenty-two recommendations for aspiring and practicing administrators are listed and the eight main themes are listed.

The results show specific kinds of support that can help teachers of at-risk students succeed: personal support, peer support, and training for both teachers and administrators. In general, the successful teachers felt that they did not receive adequate administrative support even though when asked the question "do you feel supported

by your administrators?" some said "yes." The results also indicate that administrators need further training in both interpersonal skills and communication skills.

## DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the man who provided me with the practical portion of my professional growth and development. Without his assistance in obtaining an administrative position and his guidance throughout the eight years I worked with him, this study would have been less insightful. George Galati, principal of Roosevelt High School in North Portland, mentored me first as a Chapter 1 coordinator/teacher and then as a vice principal. The administrative support that he has given me is a model for others and in part provided me with the desire to pursue this topic. George's unselfish coaching, coupled with his ability to support me even when I erred, have contributed to my practical experience and knowledge as an administrator. Thank you George.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish first and foremost to thank Ken Peterson my dissertation advisor. We met through CURE (Center for Urban Research in Education), a joint venture of Portland State University and Portland Public Schools. Our first endeavor, a study of uncommonly successful teachers, led to my interest in the PSU doctoral program and subsequently to this study. Ken's style enabled me to complete this degree while raising three children and maintaining a full time job. You are a great encourager and scholar and I sincerely thank you.

My husband, Bob Costi, deserves a special thanks. He conducted some of the interviews and read rough drafts but even more appreciated is his love, understanding and patience during the writing of this paper in our first year of marriage.

My three children, KG, Gretchen and Jeb are to be thanked for their help in the numerous libraries throughout the state as we travelled to various swim meets. They assisted, each in their own way, in helping me obtain the necessary periodicals to complete this study and the previous course work. They too, are appreciated for their understanding as I worked at the computer instead of playing with them.

To the rest of my dissertation committee, I thank you. Tom Chenoweth my co-advisor a special thanks for your attention to detail as I am an ideas person--not a detail person. Doug Sherman, thank you for "softening" the tone and Bob Liebman thanks for your sociological perspective and "charts." Bob Everhart thank you for not only reading this document but for simply asking the question "how is it going?" when you would see me on campus.

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To Gary Nave, CURE Director, thank you for your help with the interview protocol. To the late Walt Hathaway for his acceptance of this study and additional help on the interview protocol.

I would like to personally thank the 18 participants but per an agreement with the evaluation department of the district studied, I am not allowed. The idea for this paper emerged from your ideas in the former study. I thank you for both your time and ideas.

Finally, thank you dad for your support ever since that first phone call when I announced the competition of my master's degree. Your statement "when are you going to start your doctorate?" may have surprised me at the time but

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the seed of thought was clearly planted. Thank you also for listening to my complaints and for being there when I occasionally was ready to quit. Thank you dad.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### THE PROBLEM

Classroom teachers do complicated work. They plan classroom activities, gather materials, schedule instruction, guide student learning, evaluate pupil progress, resolve conflicts and social problems, talk with parents, interact with colleagues, and cooperate with administrators. Classroom teachers work with a wide variety of students. Some pupils are highly motivated, are well supported by concerned parents, and have clear ideas about how success in school is linked with a desirable future. Other students have only a few of these characteristics, and some have none of them. Teachers work with some pupils that are at risk of not completing school because of severely limiting external conditions. These conditions include, but are not limited to, lack of parental support, unclear connections between school and "real life" success (e.g., employment, housing, mobility), and limited social acceptance of cultural attributes such as language, customs, and appearance. In spite of the complex work demands on teachers and the variety of their clients, most of them perform quite well.

In order to understand how successful teaching and learning happens, it can be tempting to focus solely on how teachers work in the visible arena of the classroom. It may seem that the key to thinking about teacher success lies in an examination of the complexities of teacher/student interactions, for example how teachers talk with students or how teachers structure assignments. However, teaching does not occur in a vacuum. It is highly influenced by the conditions under which it is performed. To understand how teachers are able to complete their duties and to work with a wide variety of clients, it is important to examine not only the manifest actions of a teacher and her students but also those "external" conditions and influences that act to regulate and limit the skills and expertise of the teacher.

#### THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

This study examines one linkage of external teacher work conditions, a specific student population, and teacher performance success. It examines principal support for teachers of pupils considered at risk of not mastering the basic skills for school and life success. It explores how principals act to influence the success of teachers as they work with at-risk students. The study uses general workplace principles as a means of interpreting how principals can influence the performance of teachers. The study focuses on at-risk students with the assumption that

teachers of these types of students need a special type of administrative support for success. Failures of at-risk students threaten the well-being of public schools and have become a generally recognized social problem of national priority (Levin, 1989).

In order to examine the links among teacher success, workplace influences, and administrator action, this study is grounded in the following assumptions:

1. Administrators significantly influence workplace satisfaction (Butterworth, 1981; Sergiovani, 1991).
2. Workplace satisfaction directly affects quality of performance (Johnson, 1990; Lortie, 1975).
3. Teachers have a moral right to a satisfying workplace (Goodlad, 1984).
4. At-risk students are, in important ways, unique in their educational needs (Capuzzi & Gross, 1989; Chenoweth, 1993).

The goals of this study are to better understand one example of principal influence on teachers, particularly the support or non-support teachers receive in dealing with at-risk students, and to extract recommendations for improved practices for school administrators. Valuable outcomes for this study would include descriptions of how principals influence teachers, generalizations for the training of new administrators, and suggestions for improved practices for experienced principals.

The data for this study are the perceptions of a group of 18 teachers who have been identified as uncommonly successful with at-risk pupils. Three of these teachers are elementary teachers, 10 are middle school teachers, and 5 are high school teachers. This select group was chosen as a source of information because of their demonstrated capacity to work well with the target population. Their perspectives on working with administrators is important because they contain insights about principal influence on teacher performance and examples for improved practice. These teachers offer information about instances when administrator support was perceived present. Also, when it was absent, they can explain how it affected their workplace.

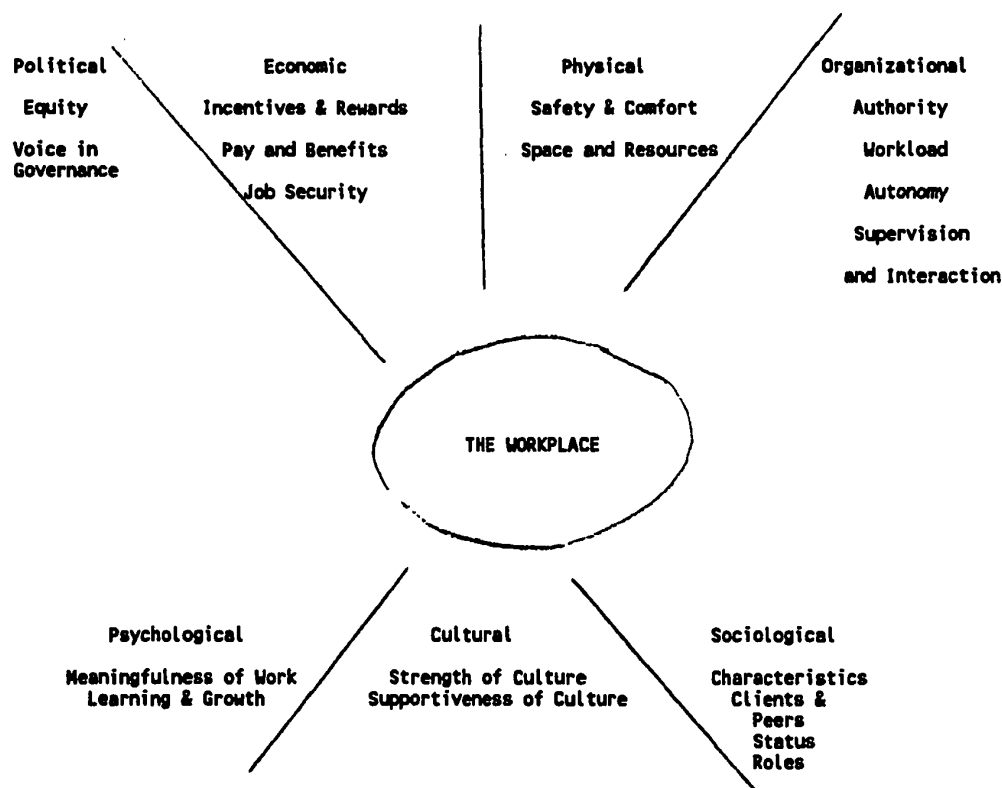
The teachers were identified first by teacher, administrator, pupil, and parent nomination and then by documentation and review of teacher dossiers. Views of these teachers about their work and students were documented through interviews. The content of these interviews was analyzed using theories about the influence of workplace variables (Johnson, 1990; Lortie, 1975) and about principal support on teacher success (Butterworth, 1981; Sergiovani, 1991).

The remainder of this chapter introduces the key ideas that guide this study: teacher workplace variables, principal influence, urban at-risk students, and uncommonly

successful teachers as a data source. Each of the four sections presents definitions used in this study. A more complete description of these ideas is included in the review of research literature in Chapter II. This chapter concludes with some limitations to this study and with a restatement of goals.

### Workplace Support Variables for Teachers

This study is based on a constellation of workplace variables as illustrated in Figure 1:



**Figure 1:** Johnson's (1990) constellation of workplace variables.

Johnson (1990) shows how the various workplace variables (such as authority patterns, rewards, site culture) affect the workplace of public school teachers. She identifies and describes organizational and physical factors in a school building that make teachers' jobs more or less satisfying and, in turn, make teachers more or less successful in their work. These workplace factors were identified through interviews with teachers and other work groups. Johnson developed seven descriptive categories based on how her subjects describe them. These workplace variable categories are economic (e.g., job security), political (e.g., voice in governance), physical (e.g., space), organizational (e.g., workload), psychological (e.g., meaningfulness of work), cultural (e.g., strength of local system), and sociological (e.g., status). Johnson is careful to point out that these descriptive categories are meant to help sort out the multitude of components that influence the satisfaction of workplace, but that they do not address "every" aspect of a workplace.

#### Principal as a Significant Workplace Variable

The original Johnson (1990) model of workplace influences has been altered by this researcher by placing the administrator at the center of the constellation of

variables (see Figure 1). This change helps focus the study on the administrator as the central influence on teacher success. This was done to begin the analysis of teacher views of what supports and what limits their effectiveness in working with at-risk pupils. This study focuses on principal's support as an influence in the workplace. Principal support is a recurrent theme in several different approaches to the study of teacher success.

The definition of "support" requires some discussion.

Support is a concept sufficiently general to allow each study to define support in terms appropriate to the purposes of the research. Consequently, there is a lack of definitional consistency across studies. (Butterworth, 1981, p. 8)

Definitions of principal support include helping teachers with new ideas, backing up teachers on student discipline, special projects, attendance problems, difficult parents, curriculum implementation, and distribution of materials. In discussing support, Butterworth emphasizes the importance of the principal's work with teachers on curriculum issues, giving advice, and bestowing praise. She also defines support as backup in confrontations with parents, students, and the bureaucracy.

Gross and Harriot (1965) divide administrative support into three areas: social (verbal reinforcement), managerial (master schedule), and teachers' authority (discipline). Often the leadership style of a given principal determines how much or in what form support is given.



Butterworth (1981) uses social exchange theory to define support as "a perception that grows with the successful exchange of valued resources" (p. 21). No single set of behaviors that constitute support are defined, but rather the process of the teacher/principal relationship is studied. Johnson (1990) divides workplace variables into seven areas: political, economic, physical, organizational, psychological, cultural, and sociological. Each of these areas becomes a potential location for support in a school setting. In this study, administrative support is defined as support given in seven areas identified by Johnson. Principal/teacher relationships are defined in terms of how many of these valued resources the principal gives a specific teacher and how that teacher perceives the support. Butterworth states the expectation that the teacher owes the principal something in return for this support, but this study examines only the teachers' perceptions of the principal's support.

Lortie (1975) states that

while the formal powers of the principal are restricted . . . , he must manage a complex enterprise without extensive powers . . . The principal's decisions can vitally affect the teacher's working conditions. (p. 196)

Administrators can enable or disable teachers by managing the workplace structure. For example, a principal can decide to counsel a parent with a complaint or merely pass the parent directly on to the teacher.

While principals are highly influential in a school setting, the actual dynamics of this influence are complicated. According to Sergiovani (1991), there is a discrepancy between the actual and the ideal views of the principalship. A principal sets out to do the job according to his or her view of what makes an effective principal. Then, constraints such as increasing or declining enrollment, labor unions, conflicting expectations, political realities, financial shortfalls, and ambiguous goals influence what actually is accomplished.

Drucker (1967) recognizes the demands on a principal, and recommends that administrators set and stay with priorities. His study does not examine teachers' understanding of these demands. This study examines teachers' perspectives of administrative support with the intent to describe instances when effective teachers want more or less administrative direction with at-risk pupils. Presumably, administrators can set their goals and priorities more effectively if they understand what teachers need.

Lortie (1975) studied teacher satisfaction from a sociological perspective and found that teachers achieve job satisfaction from both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Goodlad (1984) and Lortie support one of the assertions upon which this study is based, that teachers have a right to a satisfying workplace. Goodlad concludes "without doubt,

teachers will experience greater work satisfaction and higher morale when they are viewed by their principal as the professionals they perceive themselves to be" (p. 179).

#### Urban At-risk Students

Levin (1989) discusses the rising number of at-risk students. Though not all at-risk students are minority students, the percentage of minorities in the general urban public school is rising from 27% in 1980 to an expected 50% by the year 2020. Minority children comprise three-quarters or more of the enrollments in many of the largest cities. This increase is the result of a faster than average birth rate among this population and of immigration. Immigrant populations also tend to be younger. Levin expects the number of children not living with both parents to rise to 30% by 2020 while the real incomes of single mothers sharply declines. When academic achievement, not money, is used as a criterion, it appears that the number of at-risk students may be as high as 40%.

Traditionally the disadvantaged population was relatively small. Though it was tragic that educators were failing to educate this group, the failure could be ignored. Levin (1989) contends that

as the number of at-risk students has increased and as they are projected to become the majority of the school population--and ultimately of the overall population--the problem is no longer confined to that group. (p. 49)

The result is the emergence of a dual society. These people who face high unemployment, low earnings, and menial occupations will have voting power due to their numbers. The problem, in short, can no longer be ignored.

Slavin, Karaweit, and Madden (1990) define at-risk students as "those whose intelligence is within normal limits but who are failing to achieve the basic skills necessary for success in school and life" (p. 5). Slavin and his colleagues state that virtually every child is capable of attaining an adequate level of basic skills and that a negative spiral, which begins with poor achievement in the early grades, can be reversed, if educators act to do so. Chenoweth (1993), in a study of the role of the principal in emerging models of schooling for at-risk students, demonstrates the importance of principals as initiators in this intervention. However, he points out that the role of the principal is often overlooked.

Capuzzi and Gross (1989) describe the condition of being at-risk as a set of causal/behavioral dynamics that place the individual in danger of a negative future event. With school-age persons, these negative events may be dropping out of school or dropping out of life in an act of suicide.

Levin (1989) defines the at-risk population as those who lack the home and community resources to benefit from conventional schooling practices. Because of poverty, cultural differences, broken families, or linguistic differences, they tend to

have low academic achievement and to experience high secondary school dropout rates. (p. 49)

The number of urban students meeting the description of at risk is significant. The United States General Accounting Office (1986) reported in 1985 that 4.3 million young people between the ages of 16 and 24 dropped out of school--13% of the age group. In urban school districts, up to half of all students entering ninth grade failed to graduate four years later. In characterizing at-risk students, the authors mention symptoms such as tardiness, absenteeism, acting-out behaviors, lack of motivation, poor grades, truancy, low math and reading scores, failing one or more grades, lack of identification with school, failure to see the relevance of education to life experiences, boredom with school, a rebellious attitude toward authority, verbal and language deficiency, inability to tolerate structured activities and being two or more graduation credits behind one's age group. Not all characteristics of at-risk students need be present, but any two of these characteristics may indicate a child at risk of not achieving his or her potential.

#### THE METHODOLOGY

##### Uncommonly Successful Teachers

This study follows previous research conducted under the auspices of the Portland Public Schools and Portland

State University Center for Urban Research in Education (CURE) in which teachers were selected and interviewed, and dossiers were analyzed to determine if uncommonly successful teachers could be accurately identified (Peterson, Bennet, & Sherman, 1991). The participants were identified by their peers, administrators, parents, and students as uncommonly successful. In this context, success means that these teachers had a positive influence on at-risk students. The successful teachers used various strategies and approaches. With a great deal of variety, through these methods, they prepare a place and program for students. "They balanced a strong and specific academic program with a true student-centered approach" (p. 192). They were not necessarily the only good teachers in the district, nor even the best 15 teachers in the district. They were simply referred to as outstanding teachers, and the sources of data selected substantiated this recommendation. The sources of data used included peer review of materials, administrator evaluations, National Teacher Examinations, parent surveys, student surveys, student achievement scores, community involvement, and observation by non-district observers. The individual teachers selected those data desired and placed them in their dossiers. The researchers interviewed the teachers for background and experience, and summarized the information about each teacher. All of the teachers

recommended showed evidence that they were indeed "uncommonly successful" teachers of at-risk students.

Because teacher, administrator, support personnel, student, and parent recommendations proved to be reliable in the previous study, this method was used to obtain participants for this study. Respected administrators, teachers, parents, students, and former students were asked the question, "When you think of very successful teachers of at-risk students, which names come to mind?" As soon as a teacher was recommended three times, the name was placed on the participant invitation list. Those individuals were invited to participate, and the first 18 to respond were interviewed. Each interview lasted approximately two hours. An interview protocol, designed with the cooperation of the district's evaluation department, was used. Patterns emerged after a few interviews, but valuable individual insights were elicited in all of the interviews.

Marshall and Rossman (1989) recommend using this type of "elite interview" technique for a variety of reasons. The interview situation usually permits much greater depth than the other methods of collecting research data. Elite interviewing as described by Marshall and Rossman is

. . . a specialized treatment of interviewing that focuses on a particular type of respondent. Elites are considered to be influential, the prominent, well-informed people in an organization or community. (p. 94)

Marshall and Rossman point out that the "elite" in an organization are privy to information not necessarily available to everyone and are in a better position to influence others. Elites are better able to view the organization as a whole due to the positions they hold. Usually, they have an historical view as well as one of current events. The disadvantage of the "elite interview" is that sometimes these people are unavailable because they are very busy.

#### Goals and Limits of This Study

This study is not all-inclusive regarding principal's influences, workplace environmental factors, or education for at-risk pupils. Rather, it is a limited study conducted in one large urban district with 18 teachers from nine schools. The goal of this study, to find a few good ideas for improved practice, certainly leaves much about principal support yet to be researched.

Generalizations from this study about large populations of teachers are limited because the subjects include only urban, uncommonly successful, experienced, teachers. Three elementary teachers, 10 middle school teachers, and 5 high school teachers are included. In fact, the five teachers from one middle school provide the most in-depth information because of their differing perspectives



on the same administration. However, these teachers present differing perspectives about their principal.

This chapter has discussed organizational behavior and theory of the workplace including teacher satisfaction and Butterworth's (1981) use of the social exchange theory, administrator demands and leadership expectations, a definition and characteristics of at risk including the demands they place on teachers, participant selection of uncommonly successful teachers. Four assumptions were made and the goals of this study were stated.

Chapter II reviews the literature on at-risk students, organizations, leadership, Johnson's (1990) workplace variables, and uncommonly successful teachers research.

Below is a list of terms used in this study:

**Administrative assistant:** The administrator in an elementary school in this district who assists the principal.

**Administrative support:** The support that an administrator provides to a teacher in any or all of the following areas: political, economic, physical, organizational, psychological, cultural, and sociological.

**Assistant principal:** The administrator in a middle school who assists the principal with administrative duties.

**At-risk student:** A student who exhibits two or more of the characteristics typically assigned to those students

who are at risk of not graduating from high school or achieving their potential.

**Building administration:** This includes the principal and the three vice principals at a high school or the principal and his assistant at the middle or elementary level. Building administration is distinguishable from central office support administration by the amount of direct service to students they typically provide.

**Central administration:** Those individuals who are either administrative line support or program administrators who are considered to be "support staff." When final decisions are made, the building administration is allowed to make the final decision within the legal constraints of the program. Typical support staff include Chapter 1, English as a Second Language (ESL), Special Education, curriculum development, athletic directors, transportation, and media specialists.

**Elementary school:** In the district studied, elementary school includes grades K-5 only.

**Elite interview:** A specialized treatment of interviewing that focuses on a particular type of respondent. Elites are considered to be influential--the prominent, well-informed people in an organization or community. Elites are selected for inservice on the basis of their expertise in areas relevant to the research.

**Empowerment:** The act of enabling others to make decisions and to lead their peers. In schools this is being accomplished through the use of site-based councils, including parents, teachers, and students as well as administrators.

**Dossier:** A "collection of documents concerning a particular person or matter" (Webster's, 1984, p. 419). The teachers in part one of this study selected from a list of nine sources of data the five they wanted to include in their individual dossiers. The choices included, student surveys, parent surveys, administrator's reports, observer's reports, community involvement, National Teacher Examinations, pupil gain scores, peer review of materials, and other. A teacher could remove any source of data at any time if there was any reason in her/his mind that it was not a true reflection of her/him abilities or if she/he simply did not like what it reported. No one exercised this option.

**Friend:** Webster's (1984) defines friend as a person whom one knows well and is fond of; close acquaintance; a person on the same side in a struggle; one who is not an enemy or foe; ally; a supporter or sympathizer; something thought of as like a friend in being helpful, reliable, etc. (p. 559)

Not necessarily someone one might want to bring home for dinner.

**Forecasting:** The process of asking students what courses they wish to take for the next term or year,

dividing the number of students requesting a course by the number allowed in a section to determine the number of teachers required. Much individual counseling with each student is necessary in order to have an accurate forecast. Also the matching of teachers' credentials with available courses is a challenge for any administrator. Sometimes, after the forecasting has been completed, there simply is no one available to teach a particular class.

FTE: One full-time equivalent or one teacher teaching a full load, whether this is one teacher in an elementary school classroom with 25 students all day or in a high school in which a teacher teaches five or six classes per day, depending on the number of minutes per class per day.

FTE ratio: Number of students for one FTE. In the district studied the ratio at the high school level was 18.5 students per FTE. At the high school level, this ratio includes secretaries, administrators, counselors, athletic directors, activities directors, and any other educational assistants not funded by special program budgets such as Chapter 1 or ESL. At the elementary level, it is one FTE for every 25 students. This ratio does not include music specialists, secretaries or administrators.

High School: A school including grades 9-12. In some alternative high schools there may only be 16-year-olds or older or in a few cases grades 7-12.

**Middle school:** In this district, a middle school includes grades 6-8. They are distinctly different from either the elementary and the high schools in their design. Theoretically, the best of both schools is implemented at the middle school level in their nurturing environments with increased freedoms.

**National Teacher Examination (NTE):** These tests are given to individuals seeking certification as teachers, wanting to teach in another field, or both. When one passes the test, one can teach in that subject area. During the previous study these scores were used as one data source to verify uncommonly successful teachers.

**Principal support:** This term is used synonymously with administrator support in this study. Support in this example includes helping teachers with student discipline, special projects, attendance, back up with difficult parents, curriculum, giving advice, and bestowing praise, and--most of all--helping teachers through the maze of bureaucracy to get what they need.

**Staffing:** This process begins as soon as forecasting is complete and includes assigning individual teachers sections. Sometimes staffing is done on the basis of seniority, and sometimes the department chairperson makes these decisions with the administrators. For general program sections, the cost of a teacher is not a consideration as a teacher simply counts as one FTE, but in

special programs the actual cost of a teacher is a major consideration. This cost consideration results in experienced, expensive teachers being removed from remedial programs such as Chapter 1 and inexpensive, inexperienced teachers being assigned to this often more difficult population of students.

Urban: The center of a city or metropolitan area (Webster's, 1984). The city in which the school district studied resides has a rich ethnic mix with a continually rising immigrant population. Blacks, Hispanics, Native American, Asian, and former Soviet Union students comprise the majority of the ethnic population. Whites are about 57% of the total school attendance. The city bus service is sophisticated enough to enable the school district to be relieved of transporting any but the most severely handicapped high school students.

Vice principal: In the district studied, this title is used only for high school administrators who support the principal. The usual format is to divide the duties and responsibilities of a given high school into three components and to make one vice principal responsible for each area. The principal's major responsibilities include directing public relations, working with parent groups, and acting as hearings officers during appeals. The equivalent title in a middle school is assistant principal, and the equivalent title in an elementary school is administrative

assistant. The pay scale reflects the difference in responsibilities, with the vice principals receiving the most.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This study is an investigation of effective principal support for teachers of urban pupils at risk of not achieving basic skills for school and success in life. This chapter presents the literature pertinent to influences on teachers' performance, organizational behavior and theory in the workplace, the role and duties of the principal, the needs and demands of at-risk students, and a discussion of uncommonly successful teachers. The literature shows a link between the performance of teachers and workplace variables that influence teachers' satisfaction. It discusses background information on how this present study evolved from a prior study of uncommonly successful teachers of at-risk pupils. The earlier study, which focused on factors other than principals' support, is important because it points to the need for this study.

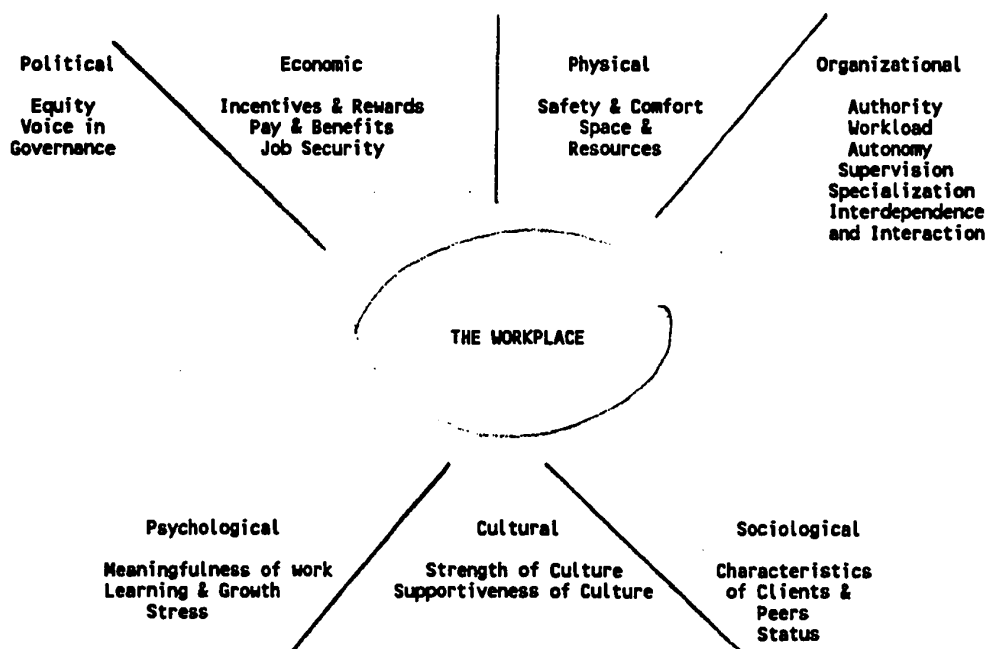
### ENVIRONMENTAL VARIABLES

One difficulty in understanding how principals support teachers is that there are so many possible ways in which the support can occur. Johnson (1990) investigated a great number of workplace, or "environmental," variables (such as



assignments, space allocation, and rewards) that significantly affect teacher performance. This framework is used to interpret the interview statements of this present study. Here, Johnson's idea that the workplace is the central influence on teachers is replaced by the idea that the role of the principal is the central influence within the workplace.

Johnson (1990) categorizes a large number of environmental factors that affect teachers' performance. She interviewed teachers to determine situations and procedures in their schools that made a difference in the way they perceived their work. Her categories are presented in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Johnson's (1990) constellation of workplace variables (the workplace).

The physical variable includes safety and comfort, and space and resources. Safety and comfort refer to dilapidation and hazard as perceived by teachers. Space and resources refer to the amount of space available to perform the task expected and the amount of supplies or help available. The organizational variable includes authority, workload, specialization, autonomy, supervision, and interdependency and interaction. Authority concerns how power is distributed, and workload means how many students are assigned per teacher or how many different preparations are assigned. Specialization refers to the degree of subject matter identification (e.g., "physical science teacher") versus generalization (e.g., "works with younger students"). Autonomy is the amount of discretion allowed in judgments about such things as curriculum and evaluation. Supervision refers to the specific way in which teachers' work is monitored, evaluated, and guided. Interdependence and interaction refer to the amount of isolation or sharing an individual experiences.

Sociological features are roles, characteristics of clients and peers, and status. Status concerns the esteem in which teachers are held by the community, fellow teachers, and the teacher's families and friends.

The economic variable includes pay and benefits, incentives and rewards as well as job security. Rewards take the form of any reward from informal praise from an

administrator to an assignment of a coveted class. Job security is important because it enables a teacher to concentrate on her tasks instead of worrying whether or not a job is ensured for the next year.

The political variable includes voice in governance and equity. Voice in governance refers to how much influence workers have and where the power base is located. Equity is how fairly employees are treated.

The cultural variable emphasizes the importance of explicit goals that give meaning to individual efforts and establish clear behavioral expectations. A supportive culture promotes positive compliance with organizational requirements, and an environment where people attend to each others' needs.

Following Johnson's (1990) lead, it is possible to see the principal as a central influence in the workplace of a teacher. The administrator is in a position to influence the majority of the workplace variables identified in the Johnson model.

In the previous section, the principal's contribution to a satisfying workplace is discussed in instrumental terms, that is, that it is desirable for principals to create a good workplace because it assists teachers in doing a good job. This section goes beyond the argument for administrator influence to improve pupil performance and makes the case that the principal's support of teachers

through workplace influence is desirable because it supports a moral right of teachers.

Goodlad (1984) discusses the moral issue of a teacher's right to a satisfying workplace. Studies of a variety of workplaces suggest that eliminating problems and upgrading unpleasant conditions that tend to frustrate workers increases both satisfaction and productivity. Goodlad assumes that the workplace is also important for teachers even though studies of pupil scores and satisfaction are not conclusive. Goodlad shows that "positively oriented teachers tend to have a positive rather than a negative influence on the classroom learning environment" (p. 177). Even if student achievement is only minimally improved, at least the teachers benefit from improvements in circumstances. He states that

it should not be necessary to establish these relationships scientifically in order to accept the proposition that teachers, like other humans, are entitled to a satisfying workplace. (p. 177)

#### ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY AND BEHAVIOR

According to Owens (1991) "an organization exists for the purpose of achieving something: reaching some goal or set of goals. It seeks to do this by accomplishing certain tasks" (p. 75). The goal of a school district might be to operate schools, transport students and provide hot meals. People are hired to implement these goals and might engage in collective bargaining as well. To accomplish these goals

with any degree of efficiency the organization has to provide a structure.

In addition to a structure, technology has to be developed to specifically address these goals. This technology, according to Owens (1991), can include hardware, such as computers, it could include systematic procedures and programs, or it could include both. Master schedules and curriculum guides fall into this category. Though structure and technology are important for any district to reach its goals, this study addresses itself more to the people in an organization, specifically their organizational behavior.

In the 1960's many schools were considered "closed" because they were not "open" to the latest fads. Owens (1991) states that this is a misnomer because schools cannot be closed systems. They are subject to the influences of their environment, specifically the community, political issues, values, parents, students, outside knowledge and money. Bacharach (1981) states that "a school system is a dynamic political entity that is constantly interacting with various other entities" (p. 14). Educational politics, in turn, affect all of the other social systems. Though the comment is often made by parents that schools have not changed in 50 years, schools have, in fact, changed dynamically. Too often, individuals and researchers simply study the structure of the school and make the assumption

that schools have remained static. Bacharach discusses the holistic approach to education while mentioning Weick's (1976) theory of a loosely coupled system.

Studying schools as organizations is particularly revealing in that the superintendent, the principal, and the teachers in a given school district may each view the district or a given school differently. An example is the decision-making process. To study the politics of a school district, it may be best to study the decision-making process. Decisions are the arena in which resources are distributed and through which individuals and groups can achieve representation in order to obtain their goals. Each individual enters the decision-making process with a different definition of the situation. The main issue in an organization is the mobilization of power for either achieving or blocking the achievement of a particular task (Bacharach, 1981). Bolman and Deal (1988) argue

. . . the political frame says that the pursuit of self-interest and power is the basic process in organizations. Organizational change is always political--it occurs when a particular individual or group is able to impose its agenda on the organization. (p. 132)

Bolman and Deal (1988), Owens (1991), Pfeffer (1981), and Bacharach (1981) all use the contingency theory as being the best way to understand the different structures organizations use to accomplish tasks. These authors do not believe that there is one and only one best way to structure an organization. Pfeffer adds that the different groups

within an organization have conflicting preferences but they also have a shared interest in avoiding conflict. This leads to the group's consensus on how to divide up the power and resources.

Bolman and Deal (1988) state that once the structure is relatively established, the symbolic function is important to signify to the outside world that all is well. It is in this way that the values and myths of society can be expressed. By continuing familiar symbols, such as graduation ceremonies, the organization receives legitimacy because there is an appearance of conformity to the way society thinks a school should look. According to Bacharach (1981), "Nonconformity invites questions, criticism, and inspection" (p. 671). Weick (1982) writes that the effective administrator in a loosely coupled system makes full use of symbol management to tie the people together. Because of the unpredictability of loosely coupled systems, these symbols are something upon which the majority agree. Those items on which the members agree are the glue that holds the organization together.

Schein's (1985) research shows the importance of the effects of organizational culture on achieving the organization's goals. There are many examples of companies that have devised new strategies that make sense from a financial, product, or marketing point of view. These strategies cannot be implemented, however, because they

require assumptions, values, and ways of working that are too far from the organization's prior assumptions. Individuals will not implement that which they have not agreed to implement. Not all the individuals in an organization will agree at first, nor will a few ever agree, but there must be a large number who do in order for a new idea to become common practice. Teaching is so isolated that once the door is closed, only the rare superintendent can affect a classroom. Schein states that in some organizations a job is a person's "turf" and is not to be invaded by others. One must be careful, though, not to view organizational culture as a constraint but rather to view it as a "strategic strength." Peters and Waterman (1982) clearly state that a company must analyze its culture and learn to manage within its boundaries or, if necessary, change it. Changing the structure of an organization is not enough--the culture must be addressed as well.

Gamoran and Dreeben (1986) argue that:

despite a decentralized structure and the attenuation of bureaucratic authority, administrative decisions about the allocation of resources constrain teachers' work and provide coordination in school systems. (p. 613)

Gamoran and Dreeben believe that the policies and practices of school systems are loosely structured and weakly controlled. The spatial isolation and need for autonomy prevent administrators from introducing bureaucratic controls such as classroom instruction and management. They



further contend that "teachers resent interference from administrators" (p. 613) and they also cannot agree on instructional policies and practices. Gamoran and Dreeben feel that managers manage the symbolic core more than they do the technical core. Much of the teachers' attitudes come from the teacher training period. There they learn "common understandings about the way classroom instruction should be carried out" (p. 614).

Weick (1976) states that what makes schools so interesting is that neither the technical core nor the authority of office appear to be the main operating force. He states that a loosely coupled system is more elusive, less tangible, harder to grasp, and harder to administer. He contends "The usual managerial tools such as networks, grapevines, routines, specialization, behavior control and performance appraisal are less influential" (Weick, 1982, p. 675). Weick suggests that a different set of sensitivities and actions need to be employed to administer this organization successfully. Loosely coupled organizations are not predictable, and often individuals do not learn from their mistakes because they do not feel the effects. For example, a fourth grade teacher does not fully realize that her students cannot write as fifth graders should be able to write. It is the fifth grade teacher who must compensate for the fourth grade teacher's poor teaching.

Wynn and Guditus (1984) discuss strategies for managing the conflict that any changing organization encounters. Their leadership by consensus takes into consideration the culture, the structure, the political, and the symbolic aspects of the organization. These researchers suggest that participatory management, or management by consensus, operates better in an organic system than in a mechanical system. Because schools are considered by most researchers to be organic and, therefore, changing in nature, consensus works better than orders from a dictator. Participatory management results in building trust, improving problem solving, and creating a sense of ownership that reduces conflicts (p. 170).

This study is limited in that it looks at teachers and the effect their administrators have on them. Though there is a question regarding administrative support from the central office in the interview protocol, the organization as a whole is not studied. Instead the building administrators and their teachers are studied. Organizational theory is discussed in this chapter because no school operates in a vacuum but rather is part of a complex whole. Even though this study includes only urban teachers of at-risk students, the other schools in the district studied have an impact on the available resources, the politics of the district and, to some extent, its structure and symbolism. The size of the district also

dictates, in part, the structure used. Kouzes and Posner (1988) state that shared values are important in an organization in order to reach common goals more efficiently. Unfortunately, in a large school district with a diverse population, the goals of the various socioeconomic and cultural groups, as well as the differing levels of staff, may not always coincide.

#### THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL

The previous section presents one view of how principals can support teachers: administrators can exercise considerable control over workplace environmental variables that, in turn, influence the quality of a teacher's performance. This section presents ideas concerning the principal's roles, tasks, and duties that affect teachers' performance. The literature suggests that the formal role expectations of principals provide for teacher support in a great many ways such as mediating with difficult parents.

Sergiovani (1991) maintains that an effective principal balances management responsibilities with leadership responsibilities. Management is defined as the routine behaviors associated with one's job. Leadership "suggests an emphasis on newness and change" (Sergiovani, 1984, p. 6). A leader initiates new structures, procedures, and goals and is active rather than reactive.

The choice is not whether a principal is a leader or a manager but whether the two emphases are in balance and whether they complement each other. Both should be directed toward the improvement of teaching and learning for students. The key is to enable others to function more effectively. Rarely does the principal accomplish much without empowering others. The job is simply too demanding for one or even three or four administrators to accomplish. (Sergiovani, 1991, p. 6)

Sergiovani states that the four main roles and tasks of an administrator are planning, organizing, leading and controlling. Planning refers to the goals and objectives for a school as well as the strategies for realizing these goals. Organizing means coordinating resources such as money, people, and physical materials to make goals happen. Leading is the ability to get others to do the work, while guiding and supporting them. Controlling refers to the principal's responsibilities for evaluation, including compliance with the schools goals. Typically, an administrator who wants an effective school focuses on and attempts to improve such skills as planning, decision making, organizing, coordinating, communicating, influencing, and evaluating.

According to Sergiovani (1991), there is a discrepancy between the actual and the ideal views of the principalship. A principal sets out to do the job according to his or her view of what makes an effective principal. Then, constraints such as increasing or declining enrollment, labor unions, conflicting expectations, political realities, financial shortfalls, and ambiguous goals, alter what is

actually accomplished. Most interactions for principals are short, choppy, local and varied resulting in an average of 56, nine-minute activities per day. These fragmented activities are patternless and interspersed with trivia. They often project a feeling of superficiality for the administrator involved. Because of the open-ended nature of administration, administrators can avoid arenas in which they feel uncomfortable. An unrelenting pace is characteristic of all administration, including verbal interactions. An administrator's memory is filled with exclusive and confidential information, which makes shared decision making difficult. Many responsibilities have been added to the administrator's job. Governmental regulations have increased the need for documentation and attention to due process. As social problems increase, especially for the urban poor, school administrators become increasingly responsible for such programs as health, health education, sex education, moral education, lunch and breakfast programs, physical plant, and testing.

Recognizing these demands, Drucker (1967) recommends that principals set and stay with priorities. Barnard (1938) recommends that administrators be selective in questions they consider. Often, it is not how a problem is managed, but rather which problems are addressed, that is important.

A study of successful secondary school administrators conducted by Greenfield and Blase (1981) found that they use their time differently from "random" or average school principals. Successful principals and random principals agree upon how time should be spent, but the successful principals come closer to this ideal. The randomly selected principals fall short of devoting desired time to program development and professional development. They also spend more time on student discipline than they would choose if they felt more in control of their time. Many successful principals credit their ability to succeed to four strategies: (a) the ability to delegate, (b) a good assistant, (c) the ability to concentrate on a few critical areas and leave less important goals undone, and (d) confidence in subordinates.

Goldhammer et al. (1971), in a study of personal qualities of successful principals, find that successful principals test the limits of bureaucracy in an almost missionary-like manner. They report that less successful schools are led by weak leadership, have low teacher and student morale, experience a general lack of enthusiasm, and have principals who are serving out their time. The principals in the Lipsitz (1984) study who were successful were able to recognize problems and face up to them with hard work. They were able to establish priorities and stick to them. In short the high level of commitment expressed by

successful principals towards students, teachers, and teaching is clear in most earlier studies.

Smith and Andrews (1989) conclude in a study of how principals make a difference that strong dynamic principals have high energy, initiative, tolerance for ambiguity, a sense of humor, analytical ability, and a practical stance toward life. They see themselves as resource providers, instructional resources, and good communicators, and they are highly visible. In simple terms, they see their job as providing support for their teachers. This study also shows that supportive administrators are highly visible, are instructional leaders, provide resources in the form of instructional assistants and materials, and communicate well as they provide emotional support.

Greenfield (1982) cites Harriot and Gross in his exhaustive review of research on principals mentions some very significant conclusions. Gross and Herriot suggest:

four personal characteristics of principals which may have some predictive value in selecting principals who promise a high degree of Executive Professional Leadership: (a) a high level of academic achievement in college, (b) a high degree of interpersonal skill, (c) the motive of service, and (d) the commitment of off-duty time to one's job. (p. 5)

This conclusion from Greenfield's research is important because it directly addresses one of the purposes of this study, namely that of training administrators to better support teachers. Gross and Harriot conclude that principals should not only be concerned with routine

administrative services to their staffs but also be skilled at interpersonal relationships, be committed to the organization and be willing to put in the extra time required. Finally, they must have the knowledge and ability to perform the tasks required. Perhaps the first step in providing teachers with administrative support is in selecting good administrators. Training can only correct so many deficiencies.

The Hemphill, Griffiths, and Frederickson (1962) study hints at the importance of personal characteristics of principals in the execution of their roles. They note that, at the secondary level, most high schools are led by white males. Large high schools tend to be led by older white males. Still, their research indicates that:

women were more prone than men to exchange information, maintain organizational relationships, and respond to outsiders, and that men were more prone to comply with suggestions made by others and to analyze the administrative situation . . . that superiors' ratings on knowledge of instruction and teaching methods and techniques tended to be higher for women than men; that women tended to do more work, discussed problems more with superiors, and used information in available background material somewhat more frequently than men; and that men made more concluding decisions, followed pre-established structures more often, and took a greater number of terminal actions than women principals. (pp. 330-344)

Their findings suggest that, in training principals, gender differences may be significant. Wolcott's (1973) study suggests that most of the problems faced by the principal are "people-problems." Blumberg and Greenfield (1980)



indicate that the principals they studied experienced their major problems in organizational maintenance activities and concerns about program change. Crowson and Porter-Gehrie (1980, pp. 51-65) identify five major problem areas as time inadequacy, enrollment decline, challenges to authority, community expectations and accommodating role expectations. Wolcott's ethnographic study concludes that most of the principal's daily encounters are face-to-face, which tends to keep the principalship a very personalized role. They also mention the common desire among principals to "try to do everything for everyone." Every problem is seen as important. Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) report that principals' success is largely dependent on their ability to listen and dialogue with members of their community and school. As Chenoweth (1993) reports, "understanding" is a key to school restructuring and this understanding can be accomplished in part only by listening.

It is clear that the role of the principal must be defined so that all can understand. Salley, McPherson, and Baehr (1979) developed the Job Functions Inventory to study the work of principals. Their study views principalship as an occupation. School size, ethnic mix, socioeconomic characteristics of the community, and age, sex, and ethnic background of principals were all considered. They conclude that variables relating to type and size of the school account for the greatest differences in how a principal

describes his job. Principals of smaller schools have more personal contact with their students than do principals of larger schools. The socioeconomic status and ethnic composition of the student body and the teaching staff make a great difference in how a school is administered. This information provides some of the basis for the assumptions upon which this study is based, namely that urban schools are more difficult environments for both teachers and administrators, and therefore, those involved have a greater need for support. Unfortunately, as this review of the literature shows, those most needed to support others are not necessarily receiving additional support themselves. Of interest also is the conclusion from the Salley et al. study that the amount of experience of the principal is not a significant factor in how the job is managed.

Peterson, Bennet, and Sherman (1991), in the study that prompted this study, conclude that successful teachers succeed for a number of different reasons and in differing ways. Similarly, the Salley et al. (1979) study notes that successful principals succeed for a number of different reasons and in differing ways. Some exhibit a high degree of involvement with their staffs, while others emphasize academic improvement. Others stress managerial responsibilities especially with the central office, and still others place a high priority on parent, community and student groups.

Of interest to those reviewing the most recent literature on school restructuring is the lack of information defining the role of the principal. Chenoweth (1993) states that "the principal is often cast adrift in uncharted territory with less power, but with the same ultimate sense of responsibility for what happens in the school" (p. 1). During this second wave of educational reform a conflict exists in that school board members are holding principals accountable but the decisions are now being made by site-based councils. This conflict, according to Cuban (1988)

points out that competing images have historically come "in and out of style," leading to a "confusing and shifting emphasis" in thinking and writing about the principalship. (p. 65)

Cuban also refers to the principalship as "a post where responsibility outstrips authority" (T. Chenoweth, personal communication, March 9, 1993).

Chenoweth (1993) mentions the shift of the principal from "instructional leader" to "transformational leader" and he refers to Fullan's comment:

Transformational leaders, on the other hand, focus on changing the culture of the school. They build visions, develop norms of collegiality and continuous improvement, share strategies for coping with problems and resolving conflicts, encourage teacher development as career-long inquiry and learning, and restructure the school to foster continuous development. (p. 12)

Burns (cited in Chenoweth, 1993) refers to the transformational leader as:

one who seeks to satisfy higher needs and engages the full person of the follower. . . [a] relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation converts followers into leaders. (p. 3)

If teachers become more and more professional and the role of the principal must change, how is this to occur without training? Time for Results: The Governor's 1991 Report on Education (cited in Chenoweth, 1993) calls for "incentives and technical assistance to districts to promote school-site management and school renewal" (p. 11). The Carnegie Report A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century and Tomorrow's Teachers: A Report of the Holmes Group (cited in Chenoweth, 1993) all refer to the current division of authority between teachers and administrators, but according to Chenoweth, these "three reports call for a fundamental restructuring of teacher work, but give principals no help in how to accomplish such a monumental task" (p. 12).

Chenoweth (1993) discusses three restructuring models: School Development, Success for All, and Accelerated Schools. All are designed for elementary children and discuss raising the achievement levels of elementary school children by various methods. According to Comer (cited in Chenoweth, 1993), school climate can be improved in the School Development model by "applied understanding of child development and through participatory management" (p. 7). Success for All focuses on basic skills by third grade and alludes to "well-designed schools programs." Levin's (cited in Chenoweth, 1993) Accelerated Schools clearly promotes

decision making as close to the students as possible, namely by the teachers. Levin's model places the responsibility on the school for educating at-risk students more than do most models, and it removes some of the responsibility for school failure from the parents. Chenoweth, in his review of these three models, concludes that "the work of principals becomes that of guiding and facilitating the work of professionals" (p. 11).

Each of the studies in this section suggests that the role of a principal is complex and that there are many opportunities for administrators to affect the work of teachers directly. One particular dynamic of principal influence is to affect the levels of teacher satisfaction with their work. The next section reviews representative literature concerning teacher satisfaction.

#### URBAN AT-RISK STUDENTS: THEIR NEEDS AND THE CHALLENGES FOR TEACHERS

Many writers, such as Johnson (1990), Fine (1986), Wehlage and Rutter (1986), and Capuzzi and Gross (1989), identify differences between at-risk youth and more school-successful students. These differences carry over into the classroom. As a result, teachers of urban, at-risk students face additional and different challenges in their work. In turn, administrators are in a position to support teachers in these additional tasks.

Capuzzi and Gross (1989) describe school behavior "red flags" that are associated with at-risk students. These red flags have relevance for classroom teachers (see Table I). In addition, the authors identify lack of family support and friendships with students who are also disenchanted with school as additional problems associated with at-risk youth.

TABLE I  
COMMON EDUCATIONAL ATTRIBUTES OF  
AT-RISK PUPILS

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ATTRIBUTES

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Tardiness  
Absenteeism  
Acting out behaviors  
Lack of motivation  
Poor grades  
Truancy  
Low math and reading scores  
Failing one or more grades  
Lack of identification with school  
Failure to see the relevance of education to life experiences  
Boredom with school  
Rebellious attitude toward authority  
Verbal and language deficiency  
Inability to tolerate structured activities  
Two or more graduation credit deficits

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Source: Capuzzi and Gross (1989).

Some school factors, such as teacher disenchantment and disempowerment and teacher and student boredom, also contribute to student failure and eventual dropout. Fine (1986) states that approximately two thirds of the urban teachers he studied felt that there was little interest

shown by staff or administrators in what they did in classes. Teachers reported common feelings that they were not listened to and that school policy did not reflect their views. Fine found that teachers with these feelings were more apt to make statements that they teach "bad kids" or that "these kids can't be helped." Thus, a circular problem can exist where disempowered teachers may help to produce disempowered students.

Wehlage and Rutter (1986) provide additional insight into how at-risk pupils perceive their school settings. These perceptions further contribute to a cycle of hopelessness for these students. These authors found that low achieving students often give personal problems as reasons for leaving school (e.g., lack of home support). They also report that school conditions, such as lack of individual help, unchallenging classes, large class size, inconsistent discipline, boredom, and communication problems with teachers, administrators, and staff, contributed to their decision to drop out. School does not have a serious hold on at-risk youth. At-risk youth do not "expect" to get as much education as their peers, and thus it becomes the added responsibility of the school to push for equality of education. This added responsibility has become a task for the urban teacher. As stated by Wehlage and Rutter,

It may be that some kinds of children are more difficult to teach than others, but the school has no less of a mandate to do its best to provide all

the schooling such children can profitably use. (p. 250)

Urban teachers have shouldered additional burdens that require more administrative support.

Still another problem for at-risk students, with implications for teachers, is the typical change in expectations for successful postsecondary education experienced by the youth. The 1983 High School and Beyond study found that most 10th grade students expect to go to some kind of college (cited in Catterall, 1987). As they begin to fall behind peers, this expectation becomes a kind of disappointment with themselves and with school. This disappointment, in turn, is reflected in school attitudes and class behavior. Once more, the at-risk pupil begins to demonstrate needs that the classroom teacher must face: how to help a young person reconcile his or her reality with an increasingly bleak future. In fact, as pointed out by Wehlage and Rutter (1986), the "counter" education behavior (non-attendance, disruption) becomes an attractive and even positive experience for youth: "for some, dropping out may be good in the sense that it gives these youth an opportunity to gain a sense of control through participation in adult activities" (p. 251). Thus, the classroom teacher has one more demand. In addition to the many derived from his or her "prime" responsibilities as a subject matter teacher, she/he must be a motivator for youth who are not working toward a productive and attractive future.



Implications for Teachers of  
At-risk Youth

The additional needs of at-risk youth place specific demands on classroom teachers. Many of these demands go unrecognized because they fall out of the expectations of "teacher work": getting lessons ready, conducting pleasant task-oriented sessions, giving feedback on pupil work, supporting pupil initiative, and grading various levels of successful student products. Instead, the work life of many urban teachers of at-risk students includes many other responsibilities.

In addition to the regular tasks of planning lessons, attending faculty meetings, evaluating student progress, and ordering supplies and media, that regular teachers must perform, the teachers of at-risk students find themselves making far more telephone calls to parents, court counselors, and social service agencies, as well as occasional home visits--due to the absence of a phone in the home than do teachers of honors students. Classroom management is considered by the teachers to be far more exhausting for this population, so more preparation time is required to create motivational tools in order to obtain minimal levels of work completed. Sometimes, the task of correcting papers is greater in these classes because the students are either not committed enough to accuracy or not capable of correcting peers' papers. This view is in contrast to the perception held by some administrators that

the paper correcting task is more difficult in an honors English class. Locating high interest, low vocabulary materials can often consume hours annually in the quest for a new publisher or in attending conferences with appropriate book sales. The emotional drain on the teachers of an at-risk class is enormous as compared to the drain on the teacher of a class of college bound students. Before teaching a lesson, making sure that the students' basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter are provided can consume hours. The vast number of drug and alcohol referrals, and child abuse referrals, as well as necessary schedule changes required for a successful program for a dysfunctional student, places additional work on these teachers.

The poor interpersonal skills of many of the at-risk students add to their problem of success in school as they appear at times unable to accept personality difference among teachers and simply do what is asked of them. They come to school, in many cases, too distraught to learn.

Wehlage and Rutter (1986) studied alternative school programs in which at-risk youth respond positively to an environment that combines a caring relationship and personalized teaching with a high degree of program structure characterized by demanding, but attainable, expectations. Successful alternative programs can adjust assignments when truancy occurs and can compensate for

out-of-school distractions in ways that more conventional urban schools cannot. Many alternative schools have provided the caring environment with appropriate social services and diagnosis of why a given student is hurt, upset, or hungry. Many of these programs use a much smaller pupil-teacher ratio and specialize in needs of at-risk youth. Thus, there will be a workplace expectation that teachers acknowledge and, therefore, provide for the needs of at-risk youth.

Peterson, Bennet, and Sherman (1991) studied uncommonly successful teachers of at-risk pupils and found a number of commonalities in their work, as well as some significant differences. They found that their sample of teachers created a sense of belonging in the classroom, had a specific academic program, interrupted the program at any time for individual student problems, taught explicit "coaching" strategies, demanded and expected high standards of students, maintained a central theme or approach rather than a totally eclectic approach, had a vision due to prior teaching experience, and enjoyed small classes allowing for individual time to diagnose and interact with their students. As interesting differences, they found that the teachers varied in the following categories: indicators of success, pull-out versus mainstreamed program efficacy, parental contact, relations with administrators and use of computers.

The particular category of relationships with principals is intriguing, given that administrator influence on a school is considered so important (Sergiovani, 1984). The Peterson, Bennet, and Sherman (1991) study points out the need for this present study: what is it about principal support that works or does not work for urban teachers of at-risk pupils according to the teachers' perceptions.

#### NEEDS FOR SUCCESSFUL TEACHING OF AT-RISK PUPILS

The most significant need or justification for successful teaching of at-risk pupils (and hence for successful administrative support of teachers) is the duty of a society to educate its youth (Wehlage & Rutter, 1986). In addition, Erickson (1987) has described the life cycle responsibility of generative adults to care for the people of the society. There should be little question that society and adults have a responsibility to meet the educational needs of at-risk youth.

A secondary but crucial justification for administrative support of teachers in their work is the more immediate social costs of students not meeting their potential. Table II lists specific social consequences identified by Levin (1972). From these considerations, it is clear that knowing specific ways in which administrators of urban schools with at-risk pupils can support (or interfere with) teachers is needed.

TABLE II  
SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF SCHOOL DROPOUT

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CONSEQUENCES

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Foregone national income  
Foregone tax revenues for government support  
Increased demands for social services  
Increased crime  
Reduced political participation  
Reduced intergenerational mobility  
Lowered health levels

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Source: Levin (1972).

TEACHER SATISFACTION

Teacher satisfaction is an important consideration for principals because it links administrators' actions and the teachers' workplace environment, on the one hand, and teachers' performance, on the other. Teacher satisfaction is important for understanding why principals' actions, independent of the teachers' immediate work with students, can ultimately affect the quality of the teaching.

Lortie (1975) studied teachers' satisfaction from a sociological perspective. He found that teachers achieve job satisfaction from both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards. Power is an example of an extrinsic reward, and reaching goals is an example of an intrinsic reward. Lortie found that teacher satisfaction is directly related to desired outcomes for students and feelings of influencing students. The basic sense of psychic reward is connected to classroom

achievement, the sense of having accomplished a goal. Factors that teachers identify as coming between their goals and gratification may become primary sources of dissatisfaction.

The literature on effective schools by Brookover and Lezotte (1979), Edmonds (1978), and Goodlad (1984) targets the principal as the instructional leader for effective schooling. These authors direct their attention to teacher-administrator rapport and perceptions of leadership styles. Goodlad concludes that the school administrator operates as a key factor in teacher satisfaction. Jago and Vroom (1975) note that perceptions of leaders and subordinates do not tend to agree on style and behavior of the leader. Schools with high morale among teachers have greater value incongruence between principal and teachers. As a group, principals tend to hold similar values, which are different from those shared by teachers as a group. Greenfield and Blase (1981), in a study seeking to understand what motivates teachers and influences their performance, conclude that principals who understand interrelations between teacher efforts, valued outcomes, and levels of satisfaction can be more effective in helping improve instruction. They improve instruction by helping teachers do their jobs more effectively. Because administrators are such a major factor in influencing teacher satisfaction, this study looks for ways in which

administrators can understand and provide more support for teachers of urban at-risk students. Goodlad supports this research by stating "Without doubt, teachers will experience greater work satisfaction and higher morale when they are viewed by their principal as the professionals they perceive themselves to be" (p. 179). The principal must be a strong, autonomous person who treats his or her staff as professionally independent and perceives himself or herself to be in control of time.

#### INDIRECT AND DIRECT ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

A number of authors have distinguished between "indirect" and "direct" administrative support. Indirect administrative support constitutes principals' actions that assist or enable teachers to succeed by changing the conditions of their work. Direct administrative support relates to tasks immediately a part of teachers' roles and responsibilities.

#### Indirect Administrative Support

Bloland and Selby (1980) studied demographic factors that influence teachers' satisfaction. Through his research, he discovered many other factors that influence teachers' satisfaction. Those factors, which were called indirect administrative support, include opportunities for advancement, time allotted for teaching, student attitude

and discipline, relationships with colleagues, accountability, threat of increased violence, job mobility, influence in curriculum or policy-making decisions, and rewards. Though building administrators can do little to select non-violent students, how these students are managed is their responsibility. Other examples of indirect administrator support are elimination of meetings that use up teacher time, and reasonable pressure on teachers to complete such routine tasks as paper correcting. Changing assignments routinely, rather than allowing the senior teachers to dominate the honors classes, can help motivate teachers to do their best at other times when they are assigned a difficult class.

Indirect administrative support for teachers comes about as the administrator affects the workplace environment and relates to co-workers of the teachers. These interactions support the teacher indirectly as they create the setting for effective practice. Ways in which administrators affect the workplace are described in a later section of this chapter.

#### Direct Administrative Support

Direct administrative support is the behavior of administrators in relation to teachers that results from explicit duties, roles and responsibilities (Sergiovani, 1984). Direct administrative support includes teacher



recognition, student management, scheduling, goal setting, resources such as materials and educational assistants, evaluating, specific student/class assignments, support dealing with difficult parents, and communication.

Glass and Smith (1982) discuss teacher recognition in the form of praise. They conclude that effective praise must be specific and rationed. Praise often is overlooked in the complexities of large urban middle schools or high schools, but is, nevertheless, an effective means of support and reward.

#### SOCIOLOGICAL VIEWS OF PRINCIPAL SUPPORT

Butterworth (1981) studied principal support from the perspective of a social exchange theory. She defines support as a "perception that grows with the successful exchange of valued resources" (p. 21). In defining support, Butterworth's model does not assume any particular set of behaviors or styles, but rather it focuses on exchanges of behavior (e.g., compliance with principals' decisions by the teacher or provisions of supplies by the principal). Lortie (1975) also states that support is not exclusively the principal's domain but includes support by teachers in how they contribute rather than detract from favorable work conditions. Lortie and Butterworth both report that teachers repeatedly identify the need for principal support. In Butterworth's study, it is clear that teacher support is

equally, if not more, important to principals than it is to teachers.

Butterworth (1981) explains the inherent uncertainty found in schools and the loose coupling of relatively autonomous classrooms as showing why goals are often ambiguous, desired outcomes are difficult to achieve, and why close supervision is almost impossible. Adding to this the lack of power to hire, fire or promote and the importance of the principal is clear. Butterworth's social-exchange theory focuses on informal processes and offers a conception of how interdependence exists in such a setting. Expectations of reciprocation, in which timing and content are often uncertain are important. Interpersonal events are indirectly woven together, with trust being the core of the exchange process. With trust, formal observation is not very critical. In fact, the more formal the processes, the more trust may be undermined. Diffuse obligations and trust allow for adaptive structuring of work relations.

Principals and teachers are dependent on each other. There are many valuable resources such as compliance and back-up, that only they can give each other. When there is limited support, then a relationship stabilizes at a low level of exchange, and there is minimal support and little compliance. The result is that the principal, to maintain any control, is limited to coercive activities such as poor

evaluations, and threats of dismissal. Growth and new ideas cease to occur under this condition. Butterworth (1981) states that the principal has more to gain from a successful relationship than does any teacher. A teacher can still be a success without complying with building goals or dreams, whereas a principal cannot be a good leader without followers.

Access to valued resources is not balanced because principals, by virtue of their position, have greater access to personnel, time, physical resources, etc., than do teachers. Most resources that pass through a building go through the principal, who has the power to distribute those resources. The social exchange theory is about this distribution of resources which indeed demonstrates the importance of both the principal and good relations between teachers and their principal. Butterworth (1981) downplays the importance of leadership style and emphasizes the exchange of resources. In the interviews conducted as part of this study, many teachers were not even aware of many of the available resources. Therefore, their need for principal and teacher exchange was even greater in order to become aware of these resources.

In her section on implications for training and hiring new administrators, Butterworth (1981) suggests that

administrators may need to learn ways to assess resources desired by teachers, to monitor the balancing process, to understand the process of

resource allocation, and to conceptualize their role. (p. 131)

Johnson (1990) divided the workplace into resources which affect satisfaction and Butterworth studied how this allocation is achieved. Together these studies provide the basis for this current study on principal support for successful urban teachers of at-risk students.

#### IDENTIFICATION OF SUCCESSFUL TEACHERS OF URBAN AT-RISK STUDENTS

This study relies on the views of a sample of teachers who are identified as uncommonly successful with at-risk students. Few satisfactory means currently exist to identify successful teacher performance (Peterson, 1984; Scriven, 1981). The reliance on administrator visit and report (McGreal, 1983) has been criticized by researchers as inaccurate and unsatisfactory (Cook & Richards, 1972). Trained observers may be limited by teacher union agreements when accurate observations are recorded.

Conventional research on teacher effectiveness relies on student outcome measures (performance) and systematic observation. Berk (1988) and Medley, Coker, and Soar (1984) have reviewed the limitations of assuming direct connection between pupil achievement and teacher effectiveness. Systematic observation, likewise, has shown the limitations of context dependency (Stodolsky, 1984).

Recent advances in teacher evaluation have led to data sources with the potential for better understanding of successful performance of teachers. Specific innovations include multiple data sources (Peterson, 1984), multiple judges (Epstein, 1984; Peterson, 1988), and variable data dossiers (Peterson, 1987a). These methods of assessment permit data gathering to focus on actual teacher performances and contributions to students. Thus, it is possible that some teachers are successful because of patterns of instructional interaction in the classroom, while others contribute through sociological interventions (Peterson, Bennet, & Sherman, 1991). In each specific case in the Peterson, Bennet, and Sherman study, data were gathered to support the contention of success.

The study of successful teachers of at-risk students is quite primitive at present (Peterson, Deyhle, & Watkins, 1988). While process-product or teacher effectiveness studies have suggested some specific classroom interaction strategies (Good & Brophy, 1977), it is not likely that they can be generalized to overall teacher quality (Shulman, 1986; Sizemore, 1985). Such generalizations need to be related to more comprehensive views of teacher performance in relation to the needs and priorities of the urban at-risk student population.

Administrators and legislators need to be able to identify successful teachers of urban at-risk students for a

number of reasons such as recognizing and documenting the valuable contributions of successful teachers for emulation and reward. Identification is hampered by having a very narrow concept of successful teachers, such as relying on "teacher effectiveness research" and pupil gain scores (Scriven, 1981). Also, the process of identification of urban at-risk students is thwarted by an unclear idea of what the successful teachers of urban at-risk students should be doing. Except for teachers of highly verbal, school-successful students, success is difficult to define. Working with at-risk students may involve much less verbal interaction concerning the specific lesson to be taught and more verbal interaction on other topics, such as relevance of, applications of, and connections among learning (Good & Brophy, 1977).

In conclusion, major ideas in the literature concern the following topics: organizational behavior and theory in the workplace, the principal's role and demands, at-risk youth's needs and their demands on teachers, uncommonly successful teachers and how they are successful, teacher satisfaction, direct and indirect administrative support, and sociological views of principal support. Chapter III explains the methodology used in this study and focuses specifically on the selection, interviewing process, analysis and follow-up recommendations with their rationale.

Chapter IV analyzes the data, and Chapter V contains recommendations for increased administrative support.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology used to explore how administrators support, or fail to support, teachers of urban at-risk students. The aim of this study is to elicit ideas for administrators to assist teachers who help students grow who are not meeting their potential for life and school skills. Included in this chapter are (a) an overview and goal statement for the study, (b) a description of the interview protocol used in this study, (c) the selection process for participants, (d) rationale for using the elite interview technique, (e) data analysis techniques, and (f) a description of workshop focus group that reviewed the findings.

#### OVERVIEW, GOALS, AND QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY

Though much has been written on potential school dropouts and their educational needs, there is little information reported on how administrators can effectively support teachers of at-risk pupils. Principals and other administrators are in a position to choose where they can support or not support teacher performance. They can do this directly, for example, by scheduling with pupil



engagement in mind, or indirectly, for example, by creating a workplace in which teachers can be most productive (Bloland & Selby, 1980; Sergiovani, 1984). Butterworth (1981) focuses on the social exchange that develops between administrators and teachers and enables teachers to do their work effectively.

Johnson's (1990) study is a good example of how teachers are indirectly supported in or detracted from their work. She interviewed teachers from private, public, and alternative schools regarding their workplace and the variables that contribute to their satisfaction. This present study differs in that it addresses the influence of the administrator on the workplace variables contributing to teachers' satisfaction. Also, this work is intended to contribute both to practitioners and educators of administrators and teachers by making specific suggestions for practice.

This study is grounded on four assumptions:

1. Administrators significantly contribute to satisfaction in the workplace.
2. Satisfaction in the workplace directly affects quality of performance.
3. Teachers have a moral right to a satisfying workplace.
4. At-risk students are in some ways, unique in their educational needs.

This present study included nine teachers from the Peterson, Bennet, and Sherman (1991) study, plus an additional nine teachers. Recommendations were solicited from parents, students, teachers, and building and central office administrators. Respected individuals were asked the question, "When you think of an uncommonly successful teacher of urban at-risk students, what names come to mind?" When a teacher's name occurred three times the teacher was invited to participate. Thirty-nine teachers were invited to become participants. The first 18 respondents were selected and interviewed. Thirteen of the 18 attended a one-day workshop during which perceptions concluded by this researcher from the interviews were discussed with the focus group and more topics explored by this group. For this additional work, the teachers earned one college credit.

### Research Questions

Research questions addressed in this study include the following:

1. How do uncommonly successful teachers of urban at-risk students perceive their administrative support?
2. What are the recommendations for administrative support for urban teachers of at-risk students?
3. What recommendations could be made to those preparing teachers to teach at-risk students?

## SELECTION OF SUBJECTS FOR INTERVIEW

This study:

values participants' perspectives on their worlds and seeks to discover those perspectives, that views inquiry as an interactive process between the research and the participants, and that is primarily descriptive and relies on people's words as the primary data. (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 11)

The following considerations are crucial to this study's success:

1. Participants are selected through recommendation by reputable educators in this field.
2. Teachers are successful for a number of reasons and their settings, though all inner city schools, will be distinctly different based on specific population, numbers, style, and resources.
3. The elite interviews, approximately two hours each, produced a rich background for analysis. Though it would be easier to simply send out a survey, the depth and nuances available only through personal contact and professional probing would be lost.
4. The anonymity of the participants and the district will be maintained. No discussions with any colleagues will occur with this researcher either during the study or afterwards.
5. As can be concluded from the interview protocol, the interviews will have as much depth as the interviewer decides.

## CONSIDERATIONS LEADING TO THE DESIGN OF THE STUDY

A perfect study in an ideal world might include a variety of data gathering techniques that might complement each other, thereby adding some credibility to the results. According to Sherman (1983),

Research into world view has often involved observation or participant observation of norms in everyday life, analysis of symbolic forms and activities, especially myth and ritual, as well as interviewing. (p. 154)

However, this study focuses on the interview technique.

This study involves members of a relatively narrow group, successful teachers of at-risk students, in a single urban school district in a relatively short time period. They are, though, diverse and socially isolated enough so that participant observation or unobtrusive observation is not feasible. Hence, the "interviews, essentially a form of self-reporting, are appropriate to an inquiry into the form and content of knowledge and judgment" (Paul, 1953, pp. 450-541). Schatzman and Strauss (1973) say that direct question techniques "... are fine tools insofar as they reveal people's constructs of themselves and their worlds as symbolically developed and rendered . . ." (p. 6).

As Marshall and Rossman (1989) point out, there are difficulties in this technique, especially in questioning and interpretation. There are also problems in that consciousness is an active process that continually reacts

to its situation. For example, the passage of a state initiative to limit taxes may well have created some feelings on the part of the interviewees that are unique to this time period.

Also the interpretation of these interviews, as well as the interpretation of the administrative support, appears at different levels or "tensions." Some feelings may be the result of action, others stand alone; some may involve articulation of understandings, while other involve background assumptions. As Whiteside (1988) contends, "that people should be dealt with 'ensituation' when developing values" (p. 53.)

These conceptual issues affect the methodological issue of how to best gather data on this segment of the population. The semi-structured interview offers a number of advantages, one of which is the non-threatening nature of such a method. Some of the more open-ended questions enable the interviewees to expound on those areas where they feel most impassioned and to gloss over those areas of non-concern. Language plays an important role in the development, maintenance, and communication of symbolic worlds and as such it must be acknowledged during this process. Also, because any profession has its own vocabulary the terms used must be discussed during the interview at any time a miscommunication appears to be occurring. Some of these miscommunications may well appear

as the items are being answered in a divergent manner than had been expected. Non-directive testing of understanding must occur in order to increase both the depth and authenticity of the data. This depth, which is so eagerly sought, is one of the major reasons for the selection of this method.

These theoretical considerations were involved in the selection of interview questions. All of the questions were reworded to reflect a positive tone. Such items as "Do you feel supported by your administrators?" were changed to "How do you feel supported by your administrators?" with a follow-up question "In what ways would you like more administrative support?" Politically, should this study be questioned by practitioners in this district, this positive wording would only enhance the credibility as it would not appear to suggest that anyone feels unsupported.

#### The Interview Procedure

The interviews were conducted by two interviewers. The second interviewer completed four interviews to evaluate effects of the primary interviewer's role on subjects. The information gathered by the non-district administrator was congruent to that gathered by the district administrator. None of the participants was members of the staff of the school where the author of this study is assigned as an administrator. Some of the participants had never met the primary interviewer. The only variable that appeared to

affect the information gathered was the use of a tape recorder. During two of the interviews, the interviewees were visibly uncomfortable and normally verbal individuals became taciturn in their responses. One did not communicate openly until the recorder was turned off. The workshop, composed of the focus group members, was recorded and some of the participants, though agreeing to the recording, were practically silent for the entire session. The effect of the administrator's status in the district was concluded not to have made any significant difference in the responses and may have, in fact, enriched their value because there was a desire in several individuals to "help the researcher obtain a doctorate" and to "make a difference" locally where it matters. Some participants wanted to know if this information would be shared with this district's administrators so their administrators would get some more training. There was a clear desire to change their own building administrators.

#### Interview Protocol

The interview protocol appears as Appendix A. Each interview was summarized before beginning the next interview. After all of the interviews were summarized to obtain overall reactions, each item was summarized by compiling a summary of each participant's response. Then two summary procedures occurred. First: to obtain overall reactions, all of the interviews were summarized. Second,

each item was summarized by compiling a summary of each participant's response. The information was reviewed to find common themes and patterns. These patterns were studied in relation to both the group's perception and to the individual teacher's perceptions of the building administrators. In some cases, an administrator would receive conflicting reports, which enriched the study because conclusions were drawn from these conflicts. For example, in one school, those members of the "in-crowd" had a different set of perceptions than nonmembers.

Because the purpose of this study is to examine and communicate teachers' feelings regarding administrators and their support, the questionnaire/survey technique would not elicit the desired information. Nonetheless, in selecting the elite interview technique, one must consider both the strengths and limitations of the interview. The strengths of the interview--flexibility, adaptability, and human interaction--do allow for subjectivity and possible bias. Eagerness on the part of the interviewee to please, a potential conflict between interviewer and interviewee, plus the tendency on the part of the interviewer to seek preconceived notions are but a few of the potential weaknesses of the interview. Nederveen (1982) concluded that matching interviewers with interviewees increased the validity of the responses. This interviewer has been a



teacher at the elementary, middle, and high school level and is currently an administrator of at-risk students.

The primary interviewer is of the approximate same social class, age, sex (in some cases), and experience as the teachers. The secondary interviewer was a white male who has taught Adult Basic Education Classes and has been an administrator for the at-risk population, specifically jailees and high school dropouts. Neither interviewer was a minority, and some of the subjects are minorities.

To avoid common errors in the way the study is explained, a participant's letter was given to each potential participant. The interviewees were offered one continuing education credit at no charge.

The interview protocol was designed to be completed in two hours after a school day or at a breakfast or lunch meeting on a Saturday. Because of the sensitivity of the topic, the interviews were conducted off campus whenever possible and requested or both. Sometimes this interview took place at a quiet restaurant, in an empty classroom or even at the local library. To ensure the confidentiality of the study, no one other than the interviewer and interviewee was present during any of these interviews.

Interviews are interesting--and sometimes absolutely fascinating--a characteristic that encourages digression. To avoid digression, the interviews involved a semi-structured protocol that would elicit similar topical

information from all interviewed. This protocol eliminated the need for any additional probes, which are difficult to manage without leading. According to Borg and Gall (1983),

the semi structured interview is generally most appropriate for interview studies in education. It provides a desirable combination of objectivity and depth and often permits gathering valuable data that could not be successfully obtained by any other approach. (p. 27)

As Yin (1989) discusses, interjudge reliability can be assured throughout most of the study because one person does most of the interviewing.

The "case study method" used by Cusick (1973) in Inside High School is not appropriate for this study. The assertion based on phase I of this study is that teachers are successful for a variety of reasons, and there is not necessarily a "one best method" for working with urban at-risk students. Teachers with differing styles may need different administrative support. At this time, this differing need for support is not documented but a single case study cannot provide the answer (Yin, 1989).

#### Rationale for Elite Interviewing Technique

The elite interview technique has been selected for this study because, according to Marshall and Rossman (1989),

the interview situation usually permits much greater depth than the other methods of collecting research data. A serious criticism of questionnaire studies is that they are often shallow, that is, they fail to dig deeply enough to provide a true picture of

opinions and feelings. In contrast, the skilled interviewer, through the careful motivation of the subject and maintenance of rapport, can obtain information that the subject would probably not reveal under any other circumstances. The reason why such information may be difficult to obtain is that it usually concerns negative aspects of the self or negative feelings towards others. Respondents are not likely to reveal this type of information about themselves on a questionnaire and will only reveal it in an interview situation if they have been made to feel comfortable by a skilled interviewer. (p. 19)

Elite interviewing, according to Marshall and Rossman, is

. . . a specialized treatment of interviewing that focuses on a particular type of respondent. Elites are considered to be influential, the prominent, well-informed people in an organization or community. Elites are selected for interviews on the basis of their expertise in areas relevant to the research. (p. 94)

Elite interviews have many advantages including the valuable information these individuals can provide because of the positions they hold in the organization. Especially valuable is their ability to view the organization as a whole and in relation to the rest of society as well as to give a historical perspective.

One disadvantage of elite interviewing is the lack of available time as these people are extremely busy and difficult to contact. Because of their positions, one must rely on recommendations and introductions to gain access. This researcher's position and past positions in the district helped facilitate this problem considerably. A second limitation with elite interviewees is that subjects often resent any form of constriction. Therefore, the

interviewer has a more difficult time confining the interview to a prescribed set of questions or topics. Elites are generally used to being in charge. More open-ended items must be asked, and this interview protocol is designed to provide for this situation. A third disadvantage is that the interviewer must display considerable competence both as an interviewer and as an expert on the topic of discussion. Again, the interviews conducted in stage one and the years spent as a Chapter 1 teacher/coordinator give this interviewer credibility and competence. The advantage of this match of interviewer and interviewee results in a more insightful collection of data (Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

#### DATA ANALYSIS

As soon as each individual interview was completed, a summary was written. After the completion of all of the interview summaries, each summary was rated on how the individual perceived much administrative support. An individual who felt that there was a great deal of administrative support received a rating of one, for very positive. Those who felt positive support from their administrators were given a rating of two. Individuals who perceived some lack of support were given a rating of three. Those individuals who did not feel supported at all earned a rating of four. These ratings were used in the data

analysis to compare comments made by those who felt support versus those who did not feel supported. For example, interviewees discussed the amount of time that an administrator gave to the staff. Those teachers who did not feel supported felt that they also did not receive any of the administrator's time. The comments made by those who felt supported, in some cases, became recommendations for other administrators to follow.

After the summaries were completed, they were compiled by item. In some situations, such as item ten, "Were there any courses in your teacher preparation program that especially prepared you to teach the at-risk population?" the respondents unanimously stated "none." The few special education teachers in this study indicated that in their master's program they studied some excellent strategies for helping at-risk students. One wonders why these strategies are such well-kept secrets from the undergraduate students.

A part of the analysis includes looking at the item summaries and extracting the general themes. As soon as these were recorded, the additional information was analyzed for its own merit. While some was perceived by this author to be valid, some was considered idle complaining and dismissed. Because this is such a dynamic group of 18 individuals, there was very little unreasonable complaining. Administrators, as well as teachers, have limits on their time and energy, and when making recommendations, this time

constraint was taken into consideration. The analysis was quite clear in most situations because the complaint of a teacher who did not feel supported would be expressed in a positive way by a teacher who did feel supported. One example is the concept of "friend." Those teachers who gave their administrators strongly positive reviews commented that they felt that they had a friend. Those teachers who did not feel supported wished their administrators would simply say hello to them in the hall and give them the same courtesies awarded a friend.

#### FOCUS GROUP REVIEW OF FINDINGS

General themes emerging from this analysis were discussed with the 13 members at the workshop. This additional information also became the basis for the acquisition of views from the attendees. Humor, a topic which this study does not address, was repeatedly mentioned during the workshop by teachers as their number one wish for their administrator. Because this research is based on the assertion that leadership skills can be taught the study of humor is too complex to be included at this time. This might very well make an excellent topic for future research. The difference between humor and sarcasm is too sophisticated a concept to make generalizations about and then subsequent recommendations so this nuance will definitely be left for a future researcher. The time of the

year may have affected the desire for an administrator with a sense of humor as it was spring and everyone is reaching the need for a break.

The interview summaries elicited 12 major themes not necessarily of equal importance but all of some value. These 12 themes were presented to 13 of the teachers at the one-day workshop. The purpose of this exercise was to check understandings and accuracy. The value of this activity cannot be overestimated. When this researcher suggested that the teachers in this study simply wanted their administrator to be a friend, their reaction was very strongly negative. Such comments as "No way" and "He is the last person that I would want to bring home for dinner" indicated that these teachers did not understand the meaning of the word "friend" in this context. When Webster's (1984) definition "a close acquaintance, someone who is on the same side in a struggle" (p. 559) was explained, there was immediate acceptance of this theme. This incident helped indicate where more clarification was necessary in order for others to understand the recommendations.

Before the workshop the participants had read the text Understanding Troubled and Troubling Youth (Leone, 1990). This book was discussed at the workshop. The discussion illuminated and reinforced the conclusion from the interviews that the majority of the teachers in this study had neither the appropriate vocabulary nor the understanding

of "due process" to assist their administrators in supporting them.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter discussed the elite interviewing technique used in this study, as well as stating the four assumptions upon which this study is grounded. The participants are discussed and the research questions stated. Interpreting the interviews is communicated and the focus workshop discussed. Conclusions from the interviews and the workshop are analyzed in Chapter IV and recommendations are made in Chapter V. A "wish list" of those behaviors that the teachers in this study want in their administrators concludes Chapter IV. Recommendations for improvement of administrative practices and explanations are part of Chapter V. There needs to be an awareness on the reader's part that not all problems necessarily have solutions. Organizational constraints, as discussed by Bolman and Deal (1988), contribute to an administrator's ability and inability to give the necessary or desired administrative support.



## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

The primary question in this study is: How can school administrators support urban teachers of at-risk students? In Chapter II the pertinent literature to teacher support and at-risk urban students is reviewed. In Chapter III the methods for studying administrative support, primarily "elite" interview, in a sample of 18 teachers who are successful with urban at-risk students is described (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Chapter IV presents the findings of the teacher interviews. Key topics in these findings include the extent to which the sample of teachers sees themselves supported, strategies of support, and interpretation of these findings in light of the literature reviewed in Chapter II.

### RESULTS OF INTERVIEWS

In this chapter, teacher interviews are summarized and central ideas are presented, using occasional quotations to ensure that the flavor of the teachers' perceptions is accurately communicated. The first section of this chapter presents a preliminary, somewhat unexpected, finding that the teachers have strong positive or negative overall

responses in their relations with administrators rather than a continuum or central response. The second section of this chapter consists of teacher responses to each item of the interview schedule used in this study. The third section details eight major themes that emerged from analysis of the interviews. This section represents the key findings of the study and will be the basis for recommendations in Chapter V for improved practice in Chapter V. The last section of this chapter presents a "wish list" for the teachers as they describe an ideal administrator.

#### A Preliminary Finding

Teachers expressed strong overall reactions.

A somewhat unexpected finding that the teachers interviewed hold such strong, overall feelings of positive or negative feelings toward their administrator. This finding is relevant because these views color the teachers' opinions about the administrators in relations with the teachers.

The finding was unexpected because relations of a teacher with his or her administrator are a relatively small part of the workload and environment. The primary responsibilities of a teacher are alone in a classroom with five to six somewhat idiosyncratic groups totaling more than 120 adolescents. The demands of subject matter, group management, rigorous schedules, and record keeping constitute the bulk of the day and the teacher's attention.

In addition, a teacher must deal with fellow teachers, especially those in the same department and in neighboring classrooms. Thus, relations with administrators appear to be a small part of the workplace environment. In fact, a finding of this study is that perceptions of administrators elicit very strong feelings in teachers. This finding corroborates the original theses that administrative support is significant in the work lives of teachers and that administrators strongly affect the workplace environment of teachers.

The 18 teachers interviewed in the study are bipolar in their descriptions of administrative support as addressed in questions #1 and #2. Four expressed strongly negative feelings (e.g., "they don't care about me as a person at all"). Four stated strongly positive views (e.g., "she gives me a great deal of moral support and . . . she cares about me as a person and not just as an employee"). Ten were evenly divided between generally positive and generally negative. Teachers at the three service levels (elementary, middle-school, and high school) show the same distribution of response.

In answering questions about support, an interesting pattern of negativity emerges in several of the respondents. Many participants said "yes" to the feeling of support in question #1, but then in response to question #2 gave lengthy examples of nonsupport and desire for additional

support. This may be attributed to the generally compliant nature of teachers as well as their focus on students rather than on their administrators. In studies of school climate, one of the hurdles to be overcome is the expectation that teachers are not supposed to complain (Lortie, 1975). The cultural norm becomes "if you do not like a particular situation or condition in your school, either request a transfer or keep quiet." This value was expressed throughout the interviews of this study.

This finding of an overall and strong affective load on teachers' opinions about administrative performance is important to address first because it greatly influences teachers' perceptions of specific techniques for support and solutions for increasing teacher effectiveness with at-risk youth. The next section of this chapter presents a systematic description and analysis of teachers' responses to the 15 interview questions.

#### INTERVIEW ITEM RESPONSES AND ANALYSIS

##### Interview Item Summaries

Question 1. IN WHAT WAYS ARE YOU SUPPORTED BY YOUR BUILDING ADMINISTRATORS?

Most participants stated that they felt supported by their administrators. The four who unequivocally stated "no support" gave such reasons as the following:

"They are careful to keep the numbers small in the honors classes because those parents will complain."

"All the administration cares about are the honors classes because they want to keep students from going to a local specialized high school."

"My principal passes me in the hall and does not even look up and say hello."

"They just don't want any problems, so if I keep quiet and don't annoy any parents, then I am considered OK."

"They don't care about me as a person at all."

I designed a program during the summer to be used in all of the classes this year during a special 'goal' time and when this year began, they did not insist that anyone use it.

"Cooperative Learning" is supposed to be a goal in this building, but it is not evaluated. Anything that is not even evaluated is not considered important, and if it is not going to be part of the evaluation, why bother to make the change or learn about it? In other words, why send us for training in the beginning?

Of those who did feel supported, several said, "yes, I feel supported," and then went on to list services that they wish their administrators would provide. These included such basics as

I wish that he would meet with parents. After we have exhausted all of our intervention strategies we need his help, but he absolutely refuses to meet with parents. The assistant principal is better about meeting with parents, but she is simply over extended and cannot do everything.

Others requested that the principal simply be a friend, a comrade, and occasionally listen to them. Several suggested

that he or she be a part of their support system and get into their classrooms more often. There was a common perception, even on the part of those who spoke highly of their administrators, that the administrators do not fully realize how stressful the classroom has become. Most teachers in this study reported that current students are far more difficult than the group that was in the schools when most of these administrators were in the classrooms.

One teacher who felt somewhat supported by his administrators mentioned services that the administration provided to make his job easier. Though this was not considered direct support, this indirect support was appreciated. Another teacher who was very supportive of his administrators stated that he did not feel that the administrators should be dealing with students directly, because there were enough support staff to provide that service, and that his administrators should be available for the teaching staff. This teacher wanted his administrator in his classroom to observe the good things that he did.

Some teachers mentioned that they felt supported by the fact that they were left alone to design their own curriculum, make their own decisions, and handle their own problems. Some did not like this form of support and felt ignored and uncared about but perceived it at least as trust in their capability.

Teachers who felt totally supported by their administrators mentioned a trust relationship as the number one criterion for this judgment. One teacher stated that he had as close to perfect an administrator as one could possibly have. He based this on the establishment of a trust relationship. This was tested through a difficult case that involved a student with a communicable disease. The central administration did not want the child to attend public school, but the teacher did. The principal was supportive through several legal procedures opposing the central administration. This support is highly irregular and caused the principal to become an outcast with her own colleagues. Comments such as the following truly validate the feelings of support:

"We are a close knit group."

"She [the principal] makes me feel special."

She always gives me the benefit of the doubt in a student-teacher conflict. She also gives me a great deal of moral support, and she makes me feel special . . . She cares about me as a person and not just as an employee. She encouraged me to go to my 30 year class reunion when I was reluctant to attend and she was right. She told me to dress up, take a friend, and to look my best. I did, and it sure paid off. . . . She also went out after her first year and hired a good aide for me, as well as getting me a computer and printer. My former principal would have purchased elaborate equipment and that would have been the extent of his support.

Another high school teacher talked about being used as a resource person for students having difficulty doing work in other classes. Also, the librarian, when selecting

books, used her as a resource. She said she felt "very respected and good about herself."

Though many of those interviewed understood that administrative support comes in many forms such as supplies, room allocation, small class sizes, schedules, curriculum choices (freedom to teach exactly what one wants to within district guidelines), and other forms than just personal attention, it is respect, trust, and personal attention that are most important in meeting the needs of teachers of at-risk students. The interpersonal skills of the administrators determine the perceived administrative support. Attention and recognition (or both) as a valued person appear to be more appreciated when they come in the form of casual pats on the back, or a moment or two spent in a classroom with a follow-up positive comment, than when they come during the formalized evaluation process. This conclusion is supported by Johnson's (1990) research about the isolation of teaching. The personalized, adult contact appears to be a necessity rather than simply an extra. In many companies, the sales data, or "closed deals," are posted weekly for all to see. In contrast, the teachers in this study appear to be motivated more by personal contact with their administrator, by an open door policy, than by pupil gain scores. Some of this most likely can be attributable to the unique pupil population and its lower success in terms of test scores.



Question 2. WHAT ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS WOULD YOU APPRECIATE?

Administrator time and recognition was the number one request by those teachers who were less than satisfied with their administrators. Even some of those who admired their administrators wanted more understanding and recognition from them. After these two primary requests, the next most common request was for more classified help in the classroom. A Chapter 1 Educational Assistant, a bilingual Educational Assistant, someone to help with the community contact in the form perhaps of a community agent, or release time to do such work themselves were suggested. Successful teachers are doing their maximum for their students. No one requested fewer students, but rather requested help so that they could serve more students more effectively.

The freedom to experiment with fresh ideas was mentioned by some teachers, but with a qualifying statement by many others that no more be added on to their workload. One teacher said, "We are losing staff because they are keeping us running so fast with all the meetings and committees and papers to correct." Add-ons are not an option for these teachers. Instead, they want to exchange some of their hassles for time spent with peers and students. One example of wished for support came in the form of a request for the administration to ask a teacher with whom the administration had scheduled her to share his

room next year for her to be allowed to bring in her own desk and file drawer. She had to fight to get some blackboard space, and she felt that this was a battle that the administration should have fought for her in the form of a policy statement. She should not have had to spend her time and energy trying unsuccessfully to work out this problem. Her feeling was that her time is better spent modifying curriculum for her students. She "wished the administration would pay more attention to the grading and make-up policy because she felt that it is discriminatory to the at-risk student." Another teacher commented on those policies that are made but never enforced. She suggested, "Don't make a policy that you either can't or won't enforce. Make it and back it or do not make it." This also supports the statement that some teachers made in regard to being freed up from the minutiae of paperwork that is often created by policy. One statement, "having to fill out forms that will never be read," was a common theme among the teachers. The desire to get rid of all the vision screening, grandparents' week, Halloween, school photos, scoliosis screening, and flu shots and to allow the teachers to teach was expressed strongly by many. With the at-risk population who have so many immediate needs including obtaining food, clothes, medical help, and counseling that consume both the teachers' time and the teaching time, these other add-ons sometimes seem overwhelming.

Another request for additional support came in the form of respecting teacher judgment regarding disruptive students. After the teachers, counsellors, team leaders, and others have tried every intervention strategy available to them, it hurt their self-esteem to have the principal say, "Well, why don't you do such and such again?" Teachers were not asking for punitive measures but rather for support in their decision for the student in question to be placed elsewhere or at the least to have a hearing with the principal. Some teachers expressed frustration because their judgments were questioned when they felt that, because they had worked with the individual student in question, they in fact, knew the situation better than the administrator did. The teachers wanted their recommendations followed and resented having to repeat their strategies.

The final request for administrative support came in the form of a plea for help in encouraging peer support. Most teachers interviewed expressed a sincere need for this support. Where there is discrepancy in the sample is between those who believe that the administration cannot do anything to help and those who honestly believe that the administration should make this help a priority. One of those who thinks that the administration should help said,

There was a lot of jealousy my first year here. I felt as if the administration had hung me out to dry and did not provide any support in the way of

inservicing the rest of the faculty as to what I was about.

She said that now when a new teacher joins the staff and begins making unkind remarks about her, her program or both, that one of the established teachers informs them of how difficult her students are to manage, and explains that if it were not for her, then the teacher questioning her program would have these students herself! This education of new teachers should, according to the interviewee, have been conducted by the administration for her first year. Another teacher hoped that next year when she is upstairs, teaching more mainstreamed students, she will finally have some respect. Just the physical location (the basement), coupled with the Chapter 1 population and smaller class sizes, created some ill will among the faculty. This is not an unusual perception held by teachers of large, high-achieving classes throughout the district. Seeing two people (an educational assistant and a teacher) for only 15 students sometimes seems unfair to the algebra teacher who has to correct 35 papers every night.

Question 3. IS THERE ANY INSERVICE NOT CURRENTLY AVAILABLE THAT YOU FEEL YOU NEED?

This was an area of success for the school district in this study. According to everyone interviewed, this district has provided administrators with the resources and training to provide their teachers with excellent inservice programs. As with any successful program, there is room for

improvement, and as the population changes, there will continue to be new needs. Some examples of requested additional training include the following:

1. Desktop publishing held on campus.

There are courses available at the local colleges but travel and parking are such a hassle that it is not worth the effort. The teachers requesting more computer training thought that there would be enough interest among their faculty to warrant bringing an instructor to their campuses.

2. Workshops on grading that does not set kids up for failure.

There was a perception throughout these interviews that some of the mainstreamed teachers were a bit too rigid in their grading practices and needed to be taught how to accommodate the needs of the at-risk population. Still others expressed a doubt that the grading practices in some of the high schools was even legal and that such flagrant violations as grading on attendance were still being allowed by administrators.

3. Information and strategies to use in identifying and helping "crack" babies.

Several of the participants expressed some fear of trying to cope with these children once the teachers could identify them. This interviewer was asked such questions as "What do they look like?"; "What do we do with them?"; "How severe are they?"

#### 4. Group process.

Many expressed the fact that they felt isolated and had only a couple friends on the staff. One teacher said "the other two teachers at my grade level and I talk, but that is about all." Another said, "I have two friends down the hall that I can talk to, but they are at different grade levels." Still another teacher, a very pleasant individual, said, "I used to have a friend in this building, but she has been transferred." In a couple of buildings there are major restructuring projects occurring, which has brought people together, but for the most part, it appears that teachers need to learn to work together better.

#### 5. Learning our limits.

Several teachers said they need a counselor who could come in and discuss with them realistic expectations for themselves so that they do not burnout nor do they feel guilty that they have not done enough. In some cases, they thought they might perhaps learn how to work smarter, not harder!

#### 6. Networking.

According to several networking with both teachers within the building and within the district to share what works and what doesn't work would be helpful. Several participants thought that sharing joys as well as failures could be very therapeutic.

#### 7. More counseling skills.

Some teachers expressed the wish for teachers in their buildings to treat each other as they would treat the children. In some cases, the participant wanted the administration to demand it, but, in other cases, teachers expressed a concern that maybe teachers needed to learn this approach. Also mentioned was the need for better counseling skills when dealing with difficult parents.

#### 8. Administrative role playing.

The teacher who mentioned this idea for inservice expressed a concern that some of her colleagues felt that the administration is out to get the teachers. She believes that administrators are definitely not out to get the teachers and that role playing, in which one person plays the part of the parent, another the child, a third the teacher, and the fourth the administrator--with individuals changing parts could clear up this misunderstanding.

#### 9. Encouraging students to read books.

Teachers expressed a need for some new, more creative ideas on how to sell reading to students and how to learn more about books that one simply does not have the time to read.

In general this list of potential inservices emphasizes practicality. Only one teacher requested more inservice on content, and that request is because she has recently changed assignments and is floundering. The fact

that teachers feel, for the most part, that they have been well-trained, is perhaps one of the reasons they are successful teachers of at-risk students. Or success means they do not need more training.

Question 4. IN WHAT WAYS DO YOU FEEL THAT YOU ARE SUPPORTED BY THE CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION?

The response to this question varied considerably. The majority of the teachers stated that the Central Administration was usually a burden and not much help. Their comments, such as "they only come around when there is a problem" and "I don't think they know me and I don't think they care who I am and what I'm doing. I'm a number," sum up the feelings. One teacher said

Central Administration does not support me or even know what I do. In fact the district dumps incompetent or troublesome personnel in our program, which is a real show of their lack of support.

With one exception, all of the teachers had negative comments regarding the Central Administration. The one exception was one of the alternative school teachers who said that the assistant superintendent's door was always open and that he gave them the money to run their program effectively. She added that he is also excellent with angry parents, in fact, much better than her building principal. One teacher who had mostly negative comments did say that the Chapter 1 money enabled her to get out of the building and attend worthwhile workshops, which she would not otherwise have been able to attend.



There was much confusion involved about the support of Central Administration. The definition of Central Administration should have been given as part of the question because most of the respondents did not know whom to include. In the district focused on in this study, all of the schools are divided up into clusters, which usually include one high school, two to three middle schools, and six to eight elementary schools. The manager of each of these clusters is called a Director of Instruction (DOI), and he or she has a teacher on special assignment (TOSA) who is responsible for inservicing all of the new adoptions and providing other information deemed necessary for the teachers. There was some support for the individuals in these positions, but many teachers did not know whether the DOI and the TOSA were considered part of the central office staff. Some teachers did not know who their Director of Instruction was nor anything about him. One teacher asked the question, "Why should we know them? They are far removed from us." This same teacher did not feel that with the number of support staff available in the buildings the principal should be holding parent conferences. In the district's efforts to allow the various clusters to operate autonomously, there was a wide divergence on how staff was used. The education of the teaching staff might enable more staff more access to available resources. The problem of teachers stepping over one administrator to get what they

want would be the lesser of the problems that familiarity with central office personnel might produce. This item was one of the least understood in this interview protocol, but by its lack of clarity, it did point out that there is a terrible lack of knowledge regarding the organizational structure of this district.

Question 5a. HOW DO YOU AND YOUR COLLEAGUES SUPPORT EACH OTHER?

The response to this item was mixed, with most of the teachers stating that they shared ideas, successes and failures with one, two, or three special friends on the staff but not with anyone else. The majority of the participants mentioned jealousy, lack of respect, philosophical differences, and cliques as being the norm rather than the exception. Comments responding to collegiality included the following:

"In the past we bounced ideas off of each other but that is all in the past and now there is no one who shares my style or my philosophy."

"We don't [have collegiality]. The people who were like me have left so now I do not have colleagues whom I support or who support me."

"I don't deal with teachers outside of my math project and we teachers continually bounce ideas off of each other."

When examining this issue school by school, rather than teacher by teacher, it became apparent that only two

schools have a harmonious staff with a third earning two diametrically opposite reviews. Perhaps this difference is due to the personality of the individuals and not so much to the administration or climate in the school. For the most part, there is a lack of supporting, sharing and comradery. Johnson (1990) discusses the characteristics of isolation in teaching and the intense need for peer support. This study involved only urban, at-risk students, so the need quite possibly might be even higher for faculty support. The administration cannot be all things to all people, and peers who support each other can free up the administration to provide support in other areas. Also, the sheer numbers of teachers in relation to the number of administrators make continual support to the degree desired next to impossible.

Question 5b. HOW CAN THE BUILDING ADMINISTRATION HELP SUCH SUPPORT OCCUR MORE?

The range of responses in this category was great. One teacher for example, said, "It's not going to happen in this building, because even though the administrator recognizes the need for 'site-based management' he wants to control." In contrast, another teacher said, "they can't." Yet another teacher said,

[The] administration has tried very hard. They totally support me, and you'd think after seven years that the rest of the people in the building would see that and maybe say OK she's gonna be here so we might as well deal with her. . . . They've brought in people from the outside because people in this building don't want to hear from me

particularly, and or at least that's what  
administration believes . . .

The two schools in which the teachers really do not think  
that their administrators can effect a change or help the  
situation were in the minority. All of the other  
participants made constructive suggestions for their  
administrators, and these suggestions are as follows:

The administrators can help us support each other by  
not causing divisions. When there is conflict,  
everyone feels it and there is a ripple effect.  
When the administration keeps everything out in the  
open and there is no game playing, then we not only  
feel supported, we are able to support each other.

If the administration could get the kids out of the  
faculty lounge and have adults serve our lunches,  
then it would help. After you have worked hard with  
students all morning, to have to help the student  
figure out how much your lunch costs or what is in  
the casserole dish is draining.

Hire a facilitator when there is a big problem. We  
tried explaining a problem with our coordinator to  
the administration and all they said was "oh, you  
Chapter 1 people are always complaining," so we had  
our own intervention and it only made things worse.  
A trained, unbiased facilitator could have been  
invaluable.

Just show that you care about us personally and it  
would really help. If only the principal could be a  
good role model instead of sticking his head in the  
sand while the vice-principal acts like a dizzy  
blond it would help.

Check on us personally. After I was injured  
breaking up a fight, no one said anything. When I  
turned in the accident report, I hoped someone would  
simply ask how I was doing.

During staff meetings have us meet as small groups  
sometimes to discuss issues and report back to the  
large group. We would get to hear from some of the  
quieter members more often.

Have whole faculty meetings once or twice a month, and use the rest of the meeting time to meet with smaller groups to allow the sharing of good things that are happening.

Send groups of teachers to the same workshop instead of one teacher to each of several workshops. After they return, they can discuss ideas, strategize, and implement what they have learned and then share successes and failures with each other before we share them with the rest of the faculty.

Treat us as adults and with respect. During such times as parent/teacher conferencing, allow us an extra few minutes to sit and talk with each other instead of just giving us the absolute minimum 30 minute duty free lunch time. Conferences are gruelling, plus most of us work overtime anyway.

"The principal offers suggestions for us to play together and he opens up his home, which is about as much as can be expected."

"The principal could get us together more often. We have two faculty meetings per month and three lunch periods. Some of us never see each other from month to month."

"The principal could fix up the faculty lounge a bit to make our breaks more relaxing and restful."

"Visiting our rooms more would make us feel good, and then we would have more confidence in each other."

"Avoid being so defensive when we teachers meet alone for lunch or breakfast."

"A little warmth!"

"Simple common courtesy! Standing out in the halls during passing time and lending a sympathetic ear would go a long way towards making this building staff bond."

"Make us feel special. Reinforce us as good teachers, and we might be more receptive to sharing."

"Allow group decisions when the group will be intimately affected such as in a curriculum model."

"Encouraging the more reluctant members to join in on committees. Some people simply have to be asked personally and let know that their opinions are valued."

"Whenever possible find money to allow teachers time off to work together. Such work encourages bonding even if the project itself is less than successful!"

"In a newsletter, in a note of appreciation, or during the faculty meeting, spotlight teachers who are doing something special."

"Organize 'all faculty with spouse' parties without any 'shop talk.'"

The above statements suggest that the interpersonal skills of the administrator make the difference. It appears that there are ways in which administrators can help provide more administrative support without large costs in either time or money.

Question 6. HOW DO YOUR ADMINISTRATORS EMPOWER YOU?

In spite of the number of articles found in most educational journals today on the topic of empowerment, it was clear from both the body language and the hesitancy in their responses that this group of teachers is neither well versed nor comfortable with the technicalities of

empowerment. It was a term that they had heard but they were unsure of exactly what it meant and how they felt about it. Empowerment was not something they had spent much time thinking about. The words "I guess . . ." began the majority of the responses. There were allusions to trust, autonomy, management teams, support, and experiment.

The findings in this study are very similar to those found in Johnson's (1990) study, which included both small and large districts:

Some teachers objected to being distracted from teaching by the demands of policy making. They believed that teaching well required their undivided attention, and they wished that administrators would simply anticipate their needs and respect their views. Precisely because administrators have historically controlled policy, some teachers regarded peers who moved into that realm as turncoats seeking undue status or political advantage. (p. 201)

The teachers in this study said that being left alone to do their own thing was probably the most empowering strategy that their administrators could give them. A few mentioned teacher/student/administrator committees, but, for the most part, they substituted the word "support" for empowerment. A few frustrated teachers talked about having been dissatisfied so many times by committees set up and recommendations made but never followed that they were not even interested in the subject of empowerment.

Question 7. HOW DO YOUR ADMINISTRATORS HELP PROVIDE A POSITIVE CLIMATE IN YOUR BUILDING?

Of the 18 teachers involved in this study, 13 felt that their administrators made obvious attempts to create a positive climate, and the teachers appreciated these attempts. In the other five interviews, the teachers said they did not feel that their administrators made any attempt nor did they even care about the climate in the building. The teachers felt total non-support in every area. The "us" and "them" mentality was mentioned in these interviews. Teachers expressed a pervasive feeling that the administration does not care about them as people. In the 13 interviews in which the teachers felt that the administrators made an effort, the strength of this attempt was in the administrator's personality. The administrators discussed had warm, positive personalities, and a way of making everyone feel special. The principal's pleasant presence in the halls appears to be the single most effective strategy used by successful building administrators. The second most often mentioned strategy was the use of personal notes and verbal recognition at faculty meetings, in newsletters, and informally. An open-door policy was mentioned by several teachers, but it was interesting to note that in the very same building two teachers would each have a different perspective of the openness of the administrator's door. In one middle school, a teacher stated that the principal has a jar of candy on the desk and is always available to talk, whereas another



teacher in this building wished that he could just get a private note to the principal without it having to go through the secretary: same building, same principal, but a totally different perception of administrative support.

Central administration was mentioned as being helpful by requiring certain principals to address the issue of poor climate. In another building a purported alcoholic was moved to a much smaller elementary school because of the central office's power. This eliminated the need to expend the energy required to dismiss this individual.

Question 8. ARE THERE ANY CHANGES OR ADDITIONS THAT WOULD IMPROVE THE SCHOOL CLIMATE IN YOUR BUILDING?

One quotation sums up the responses to this item well: "The administrators need to learn people skills. Our principal is afraid to show any emotion." Making teachers feel special, valued, was a central theme in the teachers' responses. The public is not going to give these good feelings to teachers, and only a few students are going to provide this support, so it must come from one's peers and one's supervisors.

Some other ideas for improving the school climate included finding more time to work with one another, sharing curriculum, and scheduling social time--all of which the administration could help. Two teachers mentioned that more support in dealing with disruptive students could improve the school climate, and one suggested smaller classes.

Another mentioned more control by the teachers of the budget, and a fourth mentioned more site-based management, but, for the most part, it is the personality of the administrators that has the most effect on positive school climate.

Question 9. DO YOU FEEL THAT THERE IS ANY DIFFERENCE IN HOW YOU ARE SUPPORTED IN RELATION TO HOW YOUR COLLEAGUES ARE SUPPORTED BECAUSE OF THE UNIQUENESS OF YOUR AT-RISK POPULATION? EXAMPLE: DO YOU GET MORE OR LESS RECOGNITION THAN OTHERS? MORE OR LESS OF THE AVAILABLE RESOURCES?

Nine teachers stated that they are not treated any differently because of the uniqueness of their population and nine reported that they are treated differently. Of the nine that are treated differently, five are treated worse than they might be if they were teaching the honors classes, and four are treated better. Three of these four are elementary teachers in schools with no honors program. In this district tracking does not begin until middle school except in reading and math in this district.

The five teachers who felt that they were treated worse gave such responses as the following:

Class sizes are adhered to more strictly in the Honors Classes for two reasons. One is so that the students will not transfer to a specialized technical school with some status. [The other] is that those students produce more papers that need to be graded and that their lessons must be made more interesting.

"You get stuck in less desirable rooms in the building (my office is in an old bathroom)."

"Until Channel Two News carried my Mother's Day party, I had no real respect nor status as a Chapter 1 teacher."

Of the nine teachers who are treated equally, this was sometimes positive and sometimes negative. One said "No, we are all equally ignored." The majority felt that they were not treated differently because of the population they were teaching.

Question 10. WERE THERE ANY COURSES IN YOUR TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM THAT ESPECIALLY PREPARED YOU TO TEACH THE AT-RISK POPULATION?

All 18 of the participants emphatically stated that there was nothing in their undergraduate program to prepare them for teaching the at-risk student. One teacher stated,

In one course, while I was doing my student teaching in an urban at-risk school, I specifically asked if I could write my paper with this perspective, and the instructor said "No, you will not always be teaching this population and you need to prepare for the regular student."

Some participants mentioned that some of their special education courses have been helpful, especially the behavior management and the task analysis classes, but these courses are part of the graduate program, and many teachers had taught for a while before returning to study for a master's degree.

Several of the teachers mentioned that their students were their best teachers and that they had learned to cope

with on the job. Fortunately, the inservice programs provided by this district and specifically in these schools have compensated for this initial deficiency. Likewise, both local colleges have begun to address this problem with some excellent programs complete with community-based experience.

Question 11. IS THERE ANY TRAINING THAT YOU FEEL WOULD HELP YOUR ADMINISTRATORS SUPPORT YOU MORE?

A quotation from Johnson's (1990) study parallels the feelings of several of the teachers in this study.

Teachers were also distressed about some administrators' seeming disregard for instructional matters, and for being preoccupied with bureaucratic irrelevancies. One urban elementary school teacher said that he was unhappy over the lack of support he received "financially and philosophically" from the central administration and his principal. A suburban middle school teacher faulted her superintendent for not being "an educator" and for disregarding pressing curricular problems in her school. . . . more were described as absorbed in administrative concerns. . . . Finally, teachers faulted administrators for taking little account of faculty views when policies were drawn up or practices prescribed . . . It just seems as if things are done by edict . . . Not that I expect them to allow us to make the decisions without them, but consulting us would be really nice. (p. 49)

In this present study, several teachers stated that they were not sure that their administrators could be taught how to have better people skills because the teachers they see human relations as both an attitude and a personality style issue. Teachers repeatedly said that they wanted their administrators inside their classrooms to understand what it is they are doing. What is apparent is the

teachers' need to be valued or to feel valued. The presence of their administrator in their room validates what they are doing. An absence of the administrator communicates as attitude of not caring.

He must care about me to be in my room. He asked me about the new proposal, so, therefore, he must value my opinion. He meets with the parents of my disruptive students, so, therefore, he must care about my students as I do.

Some comments such as the following show disturbing signs of despair and frustration:

[Administrators need] people skills training but I do not think that it would help unless their jobs were on the line. Just look at their spouses to see what kind of people they are and with whom they are comfortable.

"It is not an 'us/them' situation but how can that be taught?"

"I really don't think that there are any courses or training because it is an attitude problem not necessarily a skills problem."

Some teachers expressed more hope and gave some suggestions that might be valuable for districts training administrators:

[Administrators need courses on] dealing with difficult people and motivating people. Administrators should learn how to study personalities and how to support staff emotionally. They need to learn strategies to help staff relate to them and to treat different staff differently. Administrators must learn to direct goals, etc. The entire key is in the interpersonal stuff. For example, who do you ask to do what? Matching jobs with people appropriately is an important skill. An example of mismatching is placing a non-party person on the social committee.

[Administrators need courses on] student management and techniques for motivating reluctant learners. There are kids [reluctant learners] who are getting kicked out of every class every day. We're doing something wrong. We don't treat kids very well.

Our administrators are doing fine. A little exposure to how low kids think and what makes them tick would be helpful. Sometimes their questions indicate a total lack of understanding of what makes a person a non or low reader. "How come Johnny can't read?"

Our administrators could use some training in group dynamics and facilitating conflicts or conflict mediation. She needs to learn to confront conflict, and she needs to learn how to make a decision. The point where she needs to make a decision comes sooner than she realizes sometimes, [so] valuable time is lost and frustration builds up.

I wish that my administration would take a class in cooperative learning so that they could understand what we are doing. Also how do they know if we are doing a good job? They say that it [cooperative learning] is a building goal, but it is not part of our evaluation. They also should take courses on "How to build a team" and "How to build morale."

"Administrators need to teach one period per day to remember what it feels like to be a teacher. Some administrators lose touch with the profession."

"Yes, they [the administrators] need to learn to take off their tie and get into the community. Administrators need to learn more about available resources."

"Yes, [administrators need] direct involvement with students. Administrators should spend a portion of each day in the classroom."

Such comments may indicate that, in some ways, the administrators in this building are being set up for failure. The DOI decided that Cooperative Learning would be

the building's goal, yet the administrators who are expected to implement this goal have not had the training. The teachers' concerns, in this case, are valid and could be corrected relatively easily by the administrators attending these classes.

The last three comments show that teachers can be satisfied. Some teachers believe that they have outstanding administrators and are very happy to be working with them.

The following comments support these positive feelings:

I want a leader, which is what I have. I don't want a manager, and that is what I have had most of the time. The local university should train administrators to be leaders and not just managers.

No, not mine. She came prepared with experience in both curriculum and special education. Our Assistant Principal is also supportive, although not trained. She could use therapist training in order to learn how to deal with difficult people.

"No, there are no courses which would help our principal because she knows what's going on and is aware."

Question 12. IN WHAT WAYS DOES THE CURRENT TEACHER EVALUATION SYSTEM GIVE YOU THE FEEDBACK THAT YOU NEED TO IMPROVE TEACHING?

"It doesn't" is the most common response to this item. One teacher said,

It lets me know my Principal's opinion about what I'm doing, and I value his opinion. I consider him to be knowledgeable about teacher performance because he observes a lot of people and is in a position to make comparisons. I do, though, get more help from him outside the evaluation process. Evaluations make me feel scared, and even though I love him, I am really scared. Fortunately, he comes in and out of my room regularly so he knows what I

do. I don't know why I am so nervous. I've never gotten a negative evaluation.

Most of the other interviews contained comments, such as the following:

I write my own evaluations and the principal just signs them. This year I demanded that he come into my room and watch me teach the same lesson to two different classes. I wanted him to see how much pressure we are under.

No, it's tough to evaluate our teaching. The current evaluation system is simply too sterile. Most of the time an administrator does not even know what we're supposed to be teaching so the evaluation is a joke.

It is not effective because I have to fake a lesson to show that I know how to teach. My real job is the number of parent contacts, number of student's helped, and the number of contacts with teachers.

"In order to avoid grievances, our principal plays it safe, so no information is gathered. Everyone else does too."

"The observations are so phoney."

"After the observations, we go over the feedback. I get more feedback in other ways."

In general, the feeling was that the evaluation system as designed by the district does not do what it was intended to do, but this does not mean that the teachers in this study did not get feedback regarding their teaching. Informally, through verbal comments that are shared on a more regular basis, most of the teachers in this study learned about their teaching. Unfortunately, those principals who are avoiding their staffs are able to avoid



giving feedback except the one time, every other year, during the mandated evaluation cycle. Again, teacher evaluation depends on the personality and management style of the principal rather than on the instrument stated several of the teachers interviewed.

Question 13. ARE YOUR SUCCESSES AS A TEACHER OF AT-RISK STUDENTS ADEQUATELY RECOGNIZED BY THE CURRENT TEACHER EVALUATION SYSTEM?

Some teachers were not aware that recognizing success was even a goal of the current evaluation system. Generally their recognition, though limited, came from parent contacts, student successes, informal administrator comments and the district's departmental awards, such as English as a Second Language, IMPACT II, Chapter 1 and Special Education. As one teacher said, "They never come into our room, so how can they recognize something they know nothing about?" Another said, "No, because our principal does not make a big deal out of the evaluations there is neither criticism nor praise." Still another said that "No, this current system does not acknowledge anyone. . . . [It] is so easy to grieve a critical remark that the system cannot be effective." A former union representative said that "until evaluators are given some power, the evaluation system will never give adequate information. The union is too powerful!" One teacher said, "They can't say anything good about one teacher without making others feel bad, and then that causes

problems. It is better to just say nothing much about anyone."

Johnson's (1990) study produced similar results with only 5 of the 75 public school teachers praising supervision and evaluation and, in those cases, the value was attributed to particularly able supervisors:

The teachers interviewed for this study roundly criticized formal supervision and evaluation practices, observing that they are effective for dismissal but not for improvement, that administrators are rarely prepared to offer genuinely useful advice, and for that the procedures invariably take precedent over content of supervision, virtually never providing an opportunity for learning. . . . Others, particularly the very good teachers included in this study, regard the practice as an institutional obligation to be endured rather than an opportunity to be seized. (p. 266)

Question 14. WHAT ARE THE REWARDS OF BEING A TEACHER OF AT-RISK STUDENTS?

All of the teachers in this study with one exception are veteran teachers. What has kept these individuals who have shown that they are capable, intelligent, and well-educated interested for this long? The focus of this study is teachers of urban, at-risk students who are reported to be the most difficult to teach. Why did these teachers choose to remain in schools with high poverty, low parental concern, more dysfunctional students with special needs, and high mobility rates that decrease the opportunities to show bigger pupil gain scores and to form deeper relationships with their students?

The feeling expressed by almost all of the participants is the main reward is knowing that they are needed. Knowing that they make a difference in their students' lives is important to these teachers. Being needed is the primary motivator for this group of teachers.

Succeeding where others have failed with individual students was also mentioned as a motivator, as was knowing that they are doing something that they do well. Seeing the light of understanding shine in a student's eyes makes it all worth while was also a common theme. Another said "The energy that the kids give off keeps me alive." Still more discussed the joy of "connecting" with their students and making them realize that they are not "dumb" and that they do have value and worth.

The challenge of teaching motivates many of these teachers as they talk about

never being bored and the continual personal growth they enjoy. Working with at-risk students provides an endless source of avenues to explore as we search out alternative ways to reach them and more available services to help them. The students continually teach us, the teachers, to widen our views and opinions. The at-risk students are often the most unique people in our society and in some cases the brightest.

One teacher who was alone in this study said,

These kids are no different than the general education students. Granted these kids are different from the very rich kids, but they are not much different from the general population and I don't treat them as anything special. Just as kids.

This view was not expressed by any other teachers interviewed.

Most teachers discussed the intrinsic rewards of teaching and made comments such as "One doesn't wait around for either the parents or the occasional student who comes back to say thanks. It happens too rarely . . ." "When a dying student asked me to raise his two-year-old son, I knew I was a success. He told me in the hospital that 'you hugged me, read to me and listened to me.'" Those moments, though intensely rewarding, are not often enough to keep a teacher working as hard as these teachers apparently do on a daily basis. Another teacher described these children as "non-priority" children as far as the administration is concerned and said that "she didn't receive the same support for these children as she did when she taught students whose grades rise. Often they give these kids to the new teachers." Her feeling was that she had to work extra hard for these children because there were too many educators who had given up on them. She went on to discuss the term "throw-away" kids and how, in her opinion, most educators were resigned to failing with these students and did not give them their rightful attention. In her opinion, she does her part to offset some of her colleagues.

Question 15. ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS?

This item elicited interesting advice for administrators on a very practical level. Because this item

came at the end of the interview, many of the interviewees had established rapport with the interviewer. The advice sorted itself into advice for administrators sometimes based on good administrative practice and sometimes based on poor administrative practices. The fact that these teachers are successful adds to the value of this list of ideas.

#### MAJOR THEMES FROM INTERVIEWS

From the interviews two underlying themes emerged. The first is seeing oneself as valued by one's administrator, and the second is feeling supported by both one's peers and administrators. The more important of these is the perception of seeing oneself as valued primarily as a person, and, second of having one's work valued. This order is in contrast to the business world, specifically sales, in which one oftentimes achieves personal satisfaction in a job well done. Landing an important account is valued far more by the average salesperson than being an articulate, warm, sensitive person (Sloma, 1988). Without exception, each participant commented on whether his or her principal acknowledged him regularly as a person. Sloma advised business managers: "Your job as a general manager is to achieve excellent results" (p. 11). If . . . "you begin to establish business friendships you face the temptation of being excessively understanding of the many problems subordinates face" (p. 11). He consistently gave messages,

such as "You run the risk of becoming ineffective if you waste time attempting to achieve 100% understanding in your organization" (p. 12). Clearly, managers are trained to evaluate performance, and subordinates see that this performance is valued.

Teachers who rated their principals highly mentioned trust and amount of contact as key factors. Administrators who were rated low by teachers were perceived as less trustworthy and low in contact. In several cases, neither a lack of trust nor a trust relationship was mentioned, but teachers said that the administrator simply did not care. Teachers said that they want to be cared about, noticed, and valued. The isolation so natural to teaching may be a major contributing factor, or it may be a result of the personality type that enters teaching. The hours spent daily teaching behind a closed door without the interaction with other adults can create a very isolated feeling. It is not clear according to Johnson (1990), whether or not teachers have chosen to work in isolation because of the highly personalized nature of teaching, the practical need for quiet and control, or the fear of being constantly judged by others. At any rate, teaching is a very isolated profession.

The second underlying theme was that of "support," both from the administration and also from "peers." Being valued as a person is important, but as teaching demands of

teachers of urban at-risk students increase, support systems become more necessary. As society becomes more dysfunctional, the drain on these teachers is greater. Several teachers talked about the fear of burn-out and the need for a "best friend" on the teaching staff. Administrators can have a part in developing these friendships. For example, they can place specific teachers together with similar philosophies and provide the opportunity for time spent with other teachers. The research on successful teachers acknowledges that there are a variety of reasons for their success, and no one is limited to teaching only one grade level. The only level at which the administration might have a difficult time arranging compatible workers is at the high school level in areas where there simply are not very many sections offered. There might well only be one chemistry teacher and one physics teacher, so the arrangement of compatible personalities might not be an options.

Johnson (1990) discusses the importance of symbolic bonds. The teachers in her study consistently state that they are "here for the kids. We have to work with them. We know what's right" (p. 222). Johnson discusses the history and ritual passed down in private schools because the teaching staff is much more stable than typical public school staffs. These rituals, histories, and common goals help bond a school together. In this present study reported

here there was a high turnover in students, faculty and administration. In "all" of the schools involved in this study, there has been a change in one or more of the administrators within the last three years. Several of the teachers have also transferred within the last three years. Suggestions for administrators to provide more support for their staffs is discussed in Chapter V.

#### ADDITIONAL THEMES FROM INTERVIEWS

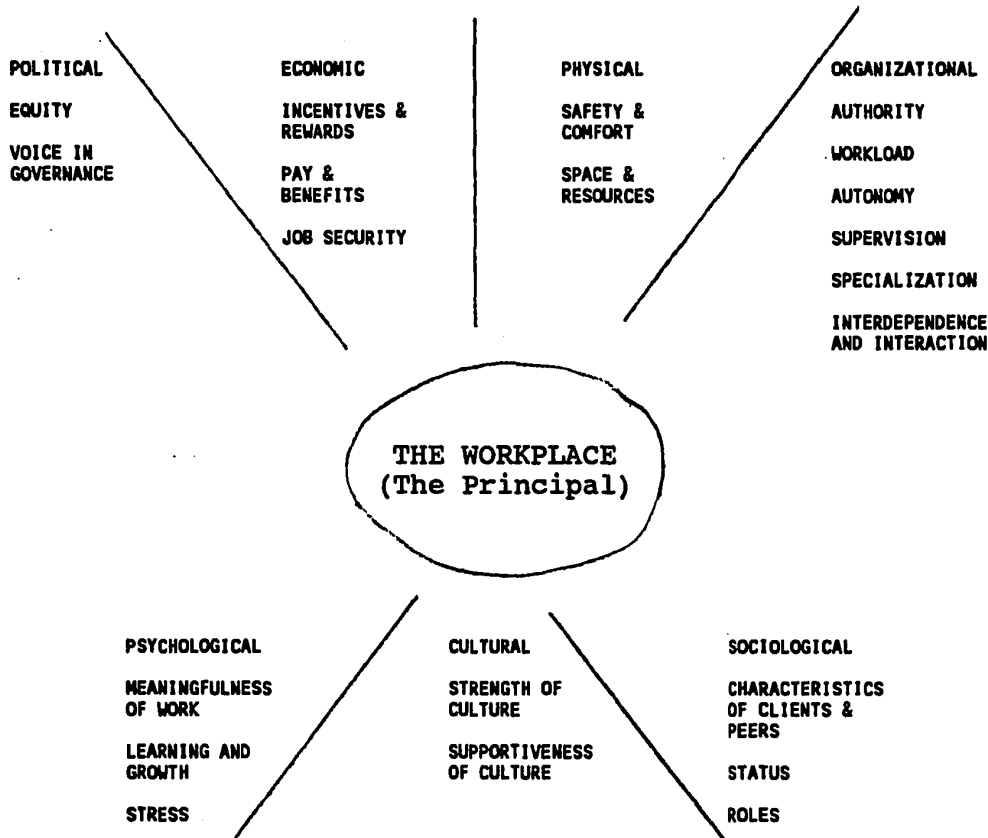
In addition to the general theme of perceived support or of the degree the support is felt or not felt, several other general themes emerged during these interviews. These themes are discussed using the terminology and the conceptual framework presented by Johnson (1990).

The main themes, in addition to the central themes, in order of significance, which emerged from the interviews of this study were the following:

1. rewards (recognition)
2. supervision/autonomy
3. strength of school culture and its resulting stress
4. resources
5. meaningfulness of work
6. voice in governance
7. job security
8. characteristics of clients



These eight topics summarize the responses to the 15 questions of the interviews.



**Figure 3.** Johnson's (1990) constellation of workplace variables (with "the principal" added).

None of the teachers interviewed in this study mentioned a lack of safety or comfort. This finding for these teachers is positive since the interviews were conducted in a major urban school district with at least some communities that experience poverty and violence. Safety is the first priority of this district's superintendent, and it appears that this goal has been met. Pay and benefits were rarely mentioned either. Most of

these teachers have been employed by the district for a number of years, are high on the pay scale, and none complained of poor pay or benefits. A lack of training prior to entering the profession was a concern of those interviewed, but the inservice provided by the building administrators was praised. In fact, some of those interviewed stated that they could not imagine any more training for teachers that would be beneficial. Many did, however, express ideas for administrative classes that included interpersonal skills training. Johnson (1990) also addresses this issue of interpersonal skills when interacting with the teachers.

### Rewards

Johnson (1990) set the sure rewards for teachers. It is no news that teaching is short on recognition. Many respondents noted that they must look to themselves for

motivation and reassurance about the merits of their work. . . . Reliance on self-assessment is not without problems. Working with students who progress slowly or erratically can fail to provide any of the signals--high student test scores, insightful writing, enthusiasm for learning--that teachers look to for evidence of their success. . . . Administrators were a source of recognition for teachers in this study, although some were said to be far more successful than others in offering meaningful praise. . . . Usually principals who provide praise that teachers value do so in the course of work rather than on formal, public occasions. (p. 290)

Teacher recognition is relatively rare and difficult to give. The present study was different from Johnson's in

that only urban teachers of at-risk students in public schools were interviewed. Because these teachers see few of the high test scores of middle and upper class suburban teachers, administrator recognition is even more crucial. Johnson's study discussed the value some teachers place on positive comments from parents. However, sometimes the lack of expression of parental concern of urban poor parents makes this source of support inadequate.

The majority of the teachers in this study noted a lack of recognition on the part of administrators. One teacher stated "He is apt to pass you in the halls and not even say hello." Several others indicated that their administrators did not understand the population of students, and did not recognize their small successes as the important accomplishments they are. Still others wanted administrators to meet with parents more often to keep abreast of what the teachers are dealing with on a daily basis. In general, teachers in this study felt that the administrators simply did not know enough about what was actually going on in the classrooms to give the teachers the meaningful recognition that they need. One teacher who praised his administrator in many ways stated, "Educators from all over the United States have visited my classroom, yet my own principal has never even observed a class. I wish he knew what I do and how successful it is." Teachers in another building who praised their principal commented

that "he knows every student by name" and "he supports us so much that sometimes there are too many teachers going in too many different directions." Contrarily, an elementary school teacher made the comment "her principal met with each of us in September and from then on we never saw her again. Her door was always closed." One of the high school teachers said,

Administrators do not even value our opinion enough to ask us about a situation before they hire an outsider for a new position. Not only would we have liked to have been asked if we wanted to fill the new position but we would have liked to have been asked for information and insight in how to best design the new job. Neither was wanted nor requested and it hurt our feelings. It was a real case of "them" and "us."

At times, it was important to distinguish among administrators at one school. The 18 teachers interviewed in this study worked with a total of 10 different administrations. Within one school there might be as many as five administrators at the high school level, or as few as one in an elementary school. Sometimes the principal might be revered and the assistant principal disliked or vice versa. In some cases, it was hard for teachers to distinguish among the various administrators and their areas of responsibility. In some, the teachers expressed a strong wish for a clearer job description so that they knew exactly whom to go to for which problems. Unfortunately, this confusion indicates a lack of understanding of administration on the part of the teachers. Administration

can be divided into areas of responsibility, but if one administrator is absent for meetings, the other must fill in. Also the amount of control necessary on the part of the top administrator is another issue. In some buildings, one sees the principal only when one is in trouble, and the teachers interact solely with the vice principals. In other buildings, the principal controls every transaction. One middle school teacher said, "Oh, once in a while the alternative program gets some extra attention, but for the most part, we are all equally ignored." Another middle school teacher said of her administrator,

I wish that he could just listen to me more. I wish that he could just give me that minute or two when I am totally stressed out. I have left school crying and ready to quit. A couple minutes of his time might have made the difference. If he could just have told me that I was OK, that I was doing a good job, it would have helped.

One teacher in a building with an administrator who reported total support stated,

There is no more support that she could give us. She does everything from writing grants to giving us emotional support. She has inspired us to move with her and to work with her, not against her.

### Supervision/Autonomy

To the question "How do your administrators empower you?" most of the interviewees responded that they were empowered because they were left alone to do their own thing. Empowerment is a proactive activity, not a passive one, and when one has been empowered, one usually is at the

very least aware of being empowered. Several teachers interpreted the lack of supervision and the high level of autonomy as actually being ignored and not cared about. In every interview, the district evaluation system was seen as having little value. It provides neither valuable feedback, valuable reinforcement, nor, in many cases, even administrative presence in the classroom. Several teachers said that they write their own evaluations and the principal simply signs them. Others stated that if the administrator writes anything negative, all the teacher has to do is grieve it, and the teacher will usually win.

Though the teachers' contract does state that only process can be grieved, the requirements for most negative comments to be permissible are far too time-consuming and, in some instances, too demoralizing on one's staff to be practical. An example was a comment regarding how a teacher treats other staff members. If a teacher is rude and obnoxious towards a secretary or another teacher, then the staff member must write a formal complaint. Within 16 working days, the administrator must meet with the teacher and not only discuss the rudeness but also design a plan to avoid future incidents again within two working weeks. In the meantime, the building union leader for the defendant may harass the teacher or secretary who made the complaint and can insist that the individual making the complaint is overly sensitive. All of this requires tremendous

administrative time, and it is difficult for most individuals in the secretarial or teaching ranks to stand up to intimidation. Ostracism by other members of the staff may occur and create a division that contributes to low morale. It is easier just to take the abuse for the individual being abused, and the overworked administrator must determine if this really is how he wants to spend his discretionary time. In a training session conducted by this district for administrators contemplating placing an incompetent teacher on a PLAN OF ASSISTANCE, administrators are told that the procedure will take the recommended amount of time necessary is one hour per day for six months. If the teacher is still on the plan at the end of the year, then the teacher must be retained in that assignment, so this adds another incentive to avoid correcting faulty behavior.

Because of the time required for corrective behavior, as well as the number of other duties, the administrators in this study simply did not spend much time in the teachers' classrooms or interact with them in other ways. One teacher said,

As long as the parents and the community do not complain about us, we are left alone. Don't rock the boat is the key to survival in this building. Just once I would like my principal to walk into my classroom, talk to a student, and respond positively.

Strength of Culture and Its  
Resulting Stress

Johnson (1990) talks about the ability of many of the private schools in her study to pass down the history and culture complete with all of its symbolism to the new faculty. Their staffs are more stable partly because they have determined the size of the school and then students are admitted up to this number. In a public school, there is the constant shifting of FTE because of increasing or declining enrollment often due to neighborhood shifts. Another complexity of staffing that occurs in the district studied is that after teachers obtain positions in a school in an impoverished area, they establish their credibility and then move to a "better" attendance area so they can work with more teachable, more motivated students. These two factors result in heavy turnover in some schools. A third factor, even among the teachers interviewed, is that if a teacher does not like the principal, then a transfer to one of the other 100 schools is simply requested and usually granted. The result of the turnover is limited attachment to the particular school and limited faculty bonding. There are also new teachers to be acclimated to the school. Close bonding does not happen quickly. It often takes years. In schools with high turnover of teachers, the teachers who remain experience high stress and consequent burnout because there is no one in whom to confide and with whom share to share experiences.



Those who study the collegial relations of teachers have found instances of the ideal--"places of intellectual sharing, collaborative planning, and collegial work," and they have concluded that such schools are more satisfying for teachers and more effective for students. However, as Warren Little observed, such schools are also "not the rule, but the rare, often fragile exception." (p. 148)

This present study of administrators is premised on the belief that more satisfying schools provide better learning and that the administration can help make a school a more satisfying workplace. By looking at the issue of stress and its dependence on "fitting in" and upon having a friend with whom to share, it seems quite reasonable to study ways of helping the passing down of history and culture and assisting teachers in finding "friends" on the staff.

### Resources

A problem of limited resources is not unique to the teaching profession. Doctors and nurses must often place too many patients in too small a space, thereby having to deal with the frustrations of overcrowding and a strain on the available supplies and equipment (Johnson, 1990). In this present study, few teachers complained about the allocation of available resources. The issue of class size came up more in Johnson's study than in the current study. Teachers in Johnson's study talked about their wish that their students would

begin school equipped with a modicum of self-discipline. Sitting still, waiting one's turn, and

following directions were listed as necessary social skills in large classes, and many teachers observed that economically poor students were unpracticed in such conventions of middle-class conduct. (p. 83)

As one urban middle school teacher in Johnson's study said,

So many of the children come to school just for some place to come. They don't know how to act in a classroom. A lot of the children have never had anybody say "no" to them. They have an awful lot of problems that are noneducational, that tend to spill over into the school. (p. 83)

An urban elementary school teacher added:

Many parents teach their children to fight no matter where--I guess for survival. I recognize that when a kid is in his neighborhood, he might need to do that. But it doesn't work in a classroom when you're trying to teach. (p. 84)

In this study, the teachers generally felt that they needed more resources in the way of smaller classes and more aide help. One middle school PE teacher compared his class sizes to the class sizes of his colleagues in other schools, and he felt good about his small classes. The district maximum ratio for the number of physical education students per teacher is 60 to 1. His classes are at 29. In addition, he is allowed to send disruptive students to the alternative school coordinator for counseling and discipline. With this exception, most teachers had comments like the following:

The parents of the honors classes are so vocal that whatever the teacher wants she gets. . . . Class sizes are adhered to more strictly in the honors classes. The argument is that the honors students produce more papers that need to be graded and that their lessons must be more interesting. Also, honors class teachers can deviate from the curriculum more than the rest of us are allowed. . .

. . . [as remedial teachers] You get stuck in less desirable rooms in the building. My office for example is in an old bathroom.

Another teacher stated

. . . I would like to be able to hire a staff that is not only effective with the at-risk population but also wants to work with this population. At this time, my program is used as a dumping ground for undesirable teachers. . . . This program also needs more support personnel in the form of aides and counselors.

Still another teacher said, when asked what additional support she/he would like from administrators, that she needed

more bilingual assistance and some paperwork help. I have a bilingual Russian aide who comes one and one-half hours per week and a Vietnamese aide who comes two hours a week IF he is not too busy.

Additional attention to documenting "due process" in regard to educational plans and discipline, the increased diversity of the urban population, and the increased dysfunctionality of both our parents and students due to crack, alcohol, and the resulting marital problems have resulted in more paperwork for these teachers. Yet they are still expected to teach a full day. Also, because of the first wave of educational reform, more attention is placed on how time is spent in the classroom by administrators. Slipping away a few minutes to do paperwork while the students watch a video is a teacher's survival strategy of the past.

Some teachers in this study mentioned that because they were teachers of urban at-risk students their special

programs provided Federal money for barbecues, trips, aides, supplies, materials, and workshops that other teachers did not get. The orientation or background of the administrator involved determined the resources allocated to these teachers. In Chapter V the issue of what weighting students as SB 814 does to allocate the resources to the district is discussed. In other words, why is the extra funding that is given to the district not passed on to the classrooms?

#### Meaningfulness of Work

Without exception, all of the teachers in this study were happy to be working with urban at-risk students and did not want to be assigned to an easier, more affluent population. The meaningfulness of the work is what has kept these teachers content in spite of some administrative disappointments. No one interviewed had applied for a transfer to a more affluent school, though some are in the process of applying for transfers to other urban at-risk schools.

The challenges of working with this population, as well as the rewards of connecting with a student who might never connect well with any other adult, is a real motivator. Knowing that they are not "just one more paid adult in this child's life," such as one experiences in a wealthy private school, motivates some of these teachers. "Knowing both that they are needed and that they make a difference" motivates almost everyone in this study. Some

of the teachers studied consider themselves to have been at-risk students, and they want to do a better job with their students than was done with them. One very bright, articulate teacher talked about the number of both private and public schools that she was kicked out of during her schooling. She knows that she is doing a better job than any of her teachers. She believes that her experience as a child has enabled her to relate especially well to her students and that this experience is a gift that she has to offer to society. It has long been recognized that most teachers are not in the profession for the money, and these teachers are no exception. This is an intense and dedicated group of individuals who have proven their competence. This group of teachers has demonstrated an intense need to be needed. Teachers have been reported to be nurturers, and this population of students provides this opportunity. There was a clear disdain of "yuppie's" kids in almost every interview, yet many of these teachers as individuals have provided their own children with the identical accoutrements as the "yuppies" have for their children. Is this a double standard? Many of these teachers live in affluent neighborhoods, belong to country clubs, and have sent their children off to high status colleges. Yet their preference is to work with at-risk youth.

The last motivator for these teachers appeared to be that their egos were fed by knowing they were doing

something that many other people in society could not do well.

### Voice in Governance

This study parallels Johnson's investigation in regard to the mixture of feelings towards the amount of power that teachers have or do not have. Both studies had teachers who felt that the administrators' roles were compromised because of the power of the teachers' union, while other teachers reported that the teachers were powerless and disenfranchised. Site-based management is beginning in the schools in both studies, and with mixed success in both studies. In schools where the teachers felt supported, teachers have some degree of voice in the decision-making process. In one school in this study, the very well-liked principal instituted a management team comprised of the intake officer (classified position), two teachers, and three administrators. There are very positive feelings about this team and their successes. However, at a second school where the management team is comprised of the team leaders, the feeling is that the principal allows the discussions to go on too long without making a decision. The teachers feel that some items are administrative decisions and should simply be done without using up teacher time discussing them. In the school where the discussions are felt to go on too long, there is no more understanding of the responsibilities of the principal than in the other

schools where there is very little or no discussion. This finding is surprising. At first glance, it would have seemed obvious that in the discussion process those involved would have a better understanding of all of the factors involved in making a decision. All of the political ramifications as well as a better understanding of the budgetary constraints and basic logistical problems of administering a school should be explained well and understood before site-based management can be successful. In discussions with these teachers, this understanding of the decision making was not an apparent result. Apparently, direct education of the faculty is necessary for better understanding of the daily operation of a school. This recommendation is discussed in Chapter V.

#### Job Security

One of the state-level factors affecting this study is the passage of a tax limitation bill. It reduces for five years the amount of property tax assessments allowable. This bill will cause severe cutbacks in schools. As school boards and other governmental agencies make cuts, employees fear that they will lose their jobs. Typically, teachers accepted the perceived low pay knowing that tenure protected them, but in these interviews, teachers were concerned about their jobs. This concern usually surfaced during the discussion of the teacher evaluation system. Most teachers expressed nervousness in the process of being observed and

evaluated even when they felt secure with their principal. Comments about the unnaturalness of the experience or about having to "fake" teaching a lesson when their job was not a direct teaching assignment but rather a consulting position, bothered some of them. Teachers expressed concern that either the principal did not understand the teacher's job or was not astute enough to ask for a log of activities and to judge that instead of a "faked" lesson. Johnson (1990) mentioned that job security contributes to worker satisfaction, and for the teachers in her study, job security was not an issue but rather a given. The passage of the state tax limitation bill has contributed to the uncertainty felt by some of the teachers in this study. There may be a resulting dissatisfaction with some of their administrators as a result of this legislation that might not have surfaced during another time.

#### Characteristics of Clients

The unique characteristics of the at-risk population and its ever changing nature were a concern expressed by most of the interviewees. This concern took on the form of wanting the recognition of both the building administration and the central administration that these changes were indeed taking place. Teachers reported that central administration was too far removed to know or care about them and that the building administrators had been out of the classroom too long to still be in touch with these



changes. The teachers felt that this understanding of the more severe dysfunctionality of the families and the students was causing them more problems in time allocation, for example linking students with the correct social service, and in dealing with discipline in the classroom. Teachers said that one child does not have the right to prevent another child from learning, yet some of the students are so disruptive that they indeed do detract from the teacher's ability to serve all students equally. PL94-142 guarantees some of these disruptive students a place in the regular classroom. The due process involved to exclude them from the mainstreamed classes sometimes takes months and large amounts of energy on the part of the classroom teacher. In one school, some teachers even went to the union to complain about the amount of time they were having to spend consulting with the special education teachers about some of their students. Other students who do not fall under the umbrella of any special program yet have phenomenal needs are also in regular classes. The State Department of Education recognizes that children of poverty have special needs, weighting each child of poverty with an additional .25 (Confederation, 1991, p. 7), and they have addressed this need by counting or weighting each child of poverty as an additional .25. Other categories that give additional funding are ESL and Special Education.

The district being studied has provided numerous resources, such as student management specialists (disciplinarians) and social workers or counselors in all of the elementary and middle schools, as well as additional resources in the high schools. Unfortunately, the classroom teachers do not always recognize these resources as a help but often as an add-on or detractor as their students are pulled out for the various programs. What some of the teachers in this study would prefer would be to receive more help in their own classroom and to lessen attention to some of these programs. Others prefer that less functional students be removed so that teachers could teach the rest of the students. The administrator is left with the responsibility of balancing the requirements of the law with the wishes of teachers. A delicate balance exists; communication and training with the teachers must be a component of this task for mutual satisfaction.

#### ADVICE FOR ADMINISTRATORS FROM TEACHERS

During the focus group, the question "if you were to give advice to an aspiring administrator, what would you suggest?" was asked. The interviews elicited several suggestions as well, and these suggestions were discussed in the workshop. Because of the uniqueness of some of the sites, some of the suggestions were offered only by one or two individuals. Other suggestions were made by many

teachers. Some of the suggestions made were unexpected and not all might even be practical. The site-based councils of the future may address some of these needs.

1. Do whatever is necessary to make us feel important and worthwhile. We need to feel valued, and if this means you buy business cards for us, then do it. Try saying one little thing to each of us each week.

2. Visit a counselor regularly. All people need to share their frustrations with someone in order to remain emotionally stable. One teacher interviewed had worked for an alcoholic while another had lived through her principal's divorce and mentioned that the whole building had gone through the principal's divorce. "An administrator brings into the school her personal problems because he cannot help but do so."

3. When there are several programs in a building, make sure that they all have some common meeting time to share concerns and to bond. Otherwise, it becomes an us/them situation, and problems result. If this meeting includes an academy (school within a school), which meets concurrently, then combine meetings once a month. If this includes day/night use of a common facility, then meet at the close of one session and beginning of the other. Those who share space must be in contact with each other.

4. Have clear job descriptions or written areas of responsibility charts and then, whenever possible, stick to

them. "It makes us feel that we know to whom to go for what, and then we do not feel that we are being given the run around."

5. Listen to us and either thoroughly explain why something cannot be done or work with us to implement our suggestion. Please do not just issue edicts. Be as empathetic as you are capable. Even when we are wrong, we need to feel that we have been heard. Involve us more, especially in the establishing of the policies and rules that we will be expected to follow. Let us fail, and adjust these policies as needed.

6. Remember that we are here for the students, so we want you to be here for the students also. The grading and homework policies need to be reviewed in light of our main purpose in being here. Interestingly, though, there were some differences of opinion on this issue and that is that some stated that the teachers are here for the students and that the administration should be here for the teachers.

7. Show emotion! Be a person and a friend. Take off your tie on occasion and get in there with us to get the job done. Be available for us when we need you, as a friend would be. Delegate if you have to in order to have the time for us. Say "hello" to us each day and as you pass us in the halls, just as you would a friend.

8. Learn to work with the rigid and the difficult people. Study us and approach us in our best way. Match personnel with jobs in ways that use our strengths.

9. Look at more alternatives for our students, such as half days, late arrivals and/or early dismissals, and work experience when necessary--just to keep a student connected with school. Be creative within the legal constrictions.

10. Hire teachers who have raised older children. They bring to the job a realistic perspective that the non-parent or parent of young children does not possess.

11. Become a child-oriented administrator and help your staff become more child-oriented instead of program oriented. We sometimes get so locked into multiple programs that the administration and evaluation of these programs', rather than what is truly best for the student, directs the students' day.

12. Set shared goals with the staff that actually serve a purpose and are not just for "show." Central office will not crumble, nor will administrators lose their jobs, if the latest fad is not grabbed onto immediately.

13. Visit our classrooms more so that you know what is going on in our rooms. This way, you can evaluate us more effectively, share our successes with us, sound more knowledgeable when talking with an upset parent, and support

us in a meaningful way when we are stressed out or overwhelmed.

14. Delegate and divide up your workload so that you are not frazzled or closeted in your office too much. Do what you say you will do and say no to that which you cannot effectively accomplish. Though we may want our administrators to be all things to all of us, we know that this goal is not possible, so pick those areas that you can and will support and then follow through.

15. Meet with our students' parents more often. After we have worked with students and have met with their parents, we need your administrative support. We sometimes need this support to keep a student in school, and sometimes we need this to remove a student after we have attempted and failed at numerous intervention strategies. Do not leave us stranded with an obnoxious parent or ask us to repeat those strategies that we have already, unsuccessfully attempted. Work with the parents for our benefit, and do not let the parents intimidate you.

16. Educate the entire staff on the purpose of new special programs as a means of helping those teachers involved in those programs become accepted by the rest of the staff. Share the frustrations and difficulties of the unique population that the special program is serving and learn how the general staff can help because, after all, "those kids" are really all of ours. In almost every case,

the specialists stated that they had to earn their own credibility with the staff and that they felt that the building principal could have helped this process by informing the staff of the laws and expectations involved and by offering inservice training on this program.

17. Help us form support groups that ease our frustrations and enable us to get on with the job of teaching. Administrators can assist by building time into the schedule in a number of ways and by dividing us up into smaller groups even for the dissemination of information so that we can ask questions in a less intimidating environment than in a whole building staff meeting. Also encourage district-wide curriculum meetings and/or grade level meetings so that we can share our successes and frustrations and pick up new ideas. Every year there is a new textbook adoption--so often we are still muddling through a relatively new book. Help us help each other.

18. Learn about those areas with which you are not familiar. For example if you came into administration with an Honors English/Activities Director background, then study the at-risk student and remedial reading, etc. Become knowledgeable about your population so that you can administrate more effectively. Visit the community in which you have been assigned, even if 20 years ago you used to play ball at our park. If there is a building goal of cooperative learning or assertive discipline, then take the

inservice classes with us so that you can be a resource working with us instead of watching us struggle through. Because of your ability to get into several different settings and your teaching experience, you will have information to share but not if you really do not know what the program is all about.

19. Protect our time by screening out any unnecessary paperwork or interruptions. We are here to teach, and you can help us be more effective with our students by screening interruptions for us.

Table III summarizes the findings presented in Chapter IV. Table III has four columns: "concerns" identified by interviewees, references in the "literature" to the issues raised by teachers, differences in the teacher "interviews" on the concerns depending on whether the subjects reported high levels of support (HST) or low (LST), and finally a priority listing of "recommendations" by the teachers to address the identified concerns.

Chapter V presents a discussion of these findings from several perspectives.



TABLE III  
CHAPTER IV SUMMARY

CONCERNS	LITERATURE	INTERVIEWS	RECOMMENDATIONS
1. A culture of caring needs to be created.	Goodlad (1984) and Lortie (1975) state that teachers have a right to a satisfying work place. Teachers experience greater work satisfaction and higher morale when they are viewed by their principals as the professionals they perceive themselves to be.	High Support Teachers (HST) stated that their principals gave them informal pats on the back. They felt respected as professionals and liked as people. Low Support Teachers (LST) said "my principal passes me in the hall and doesn't even say hello."	1) Administrators need to value teachers more and the teachers' suggestion that the administrator say "hi" each day or when passing in the halls is reasonable. 2) Requesting principals to visit classrooms more often is OK in elementary school but is not OK in high school due to large number of teachers. 3) The request to make honors classes larger in order to make remedial classes smaller is not reasonable because remedial classes are unmanageable.
2. Teachers have a minimum expectation of the managerial responsibilities of their principals and this minimum must be met in order for the principal to have the teachers' confidence.	Sergiovani (1984) discusses leadership vs. management. Four main task of administration: planning, organizing, leading, controlling. 2) NASPP study states good principals delegate, have a good assistant, concentrate on a few critical areas, and have confidence in subordinates.	HST reported frequent classroom observations, involvement in training, written thank you's, involvement with students as well as paperwork completion. LST were frustrated by no classroom observations, no student contact and slow response to written requests.	1) Administrators share job responsibilities with staff and then adhere to them. 2) Gently remind staff the ratio of staff to administrators. 3) Administrator has an open-door policy with restrictions. 4) Personal notes are sent often. 5) Administrator role-plays job. 6) Structure evaluations to include building goals. 7) Site-based councils set up in each building.
3. Principals need to involve teachers in establishing the buildings' goals.	Johnson (1990) refers to teachers' desire to have a voice in governance.	HST felt respected and were highly involved in the schools' decision-making process. LST did not feel involved nor was their input desired.	1) Site-based committees will solve some of these problems. 2) Training for everyone on facilitating site-based committees.

TABLE III  
CHAPTER IV SUMMARY  
(continued)

CONCERNS	LITERATURE	INTERVIEWS	RECOMMENDATIONS
4. When a teacher has exhausted all solutions for modifying disruptive behavior she/he wants the principal's help.	<p>1) NASSP study shows random principals as opposed to successful principals spend more time on student discipline.</p> <p>2) Capuzzi and Gross (1989) discuss school behavior "red flags" which helps identify at-risk students.</p> <p>3) Wehlege and Rutter (1986) discuss hopelessness cycle felt by at-risk students and how teachers contribute to this cycle.</p>	<p>HST stated that their principal met frequently with angry parents and disruptive students.</p> <p>LST felt frustrated that their principal would not meet with angry parents and repeatedly disruptive students and when they finally did meet, the principal wanted the teacher to "try more strategies."</p>	<p>1) The desire for administrative support with difficult parents is sometimes valid but as the workshop showed the entire concept of "due process" was foreign to many of them. Often there was a tolerance for disruptive behavior and then when the teacher's limit was reached and the teacher wanted the student removed, there had been no behavioral plan written nor call home.</p> <p>2) Conflict management training for both administrators and teachers.</p>
5. A need for support from peers was often mentioned and a perception that administration should help correct this problem.	<p>Johnson (1990), Lortie (1975), and Goodlad (1984) discuss this as a result of the isolation of teaching.</p> <p>2) Johnson (1990) and Bolman and Deal (1988) discuss importance of symbolic bonds.</p>	<p>HST cited examples such as Christmas parties in their homes as examples of facilitating friendships among peers.</p> <p>LST stated that their administrators did not schedule either classes or functions to facilitate support.</p>	<p>1) Pairing new teachers with experienced can break up cliques.</p> <p>2) Regular interactive faculty meetings and inservice rather than information relaying will help.</p> <p>3) Scheduling teachers so they can interact with others is not always reasonable given the resources available.</p> <p>4) Planned social activities are a valid expectation for teachers.</p> <p>5) Site-based committees will help some of this feeling.</p>

TABLE III  
CHAPTER IV SUMMARY  
(continued)

CONCERNS	LITERATURE	INTERVIEWS	RECOMMENDATIONS
6. Teachers want their administrators to communicate ideas, building goals, expectations and successes well.	<p>Sergiovani (1984) discusses unrelenting pace which is characteristic of public school administration and the number of responsibilities which have been added in recent years due to governmental regulations and increased social problems.</p> <p>2) NASSP study concludes that successful principals select how they spend their time.</p> <p>3) Smith and Andrews (1989) conclude that effective principals are good communicators.</p>	<p>Most of those interviewed expressed a lack of good communication skills on the part of their principals.</p> <p>HST wanted more sharing and LST felt there was very little sharing.</p>	<p>1) Principal tells staff his priorities and make delegations known.</p> <p>2) Interactive faculty meetings at which time questions may be asked.</p> <p>3) Networking so teachers do more of the sharing.</p> <p>4) Increased contact between principal and teacher.</p>
7. Teachers want to be able to access their principal.	<p>Johnson (1990) discusses this problem in relation to the isolation felt by many teachers.</p> <p>Butterworth (1981) states the social exchange between some individuals is better than with others.</p>	<p>HST stated that their administrators had an almost open-door policy for them</p> <p>LST were very frustrated at being unable to even "touch base" with their principal.</p> <p>This response elicited an equity issue in that within a given building some did have access while others did not.</p>	<p>1) Administration can set up "gripe" sessions.</p> <p>2) Interactive faculty meetings instead of informational meetings.</p> <p>3) Secretaries can schedule appointment and then make sure they are honored.</p> <p>4) Principal has "duty" station which enables both teachers and students to hold mini-conferences.</p>

TABLE III  
CHAPTER IV SUMMARY  
(continued)

CONCERNS	LITERATURE	INTERVIEWS	RECOMMENDATIONS
8. Teachers wanted their principals to know and understand at-risk students as well as the difficulty in teaching them.	Levin's (1972) research indicates severe difficulties of at-risk pupils.	HST expressed appreciation for their administrators willingness to work with them to help the reluctant learners succeed. LST expressed the frustration that teaching had become far more difficult since their administrator had been in the classroom.	1) Principal teaches "due process" to teachers so they do not perceive a lack of support when it is really a legal matter. 2) Round table discussions between teachers and administrators regarding students' needs and their needs. 3) More classroom visits by administrators (not necessarily the amount desired by teachers, but any increase might help.
9. Teachers wanted everyone who is assigned to the at-risk students to have special training.	Levin's (1989) accelerated schools for at-risk students places the responsibility for pupil success on the school. 2) Slavin, Karawelt, and Madden (1989) discuss adjusting the curriculum to best meet the needs of at-risk students.	ALL the teachers stated that in their initial teacher training they were not prepared for this population nor did their administrators have any. The teachers who had gone on to teach Special Education students did have some training.	1) School districts could use 30 of the 990 allowable inservice hours to train teachers to use effective strategies with at-risk students. This could include drug/alcohol information, child abuse, behavior modification, classroom management. 2) Universities must provide experience and training with at-risk youth for aspiring teachers.

TABLE III  
CHAPTER IV SUMMARY  
(continued)

CONCERNS	LITERATURE	INTERVIEWS	RECOMMENDATIONS
10. Teachers want the current evaluation system to provide feedback.	Johnson's (1990) study produced similar results with only 5 of the 75 public school teachers praising supervisors and evaluations.	All teachers stated that the evaluation system is not providing feedback. LST and HST stated that the principal does not even observe them teach, nor were building goals included.	Some problems are too complicated to explore in this study or for that matter solutions are too difficult to attain with any study. 1) Some relief could be achieved by principals observing at least the minimum number of times. 2) Building goals should be included in the process. 3) If nothing else, administrators could add a few more positive comments to evaluations alleviate some of the lack of recognition problems facing teachers.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

This study centers on the topic of identifying public school administrative practices that support teachers of urban students at risk of not completing high school or fulfilling their potentials for life success. Information for the study came from the interviews of 18 teachers identified as uncommonly successful with urban at-risk students. Interviewees were identified by nomination and confirmation by objective data. This study is a follow up study to an earlier investigation of uncommonly successful teachers of at-risk pupils (Peterson, Bennet, & Sherman, 1991).

This chapter discusses the findings presented in the previous chapter from six perspectives. First, Table III in Chapter IV presented certain distinctions between the recommendations of teachers who perceived high levels of administrator support and those who reported low levels of administrator support. This chapter summarizes the characteristics of administrators in these two categories. Second, this chapter discusses the central findings of this study from the perspective of Johnson's (1990) constellation of workplace variables--with the alteration of the principal

as a central influence. Third, "priorities" in the recommendations presented in Table III are made explicit and discussed. Fourth, certain biases inherent in the methodology and analysis of this study are discussed. Fifth, the recommendations for practice produced in this study are discussed in terms of how changes in context may qualify or alter the priorities given by teachers. The sixth discussion centers on the question of apparent neediness of teachers in this study for human support in their professional practice. Finally, this chapter concludes with recommendations for future research.

#### DISCUSSION OF DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN HIGH SUPPORT AND LOW SUPPORT ADMINISTRATORS

In Table III, Chapter IV recommendations for administrators, teacher recommendations differed as to whether they had high levels of administrator support or low levels. For example, high support teachers (HST) recommended more administrator intervention (e.g., with parents, classroom observation) while low support teachers (LST) did not. Table III contains some 11 other differences in recommendation according to perceived level of support. This finding represents an important qualifier in teacher recommendations for administrative practice. That is, teachers tended to recommend certain practices when they

experienced strong support from their administrators, and other practices when the support seemed low.

Analysis of the interviews of this study produced a number of clear differences in administrator behaviors which led to reports of high support or low support. The following characteristics of administrators were offered by teachers in distinguishing between high and low support.

Characteristics of teacher-reported high support administrators:

1. Involve teachers in decision-making process. Treat them as the professionals they believe themselves to be.
2. Trust teachers' judgment regarding students.
3. Frequently contact teachers on both a professional level and on a social level.
4. Facilitate peer teacher support by arranging either social events and/or time with colleagues.
5. Meet with difficult parents and disruptive students when requested by teachers.
6. Become involved in the building goals and programs to the degree necessary to be a resource for the teachers.
7. Are available for consultation and support when needed. This might take the form of immediate discipline, ability to schedule an appointment, or simply listening to a frustrated teacher.



8. Give informal and frequent praise and encouragement. This can be "nice bulletin board" to "I know you have a difficult group this year and it appears that you're doing a nice job with them."

9. Show concern for the students. Teachers are there for the kids, and they want their administrators to feel similarly. This does not mean that a large amount of time must be spent with the students but rather an attitude of liking students should be displayed.

10. Stand up to the bureaucracy to support the beliefs of their teachers.

Characteristics of teacher-reported low support administrators:

1. Do not involve teachers in decision making and simply report decisions made in faculty meetings.

2. Question the previous disciplinary measures employed with either all students or with specific students.

3. Are hidden in their offices and either no social events are scheduled or they are not attended.

4. Hold infrequent faculty meetings; arrange schedules so as to reduce contact among faculty.

5. Avoid meeting with disruptive students or angry parents. There are certain parents who can intimidate some teachers and these teachers need and want their administrator in the room during the conference.

6. Are unwilling to observe in classrooms, learn about those programs adopted by the building or promoted by the administration.

7. Pass teachers in the hall and do not even say "hello" or who never give an occasional pat on the back.

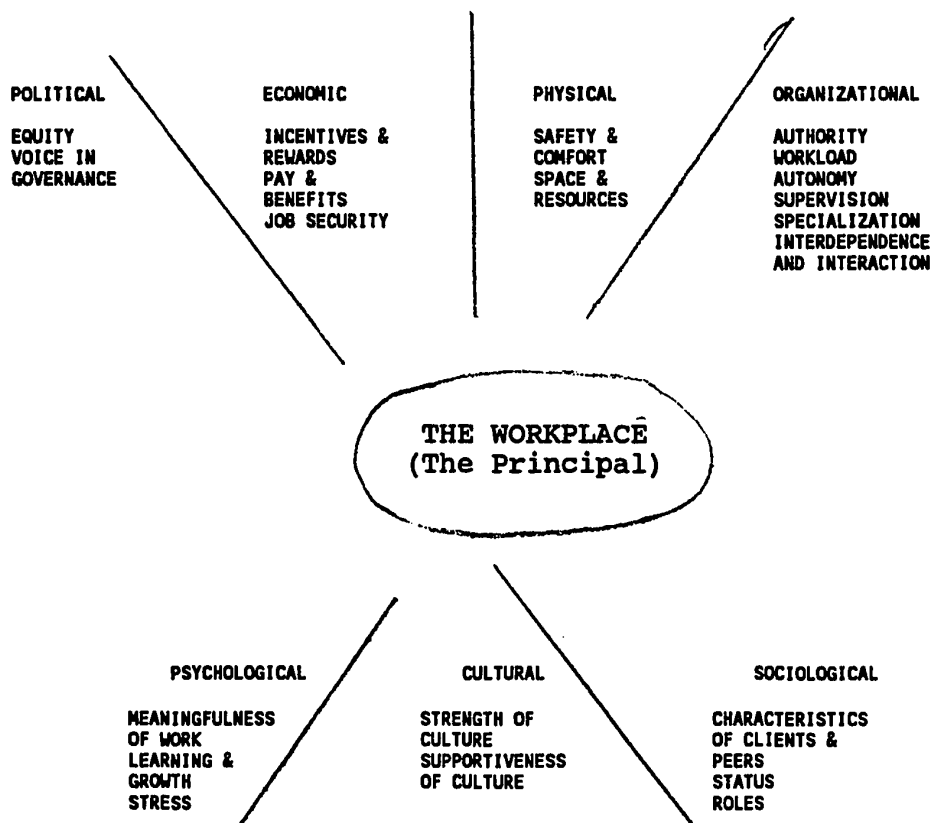
8. Appear to avoid students or appear afraid of students.

9. Become paper pushers and generally avoid people.

10. Avoid conflicts at all costs.

#### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PERSPECTIVE OF JOHNSON'S WORKPLACE INFLUENCES

Johnson's (1990) "Constellation of workplace variables" model presented in Chapter II (see Figure 4) is an important and helpful framework for understanding the perceptions of teachers as to how administrators support (or fail to support) their work with urban at-risk students. This section will summarize and discuss the views and recommendations of teachers in this study using each variable of the Johnson model (politics, economics, physical, organization, psychological, culture, and sociology).



**Figure 4.** Johnson's (1990) constellation of workplace variables (the principal).

### Politics

Summary and Discussion. Equity: Most teachers in this study mentioned the concept of an "in-group." If you were "in" you had certain privileges, such as easy access to the principal's office, automatic respect, and friendship with the principal. For the purposes of this study, Webster's (1984) definition of a friend is used. A friend is

a person whom one knows well and is fond of; close acquaintance; a person on the same side in a struggle; one who is not an enemy or foe; ally; a supporter or sympathizer; something thought of as like a friend in being helpful, reliable, etc. (p. 559)

A friend does not necessarily have to be someone you would have over for dinner, but is more than an acquaintance. The "value" of having the principal as a friend is not as important as the "benefit" acquired as the result of having the principal as a friend. Those teachers who reported that they did not have access to their principal's office and that the principal did not even say "hi" to them in the halls expressed a desire to be treated as a friend by their principal. In some cases, one might even describe the behavior on the part of the principals as rude or lacking in refinement. It is possible that some of these principals are aware neither of their behavior nor its impact.

Voice in Governance: The teachers in this study varied in their values for being heard and having one's opinion valued. Some said administrators spend too much time listening to teachers and did not make decisions soon enough. Others wanted to have a voice with administration. Others wanted at least an explanation of why their ideas were rejected by their administrators.

Recommendations.

- \* Be available.
- \* Be a friend.

An effective solution to the problem of access to the principal is to have a council that meets weekly to discuss issues brought to it by staff members. Also teachers in one specific building appreciate a 30-minute "gripe" session

once a week for anyone who wants to be heard by the administration. Site-based management is beginning to occur in this district, but is taking on too many different forms to discuss in this study. Feeling heard and having their opinions valued was important to the teachers in this study. Listening to teachers and respecting their opinions are strategies administrators can learn and implement.

The concept of being a friend to one's staff is difficult for many more introverted principals, but basic courtesies of greeting can be implemented easily. The request by some of the teachers in this study to have their administrators say one pleasant word each week to every staff member is reasonable. One method that would facilitate this amenity efficiently would be for the administrator to be at the check-in counter during the 20 minutes that the majority of the staff arrive in the morning. Though this time would vary from building to building, this practice would probably place the administrators in contact with the majority of the staff. If time constraints prevented daily greetings, then even once or twice a week would help. Another possibility is to rotate with one's assistant/vice principals so that they too are in contact with the staff.

Another effective practice is to have a stationary location during a set time, such as in the hall in front of the main door during lunch time or as the students are

leaving at the end of the day. Critical business should never be conducted in such a public arena, but many day-to-day questions can be discussed in this arena--or at least, if necessary, official appointments determined.

Principals need to allow their secretaries to make appointments for them. In this study, there were some administrators who liked to make their own appointments and "catching" them in order to make the appointment became a task in itself.

Bonding activities at faculty meetings can break down barriers, especially for those few individuals who never go to the formally organized social activities. Johnson (1990) recognizes isolation in teaching and concludes that these activities place teachers in proximity not only to their administrators but also to their colleagues. When small problems occur, it is usually easier to approach someone more familiar than a stranger. Once the problem has become large, then approaching the administration in an adversarial position seems the only solution.

### Economics

Summary and Discussion. Two areas were identified: recognition and resources.

Recognition: Recognition is a difficult task for school administrators, since there are not the natural means of recognition, such as one experiences as a lawyer winning cases or as a physician saving a life. Teachers who felt

supported by their administrators reported receiving accolades and words of encouragement from them. Teachers who did not feel supported mentioned a lack of contact with their administrators. If an administrator is not in contact with a teacher, then it is difficult to give the casual and meaningful praise that was so desired by the teachers in this study.

Resources: The allocation of space, educational assistants, and class size were the only resources that surfaced in this study. Pay and materials were not mentioned except to state that they had sufficient materials and the pay appears adequate. The feeling that a teacher placed in the basement felt because the administration was attempting to hide him, or because he was not important, must be addressed as does the class size issue. The allocation of Educational Assistants in this district is driven in most cases by the Chapter 1 budget and guidelines or by special education mandates. In the allocation of FTE for a building, the cost of a given staff member is not a factor, but in the case of Chapter 1 personnel, the actual cost of an employee comes out of the Chapter 1 budget for that building. Consequently, as teachers become more experienced and cost too much, common practice in this district is to eliminate the educational assistants or to hire a less expensive teacher for that position. Due to contract restrictions, sometimes the movement of a teacher

to another program is not possible, so the educational assistant is eliminated. Sometimes an educational assistant becomes too expensive, and then the program cannot afford new materials, thus creating another problem.

Recommendations.

- \* Visit and praise effectively.

- \* Educate teachers on administrator's tasks and procedures.

The three problems under the auspices of "economics" have very different solutions. The ability to give valued praise is an interpersonal skill that can be learned. Glass and Smith (1982) show that for praise to be meaningful, it must be specific and measured. No administrators in this study are in danger of giving too much praise, so the amount of praise is not a problem, but in order for an administrator to give specific praise, the administrator must know what is happening in the teachers' classrooms. This then necessitates visitation by the administrator to classrooms on a regular basis. The unfortunate practice in some of the buildings in this study of having teachers write their own evaluation with the administrator simply signing the evaluation makes a mockery of the system and appears to devalue the teacher. The message that the teacher receives is "my room, my students, and my program are not worth learning about." The teacher who mentioned that educators from all over the nation have been visiting his classroom,



yet his own administrators have never been in to watch a lesson, felt that the building administration did not care about his program. This may not be the case at all. In fact, the tendency on the part of administrators is to spend their time managing crises and those programs that are functioning well are ignored in the essence of time. Nonetheless, like any other aspect of life, good relationships and programs must be given some attention in order to succeed.

During the workshop part of this study, several teachers asked: "Why can't administrators do their paperwork after the students and teachers are gone?" This question indicates the teachers lack of knowledge of administrative responsibilities. Much of what an administrator does is contact agencies and parents. These contacts must be conducted during normal office hours of the agencies. Also, after school is when many parents are available to meet, so those hours are often consumed. To address this misunderstanding between administrators and teachers, administrators could explain their duties to teachers, perhaps during a faculty meeting or during joint training. If teachers truly understood the demands placed on the average administrator then this misunderstanding might be resolved, thereby reducing some frustration. The problem of visiting classrooms is simply one of delegating other duties to make the time. Visiting classrooms must

become a priority. The district has mandated two classroom observations every other year. This number appears to be insufficient for these teachers, and their view should not be dismissed. Rather, casual visits should be added and formal visits should occur annually.

### Physical

Summary and Discussion. Space and resources are the two identified concerns expressed by those interviewed.

Space: To the teachers in this study, the assignment of basement rooms appeared to reflect an attitude on the part of the administration of not caring at-risk students. The perception of being neglected created problems for the teachers.

Resources: The only resource mentioned frequently by the teachers in this study that is lacking is the assignment of educational assistants. According to the funding formula in the district being studied, an educational assistant equates to one-half of a teacher, or two educational assistants equate to one teacher. Staff is allocated to the building, and each building makes the decision, in compliance with the union contract, regarding exactly how this staff is distributed. The exception to this formula is in the use of Chapter 1 funds. Money is distributed to a building based on the number of students receiving free or reduced lunch. Once the money is allocated, then the individual teachers and educational assistants are hired

according to the perceived needs of the administrators. The actual salary, plus benefits of anyone hired in this program, comes directly out of the total budget. This practice encourages hiring inexperienced teachers or releasing educational assistants in order to retain more expensive, more experienced teachers.

Recommendations.

- \* Discuss room assignments with affected staff.
- \* Provide Educational Assistants.
- \* Readjust district funding for Chapter 1 staff.

The allocation of room space could become a joint effort on the part of the administration and the teachers. An administrator can sit down with a building room plan and ask the teacher where the class should be placed. As the teacher says "room ???," then the administrator asks the obvious question, "where would we place program XYZ?" It might be more helpful to assemble all of the programs that use small rooms and have a group discussion. Most likely, some creative solutions will emerge, but at the very least, an increased awareness of the complexity of the problem will result. Just knowing that the condition one must work in is the best of all possible solutions often makes a worker feel better. Having been heard often makes one feel valued. This was a perceived missing link in the support provided by many administrators.

The solution to the problem of educational assistants could be managed differently. The district budget could supplement the Chapter 1 budget when a teacher becomes too expensive to pay for within the building allocation. Current practice is to determine Chapter 1 eligibility by the number of students receiving free/reduced lunch. Once eligibility is determined, then the budget is based on the number of students with reading and math scores below an established score. To be eligible for Chapter 1 services, a student must be deficient at least two grade levels and not be a severe behavioral problem. As one can quickly compute, the need for services does not change just because the teacher becomes more experienced and thus more expensive. Once a program is established, then it should be allowed to function with the district budget absorbing the difference. This change would reduce the common practice of placing new, inexperienced teachers in programs such as Chapter 1.

### Organization

Summary and Discussion. The five organizational variables identified are authority, workload, autonomy, supervision, and interdependence.

**Authority:** Authority is a problem for some of the teachers in this study as they do not know which administrator is responsible for what area. In some cases, teachers want their principal to assume certain responsibilities and let the assistant principal assume

other responsibilities. This shift would reduce the stress for one administrator, and it would allow the teachers to go directly to the administrator most able to supply a solution for a specific problem. Most of the teachers in this study understood that when one administrator is away from the building then another must cover.

**Workload:** Workload was mentioned in some schools when the administrator attempted to involve the staff in too many projects. The necessary additional meetings added work to what the teachers considered an already stressful job, i.e., teaching at-risk students.

**Autonomy:** Administrators in this study gave the teachers much autonomy. However, sometimes this autonomy was perceived by the teacher as a lack of interest in them on the part of the administrator. Again the problem here appears to be a deficiency in interpersonal skills on the part of the administrator. Several teachers perceived that as long as they did not irritate any parents or students, then whatever they did was satisfactory. Another concern expressed by some of the teachers was that "programs" are more important than children. The teachers expressed a desire for a balance in which the administrators neither micro-managed nor ignored them. They also wanted to be treated like the professionals they perceived themselves to be.

**Supervision:** It is difficult to separate autonomy from supervision in this study because the teachers' criticisms that the administrators ignore them automatically create autonomy. Strict adherence to programs necessitates close supervision. Again, a balance between micro-managing and ignoring is important.

**Interdependence and Interaction:** The isolation variable experienced by almost every teacher in this study is too big a factor in workplace satisfaction to be dismissed lightly. According to Johnson (1990), a perfect school includes intellectual sharing as well as collaborative planning and emotional support. There is an ever present tension between the good of the individual classroom and the good of the total school. An outstanding teacher in a failing school is probably not going to produce outstanding students. Coordination with other teachers is necessary, and yet this appeared rarely among the teachers in this study. Most of the teachers in this study stated that there are colleagues in their buildings with whom they NEVER interact, yet they all share the same students. In most cases, a teacher mentioned one or two individuals who provided their support. In many cases, that was their total interaction with other staff except for an occasional social event attended by some of the faculty. The natural obstacles that reduce contact with colleagues, such as different lunch breaks and the physical layout of many

buildings into isolated wings, can be reduced by diligent effort on the part of the administrator.

Recommendations.

- \* Design an organizational chart and maintain it.
- \* Manage time and delegate responsibility.
- \* Break isolation.

The solutions to some of the organizational problems lie in the interpersonal style of the administrators. If the administrators in a building decide who is going to administrate which areas, make these decisions known to the staff, and then seriously adhere to them, then many of the frustrations experienced by the teachers in this study might be eliminated. The feeling of having one's problem passed on to someone else and then to another person is not only costly in time but also indicative of problems in communication.

The problems that have resulted because of poor supervision are probably the easiest to correct by better time management and especially by delegation. The teacher evaluation system, at a minimum, requires administrators to observe teachers two times every other year. None of the teachers who expressed a lack of administrator support were visited by their administrators more than the minimum, and in many cases they have never been observed. The teachers in this study do not feel that an administrator can adequately support them either as individuals or with

parents and students without having observed their classrooms. As long as this feeling persists, there is no alternative but for the administrators to adhere to the district mandate and observe teachers. It is also a recommendation from this research that administrators make specific, meaningful comments after the classroom contact and show the teachers they really do value them as individuals as well as valuing their work. Administrators simply need to treat their staff as they would any other friend. The many of the feelings of nonsupport might disappear.

The problem of isolation is real and must be addressed. Some solutions to isolation include helping staff organize social gatherings, but these gatherings alone do not solve the problem. One teacher suggested that the administrator fix up the faculty lounge, so that it could be a pleasant place to relax. This is a basic expectation and should not be overlooked in overcrowded buildings. One school in this study does not have a faculty lounge, and there are students in the lunchroom at all times because the students cook the meals. Another school has students serve up the food and take the money, so even during lunch the teachers cannot find respite from students. Administrators can look for creative solutions, and often Booster clubs will help create an inviting faculty lounge.



Bonding activities as a part of the regular faculty meetings help teachers get to know each other better. Careful placement of personnel on committees is another strategy that encourages interaction among teachers. If teachers are allowed to sign up for committees with the stipulation that one person is from each cluster, pod, grade level or whatever configuration the school is divided into, this process allows staff to interact with those not next door to them.

The scheduling of common prep periods is another excellent means of allowing teachers to share ideas and get to know each other better. This scheduling also enables coaches, fine arts directors, and those taking classes at the local university to attend meetings because they do not all have to occur after school hours.

### Psychological

Summary and Discussion. The three identified psychological variables are meaningfulness of work, learning and growth, and stress.

**Meaningfulness of Work:** The teachers in this study know that what they are doing is important and that they make a difference. Some expressed the satisfaction of knowing that they do something well that many people could not do at all. In spite of society's current lack of respect for the teaching profession, the teachers of urban at-risk students know they are both needed and successful.

They do, however, want their administrators to value students as much as they do. A few individuals felt that the teachers in the school are for the students and that the principal is there for the teachers. It should not have to be an either-or-situation.

**Learning and Growth:** The teachers expressed appreciation for all the inservice their administrators have conducted because, without exception, they completed their undergraduate programs with no training in how to teach urban at-risk students. There was a problem in the teachers' understanding of the responsibilities of an administrator (how much and in what areas can teachers expect help). A few teachers requested more inservice on contemporary issues such as children with fetal alcohol syndrome, recognizing drug/alcohol impacted students, and cooperative learning.

**Stress:** In this study stress refers to the conflicting obligations experienced by the teachers and how well the workplace is able to accommodate them. By the very nature of the shorter day, concurrent with their children's day, many teachers are able to reduce the conflict of working and parenting. Other problems related to stress such as children's illness are managed through the use of substitute teachers.

### Recommendations.

\* Show teachers they are valued. Self analyze and then work to improve areas of weakness.

The only schools where meaningfulness of work is a problem are those in which the administration appears to respect and value the honors programs and honors teachers more than the at-risk programs and teachers. The teachers in this study indicated that the background of their administrator determined the amount of administrative support that was given to their classes. Principals who had taught special education classes were the most sensitive to the demands of the at-risk pupils. Principals who had been activities directors or honors English teachers to often lack the understanding to administrate at-risk students properly. Administrators need to be trained in this area or placed in other schools. An example of the lack of understanding of at-risk students is reflected in the practice of determining that honors classes should be smaller than remedial classes because of the amount of paperwork generated by honors students. Many alternative schools advocate small classes for dysfunctional students.

### Culture

Training in interpersonal skills is necessary in those cases where administrators do not make teachers feel valued. A course in counseling component is absent from the administrator's training program at many universities. Sometimes one course on group dynamics in which

administrators learn how to obtain consensus is the only interpersonal skills training given. "Counseling for Administrators" might be an excellent addition to the current program of study for administrators in training as well as for those currently administrating.

Summary and Discussion. The two variables Johnson (1990) identified under culture for this study include the strengths of culture and supportiveness of culture. The teachers in this study indicated that they wanted their principal to have a clear, consensual vision, and to follow through with input from the staff. Without a clear vision the school appeared to flounder with many teachers going in several different directions. Clear expectations for student behavior are as important as academic goals and must be present for the teachers to feel comfortable. Some of the teachers expressed frustration with their administrators because, when the time came to make a decision and proceed on with the agreed upon goal the principal was unable or unwilling to make decisions. In other buildings, there was a feeling that the building goals were determined unilaterally by the principal. These goals appeared to some of the teachers to be for the benefit of the central administration, not necessarily for the teachers and the students residing in their building.

Grasping the latest fad in education was not perceived as a positive by this group of teachers. They wanted to

wait to see if the newest idea would truly be best for their unique population. Because of a huge failure in a now-defunct high school over ten years ago, many of these teachers are skeptical of new programs. Most of the schools in this study, though, are involved in restructuring to some degree and are not opposed to change.

**Supportiveness of Culture:** Support is the main focus of this study and has been mentioned repeatedly.

Administrators must show teachers they are valued first as people and secondly as workers. In some buildings there is a perception that the principal is looking for ways to 'catch' teachers making mistakes. This obviously is not a supportive culture. Some comments regarding the central office administration indicate that the only time a teacher ever sees a central office administrator is when someone makes a mistake.

#### Recommendations.

- \* Value teachers as people first and as educators second.
- \* Mutually decide upon building goals and then support them.
- \* Educate teachers on administrative vocabulary and processes.

**Strength of Culture:** Teaching is a demanding job under constant public scrutiny. The principal can be essential in his or her support of teachers under these

conditions. Teachers make mistakes, how these are managed determines the amount of support felt. Respect for the individual teacher, and separating the mistake from the person adds to a culture of support. Educating teachers who have made mistakes, and then expecting improvement creates a positive culture.

Administrators need to decide with their staff the goals for their building. Without consensus, there is resentment by the teachers and a lack of cooperation perceived by the administrators. The concept of "due process" must be explained well by the principal. Only then can teachers help achieve the building's behavioral goals without violating the students' rights. academic goals are more easily determined by both parties, as long as both are familiar with current research and the Director of Instruction's (DOI) expectations are shared. In one building in this study, the Director of Instruction had given the principal the building's goals in advance and the faculty was never informed of the goals. The faculty proceeded under the belief that they were to design their own goals, never once knowing about the DOI's goals. Once agreed upon, goals must be part of the evaluation system. Only that which is evaluated is valued, and if there is no mention of the building's goals during the evaluation process, then there is a clear message that they must not be very important.

Finally, training necessary for the faculty to achieve the mutually agreed upon goals must be available. The principal should attend this training. Teachers in this study want their principal to know what they are supposed to be doing, so that their principal can act as a resource and not just as an interested observer. The majority of principals are respected, and thought to have knowledge and experience not held by every teacher. Their participation in the training necessary to achieve the building's goals, coupled with their experience and access to the inside of so many different classrooms, can be an excellent resource.

### Sociology

Summary and Discussion. Three sociological variables identified in this study are characteristics of clients--specifically urban at-risk students, characteristics of peers, and status.

**Characteristics of Clients:** The difficulty in meeting the needs of the at-risk population is clearly substantiated by legislative appropriation of additional funding for children of poverty. An additional .25 weight (that is, a child defined as poor is counted as 1.25 students) is allocated because these students require many services due to dysfunctional family situations. In some interviews, teachers stated that their administrators did not understand the educational nor sociological problems of this group. Rather, they tended to place too many in a class, or asked

insensitive questions such as "Just why can't these kids read?"

**Characteristics of Peers:** The people with whom one works often determine how one defines the job. Teachers act according to how they think their peers expect them to act. This behavior is, in part, how the culture is transmitted to the new teachers. The isolation of teaching creates some problems because teachers are not in contact with each other as much as is often necessary to satisfy their emotional or social needs. Common processes are often not written down, or they are written in a huge manual too unmanageable to comprehend.

**Status:** The status of teachers has dropped considerably according to those interviewed. Teachers do not feel the community support they once experienced, consequently they feel the need for the principal to meet with the parents. Often the media report low test scores for children of poverty or color (or both) in a condemning tone that contributes to the general public's appearance of having lost confidence in the profession. The status of the at-risk teacher, in contrast to the status of an honors teacher, was mentioned by some of the participants as being significantly lower. The feeling that there is a price, in terms of reduced status, for teaching at-risk students was perceived by some teachers. This perception is unfortunate



because the case can be made that this population is most needy of the best teachers the profession has to offer.

**Roles:** Work roles shape the behavior of both the individual and those around him. In this study, teachers assigned varying roles to themselves and to their administrators. In some cases the teachers saw themselves as quite subservient to their principal. In other cases they saw themselves as equal and, consequently, wanted more participation in the decision making.

The role of the assistant principal at the elementary and middle school level appeared very confusing to some of the teachers in this study. In some cases, it appeared that the assistant was "one of the teachers" except that she performed more "administrative" type duties, whereas in other situations it was very clearly an "us" and "them" mentality with the assistant principal being accorded almost full status with the principal. The reported confidence level of the teacher often defined the role he or she assigned to the teacher, the assistant principal and the principal. In high schools, the roles of the teacher, vice principal, and principal are more clearly defined by their duties. This helps reduce the confusion regarding roles, but does not always eliminate it.

#### Recommendations for Administrators.

- \* Actively share accomplishments and difficulties of teaching at-risk students with the entire staff.

- \* Obtain training in unfamiliar areas.

- \* Adjust FTE allocation to reflect 1.25 for poverty students.

- \* Universities train for urban administrator problems, including counseling courses.

- \* Educate staff on administrators' duties and responsibilities and how teachers can help.

- \* Be accessible.

- \* Improve communication.

At-risk students provide exceptional challenges. To expect administrators with limited experiences (e.g., a former coach from an affluent school) to be prepared for an assignment in an at-risk school is unreasonable. Central Office administrators need to be diligent in assignment of administrators. There are times when a specific management style is needed in a specific building, and it is believed by district leaders that this management style is a more important consideration than awareness of the needs of at-risk students. The result is assignment of a principal successful in one dimension, but lacking in ability to support teachers of at-risk pupils.

Other assistance for administrators could include more training about dysfunctional youth and the services available. This training could be accomplished in such inservices as the Principals Academy and in the preservice program. The majority of administrators rise to the

administrative ranks through the coaching/athletic director route or honors teacher/department chairman/activities director route at the middle and high school level. At the elementary level, one often becomes a lead teacher first. This position, though, might be as a primary teacher. The needs of intermediate students are quite different. A few administrators were special education or Chapter 1 teachers, but the majority of those assume assignments at the district level, not in buildings. A one-time, two-hour workshop is not enough training to become aware of the needs of at-risk students, but it is a beginning. Because of the quantity of these students and the normal rotation of administrators, this training would be helpful for all administrators. Even those administrators who do not work in at-risk sites could benefit from this information. Every school has some students at-risk. Furthermore, an awareness of the complexities of a colleague's workload sometimes reduces one's own frustrations.

The district could also mandate a class size for remedial students based on the state allocation of units of financial support per person. An average student counts for funding purposes as 1.0. An ESL student counts as 1.25, a child of poverty as 1.25 and a minimally disabled special education student counts as 1.5. This formula is used for funding but not for determining class sizes. In the district studied, the teacher's contract states that a

teacher may have no more than 160 student contacts per day. There is no mention of the type of students who are included in this count. If at-risk students counted as 1.25, then four at-risk students would be equivalent to five average students, and the class sizes would be lower.

Often, the poor attendance of this population makes it appear as if a remedial teacher does not have as many students when, in reality, the return of an absent student results in individual teacher time spent catching the student up to where the class is functioning. This process takes more time and effort than correcting a few extra papers, as in an honors class. With an awareness of these demands on their teachers, most administrators would change or modify their current practices to accommodate the teacher's needs. To hold administrators responsible without having prepared them seems unreasonable as well.

Teacher training institutions must also assume some responsibility for the training of administrators on the problems encountered with the at-risk population. Rarely are courses on urban at-risk problems required for administrators during their training. While administrators in rural areas may not need these insights, availability of such training is highly desirable. Another need common to all schools is the administration of an efficient special education program. Keeping abreast of the ever-changing federal laws in this domain is time-consuming but important.

The teachers in this study wished that their administrators were more knowledgeable in this area.

#### GENERAL OVERVIEW

##### Major Areas of Concern

- \* Weak interpersonal skills.
- \* Poor communication.
- \* Lack of training for both administrators and teachers.

In an overview of major ideas that emerged from the interviews, the following 12 thoughts can be divided into three general areas for improvement. The most significant deficiency reported by the teachers in this study is weak interpersonal skills. The second set of problems is communication, and the area of least concern is simply a lack of training on specific matters that would enable administrators to more effectively support their teachers of at-risk students. These divisions are not discrete. Communication and interpersonal skills, for example, are very closely linked. An introverted administrator might very well share less information informally, because it is not natural to be verbal. This study is based on the premise that well-educated administrators can be trained, can share more information on a regular basis, and can learn more effective interpersonal skills.

### Interpersonal Skills

What appears to be most important to the teachers in this study is feeling valued as a person. Comments such as "If I have to make a choice I would prefer to have my principal take the time to say good morning and notice me than to have all of the paperwork done to perfection and on time" and "I would rather be valued as a person first and my work secondly" or "Easy access to my administrator is very important to me"--indicate that teachers want to be treated as a friend. Simple common courtesy is all that many asked for in their workplace.

### Staff Training

Another recommendation for administrators is to educate the staff on the duties and responsibilities of administrators. Why should the tasks of administration be one of the best kept secrets of the school district? While some information is confidential, most of the information and business that occurs during the course of a day can easily be shared with the staff. Teachers in this study suggested that the administrators do their paperwork after the students and teachers leave. This suggestion is unreasonable for two major reasons. First, there is too much to do "after hours" and, second, many duties must be done during normal business hours which conflict with the students' and staff's time. Furthermore, there is no time when everyone is gone. Typically, when the administrator

arrives in the morning, some staff member is already working, and when administrators leave at night, there are often faculty members still there. Nevertheless, some duties could be delegated to other personnel, including teachers, so that administrators could visit classrooms more often.

#### Administrative Training

The request for administrators to be skilled in dealing with difficult people is valid, and it is a skill which can be taught. Definite strategies can be learned and employed to ease the situation with dysfunctional people, and a district Employee Assistant Plan can help with the counseling for disturbed employees. These plans are under-used; education about their availability will help in some difficult situations.

The relationship of being a friend is difficult for some administrators to achieve because of the adversarial relationship between the teacher's union and management. In addition, sometimes administrators create an adversarial position because of their elusiveness and unapproachability. If the principal and the teachers feel free to walk into each others' workplace and discuss issues--both positive and negative--then many problems might be resolved before they escalated to the level of a grievance. Some grievances are so minor that they appear petty when, in fact, all the teachers say they wanted was to be heard and acknowledged.

Most grievances are lost by the teacher, but the residual ill feeling lasts for years.

### Communication

Access to the principal is an easy problem to solve. After the administrator has created an atmosphere of approachability, then a system appropriate for the specific site needs to be designed, put into place, and followed. This system may include allowing the secretary to make appointments for the principal and then the principal keeps these appointments. This schedule should also include attendance at as many social functions of the faculty and activities for the students as is humanly possible. A third strategy is to appear in the halls and to visit classrooms regularly. Contrarily, it is not uncommon to find an administrator on duty in the morning in a relatively empty cafeteria and available to talk.

The lack of administrative support which appears to be the result of poor communication is common. However, it is a problem that can be solved with diligence. First the problem must be acknowledged. Then steps can be taken toward positive communication patterns.

Three problems concerning communication identified in this study are the lack of understanding regarding central office, the lack of visits to the classrooms, and the isolation factor. The central office staff of any large urban district with 100 schools cannot anticipate all of the



needs of the schools. Most often, they respond to crises and problems; occasionally they provide training on new programs or equipment. Any building principal can inform the teachers of those services offered by the central staff, thereby reducing the perception that central office is there only when someone makes a mistake. This information enables the staff to have access to the central office's wonderful resources themselves. The mystique surrounding the Central Office can be disabling to teachers.

The problem of isolation indigenous to teaching can be alleviated by bonding activities arranged by the administrator by teachers, or by both. Faculty meetings, as unpopular as they might be, place teachers in contact with each other. Careful scheduling of teachers in various clusters so they have a preparation period together, or assigning all the teachers in a grade preparation time together, or cross grading, or other configurations that help teachers to interact are healthy. Isolation can be a natural, but it is not an insurmountable barrier. An astute administrator should be able to assist the staff in providing activities that reduce the barriers that create isolation.

#### DIFFERENCES BETWEEN JOHNSON AND BENNET STUDIES

Though many of the teachers in the Johnson (1990) study and this study expressed similar frustrations and

successes, the teachers in the Johnson study appear to accept more clearly defined roles for their principals:

Principals of public-school systems have long exemplified middle managers caught between the demands of their supervisors and their subordinates, obliged to enact practices that they cannot control. (p. 340)

The teachers in the Johnson study mentioned that poor principals were politically preoccupied, administratively driven, and instructionally inept and that good principals succeeded in some areas but not in others. The perception of the loci of control in the principals in the Johnson study was more external, whereas in this study there was not one teacher who did not think that the principal had control. The number of suggestions (only some of which are contained in this paper) supports this belief. The power of the union is mentioned as more of a factor in this study than in the Johnson study, but this difference might be more related to the size of the districts studied in Johnson's study. Often the larger the district, the more powerful the union must become to control management. The teachers in this study were more apt to express incompetence on the part of their administrators in making the correct decisions on time management and incompetence in interpersonal skills. Many in the Johnson study express a lack of respect for their principal's ability to teach, to direct curriculum, or to evaluate teachers. In the Johnson study teachers perceive that principalships are more political

appointments, whereas, in this study, some teachers lament "if he would only treat us as a friend, then we would respect him." The principal's competence in the classroom never once surfaced in any interview in this study. Rather, teachers commented, "We want him to attend out workshops so that he can help us implement the new program," and "we want him to evaluate the new program." The principalship as a political appointment was never hinted at in this study, which could be considered a positive for the district studied. Hope for the future "if they could just redefine their time" was often expressed in this study, while in the Johnson study, 9 of the 75 public school teachers interviewed have plans to leave the profession. In this study, the most change desired was for a different school within the district.

The suggestions elicited from the Johnson (1990) study are more global than those in this study. First, Johnson states that policy makers must secure sufficient funds to ensure that public schools are well-financed. Money was not mentioned as an issue in this study. The research for this study was conducted before the passage of a state tax limitation affecting the amount of money available for the public schools. Had these interviews taken place a couple years after funding was reduced, then the responses might well be different. Johnson does not indicate the number of

schools interviewed who might be experiencing this phenomenon.

Second, Johnson (1990) suggests a decentralized administration. She suggests moving decision making and training down to the level closest to the students. The teachers in this study, as evidenced in their responses to question number 4, are hardly even aware of the services offered by the central administration or of who performs these services. Their lack of awareness supports Johnson's contention that decentralization is an improvement.

Third, Johnson (1990) recommends more high-order thinking skills to be taught than are currently required. The reform to increase the basic skills did not improve the quality of education. Curriculum issues of this nature were only mentioned in a couple of sites. One site, which has implemented "Math in the Mind's Eye," expressed a concern that their administrators had never been in to visit their classroom. This oversight was perceived as the administrators' lack of support for all their hard work. A few others mentioned a lack of understanding of the difficult task of teaching the reluctant learner to read. For the most part, though, curriculum issues relating to higher-order versus basic skills simply did not surface from the interview protocol used.

Finally, Johnson (1990) suggests increased parental involvement. This suggestion was also not a common

recommendation by any of those interviewed in this study. In contrast, in this study, teachers frequently mention a lack of administrative support in dealing with difficult parents, but no one suggested additional parent involvement. The suggestion that earned the most support in both studies is to increase the respect for the professionalism of teachers. Johnson states

schools should rely more on the professional expertise of teachers by granting them greater influence in what they teach and how their schools are run. In turn, teachers and their leaders should take steps to increase their responsibility for managing their schools and assessing the performance of their peers. (p. 337)

In conclusion, the Johnson (1990) and Butterworth (1981) models support the teachers in this study in their belief that the administrator has the ability to affect the teachers' workplace more than Johnson's teachers believe. Johnson places the workplace at the center of the diagram (see Figure 1), and all the variables that affect the workplace are placed around this term. This study shows that the administrator could be placed at the center because the administrator has the ability to affect virtually all of the variables.

Some variables, such as salary, are outside the prerogative of the principal, but allocation of extended responsibility pay is within the jurisdiction of the principal. The extent of voice in the school, within the constraints of the contract and some district guidelines is

up to the discretion of the principal. For example, a voice in governance can be increased by site-based councils.

Non-verbal and non-financial rewards, such as praise, are within the domain of the administrator to a much greater degree than other players in the educational setting. No one can substitute for the building administrators in giving recognition for jobs well done. Peer and central office support do not obviate the desire for support from building administrators.

The assignment of rooms is the responsibility of the building administrators. For example, in the case of the teacher who mentions that her office is an old bathroom that stills smells, the principal could give instructions to have the room cleaned. How the building money is allocated could be a shared decision. How much the staff spends on red construction paper, relative to the amount spent on the copy machine is an administrative decision. Assignment of specific students to specific classrooms in the elementary schools, and assignment of specific courses are the prerogatives of the building administrators given the specific population.

Stress is often the result of how problems and mistakes are managed by the administration. The teacher who allows the sink to overflow, ruining the newly painted ceiling below, is probably not going to remember any better to monitor the water flow if she is yelled at than if she is

gently admonished for leaving the room. Stress resulting from the loud verbal reprimand may well induce more mistakes. Again, it is the building administrator who determines how this problem is managed.

School climate can be affected by administrators. The culture of a building is, in part, affected by the style of leadership of the administrators. An autocratic style leads to a more layered organization, such as lead teacher and powerful department chairpersons, more than a collegial leadership style might. The hiring and firing of teachers may not be a matter of control by building principals, but in most cases it is. Some administrators are unwilling or unable to place teachers on plans of assistance and are thereby unable to remove dysfunctional teachers. Nonetheless, the respect given to teachers by the principal affects their feelings of status. The building principal can affect only how he or she perceives teachers' abilities and can not affect larger perceptions about teacher value in the society. But if teachers are treated while at work as if they are capable and respected, their sense of status is enhanced.

The teachers interviewed for this study indicated their administrators' power to affect their workplace both in their comments and in their suggestions. This difference is fundamental to the understanding of this study and the justification for conducting this study. Johnson's (1990)

identification of the workplace variables is valuable, but ascertaining the principals' amount of control over these variables is vital to helping future and practicing administrators make the necessary changes in their own practices.

Butterworth (1981) acknowledges the principals' control over these workplace variables in her social-exchange theory. Interesting to note, though, is that at no time during any of the interviews conducted for this study, did anyone mention the teachers' responsibilities to their administrators. These successful teachers saw their administrators as giving to them, but there was no mention of any return. The closest hint of an exchange of services in this study is in the statement "they leave me alone if my [students'] parents do not bother them." This is not perceived as empowerment nor respect for a job well done but, rather, as how to avoid being hassled by the principal.. Butterworth says,

Feelings of support associated with the exchange of valued resources appear to sustain a relationship [R]esources which maintain authority emerge as particularly critical to those in a school setting. It is important to note that this authority support is a need shared by both principals and teachers. (p. 1,070)

In loosely coupled organizations such as schools, this informal process of social exchange is important. The exchange of information, considered communication support, is important in maintaining a high level of professionalism



among teachers. Butterworth mentions that those teachers who perceived high support expressed a frequent number of informal conversations and tended to discuss a wider variety of topics with their administrators than did the lower supported teachers. According to Butterworth, principals are unable to lead if no one follows, and a lack of information reduces the desire to be led.

#### DISCUSSION OF PRIORITIES IN TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADMINISTRATOR PRACTICES

The findings of this study of teacher perceptions led to a series of recommendations for administrators presented in Chapter IV in Table III. The recommendations are intended to be useful to practicing administrators, further analysis of these recommendations is important for theoretical reasons. Some of the teachers' concerns were greater than others. For example, teachers placed a culture of caring ahead of practices that showed merely negative consequences (e.g., principal accessibility), and far ahead of practices of smooth logistics. This sense of priority in the recommendations adds additional perspective to the findings.

#### SETTING PRIORITIES AMONG THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations presented in Table III are listed in the priority offered by the interviewees. The Concerns

(first column) can best be described in four levels of priority. Concern 1 is in Level 1, or the highest priority. Concerns 2 and 3 are in Level 2 (a lower priority) and concerns 4, 5, and 6 are in Level 3. Concerns 7-10 are more logistical and are in Level 4, the lowest priority.

Level 1: culture of caring (Concern #1) was the preeminent recommendation. Without this institutional climate the other recommendations were seen as merely "going through the motions." This recommendation centered on the person to person values expressed in the work place. This theme included (a) how teachers were treated, (b) how teachers interacted with administrators, and (c) how students were treated as persons.

Level 2: included two basic administrator role functions in the organization, namely "institutional manager competence" (Concern #2) and "organizational goal setter and facilitator" (Concern #3). These concerns and recommendations were second in priority. They addressed teacher needs for the administrator to be an effective member of the school team as a manager. While other adults in the school are seen to be quite important, the administrator has the significant roles of planning, leading, controlling, and organizing and protecting the direction of the school organization.

Level 3: involved more mundane, but necessary, administrator functions, including "administrative back up

support" (Concern #4), "administrative support for good teacher peer relations" (Concern #5), and "communication of ideas, goals, expectations and rewards" (Concern #6). These three recommendations addressed extensions of basic role functions from Level 2. Level 3 recommendations were less important than the way in which people treated each other in the school setting, and the way in which the administrator performed his or her basic leadership and implementation of school direction. However, Level 3 recommendations were described as key influences on teacher effectiveness.

Level 4: included more logistical recommendations which could actively facilitate the higher level priorities. "Access to administrators" (Concern #7), "a practical working knowledge of at-risk pupils" (Concern #8), "effective, specific training for work with at-risk pupils" (Concern #9), and "evaluation that provides useful feedback" (Concern #10) showed practical payoffs that enabled teachers to get their work done and avoid barriers to effectiveness.

In summary, these four levels proceed from personal interaction to the place of administrative role in the educational organization to extensions of the administrator role, and, finally, to implementations as key to teacher effectiveness. This discussion will continue with examples of specific recommendations in a priority listing. These examples are important because they translate the

generalizations of this discussion to understandable examples for practitioners.

Examples for Prioritization  
of Recommendations

Concern #1: Culture of Caring

1. Everyone needs to be noticed and recognized.

Teachers are not unique in this need.

2. The law mandates observations by administrators for teacher evaluation. More important for teachers, is that they want to share their successes in a personal transaction as a part of their administrator observations.

3. Sacrificing any group in the school (students, teachers, staff, parents) for the benefit of another group cannot be justified.

4. Each student, even one showing failure and rebellion, has the right to the best education available.

Concern #2: Institutional Manager Competence

1. Administrators need to identify the areas for which they are responsible. This way teachers know to whom to go for help. Otherwise, they feel they are being passed around because no one cares.

2. Gentle reminders (as opposed to harsh dictates) place the needs of both teachers and administrators in perspective.

3. An open-door policy enables unhappy teachers to be heard, calms them down and makes them feel understood.

4. Recognition is too rare in at-risk schools.

Administrators must provide recognition for teachers.

5. Role playing is a useful means of sharing the perspectives of both teachers and administrators.

6. That which is not evaluated is not perceived as valued.

7. Site-based councils can help teachers make their expectations known for their administrators.

#### Concern #3: Organizational Goal Setter and Facilitator

Site-council committees, by their very composition, involve teachers, and this training can help teachers and administrators establish goals together.

#### Concern #4: Administrative Backup Support

1. The entire concept of "due process" must be shared with teachers and parents, and then followed. Inappropriate student behavior should be dealt with early and not be tolerated until the teacher has burned out. Progressive discipline with numerous parent conferences is a must. Then, after all the necessary steps have been documented, the exclusion of a disruptive student is a viable option which the administrator must consider. Without the proper documentation, the administrator may not exclude a student. Teachers often perceive this non-exclusion of disruptive students as non-support.

2. Conflict management is a discrete set of steps to be followed to diffuse anger and resolve conflicts. Many disruptive incidents can be avoided through this process.

Concern #5: Support for Good Peer Teacher Relations

1. Pairing a new teacher with an experienced teacher gives recognition to the experienced teacher and can prevent many "new-teacher errors." They can teach many shortcuts and time saving strategies to save a new teacher's sanity in the most difficult of years.

2. As teachers interact they not only reinforce each other by recognizing the good things each other does, but they teach each other as well.

3. Some scheduling of common preps can be accomplished, but often in elementary schools one teacher preps while another teaches or the music teacher teaches so the classroom teacher can prep.

4. Administrators can plan social activities which break down teacher/administrator barriers. Also, attendance at most of these social activities is a minimal expectation for administrators. It is easier to go into the office of an individual with whom one has socialized informally than it is to approach a stranger's office.

5. The process of establishing and maintaining site-councils will force some additional interaction among peers.

**Concern #6: Communication of Ideas, Goals, Expectations, and Rewards**

1. Declaration of the school board's goals, the central administration goals and the principal's goals for a building establishes trust and promotes success. In many cases, if the staff knows the board's and the DOI's goals, they will adopt these as their goals which help the principal succeed in meeting these goals.

2. In an interactive faculty meeting, clarification can be made as faculty begin to understand the expectations. Goals are often written somewhat globally and specifics need to be explained.

3. Some faculty members will understand and accept certain goals faster and more willingly than others. Allow those individuals to "carry" the rest rather than always placing the burden on the administration.

4. As principals and teachers interact, incidental information concerning the building's goals will be shared. The lack of compliance will also be noted.

**Concern #7: Access to Administrators**

1. Teachers need to have the opportunity to complain to the person most able to solve the problem or at least explain the rationale; teachers are less apt to complain elsewhere.

2. Faculty meetings in which individuals can express their frustrations, exchange ideas, and ask questions, improve communication.

3. Principals who allow their secretaries to schedule appointments for them, enable more access for teachers.

4. Being seen in the halls, especially at a designated location, enables faculty the opportunity to stop by for quick questions which can reduce the number of appointments necessary.

**Concern #8: Practical Knowledge of Working with At-Risk Pupils**

1. "Due process" is crucial for effective management of both students and teachers. If teachers follow due process then the documentation will be done correctly. The principal may then proceed with the next step which may be school exclusion. When due process has not been followed, the principal must request documentation. Teachers often perceive this request for more documentation as non-support from their administrator.

2. The process of roundtable discussions, or sometimes referred to as "staffings," educate administrators not well-versed in at-risk students.

3. Administrators visiting classrooms will become more familiar with at-risk students as they observe their behavior in the various rooms.



**Concern #9: Specific Training for Work with At-Risk Pupils**

1. For practicing teachers and administrators, some inservice such as on child abuse is currently being done in the district studied. Specific training for preservice teachers in dealing with at-risk pupils is necessary.

2. Universities are currently adding experience with at-risk students as part of the basic training.

**Concern #10: Teacher Evaluation that Provides Useful Feedback**

Administrator observations of the classroom are a minimum expectation; no teacher should have to request one. Building goals should be included and positive comments, when warranted, are a must when teachers receive little recognition from parents and students.

**DISCUSSION OF RESEARCHER BIAS  
IN THIS STUDY**

The methods of this study generated some researcher bias in the findings, analysis, and reporting of this study. As described in Chapter III, Marshall and Rossman (1989) and Borg and Gall (1983) outline weaknesses inherent in studies using elite interviews as performed in this study. Beyond these methodological limitations, selective perception during interviews and the reporting of priorities for administrator practices provided particular opportunities for introduction of biases by this particular researcher.

The researcher responsible for most of the interviews and all of the analyses was an urban high school vice principal with considerable responsibilities for teacher supervision and interaction. The school where she is employed has upwards of 80% of students in a category of at-risk (60% of students are eligible for reduced or free lunches). Thus, interviewer and analyst could be expected to have an administrator perspective with preferences for productive ideas and viewpoints toward service for at-risk pupils. The biases may have been expressed in notetaking, setting priorities, expressing the ideas uncovered in this study and most definitely in the recommendations.

#### DISCUSSION OF CONTEXTS AND QUALIFIERS THAT AFFECT TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Generalizations were presented about which administrator strategies are more important than others. However, it should be recognized that the recommendations (and their priority) can be significantly affected by the specific setting of the school. For example, a school that has unusual district recognition for success in academics may be relieved of needs for internal, administrator-to-teacher rewards. Thus, the context of specific school setting may qualify the advice given by teachers in this study.

Such contextual differences were not sought in this study because the original design aimed to discover teacher

perspectives across a wide range of site variation.

However, three contextual differences were found in the teacher interviews. First, the "level taught," elementary, middle or high school, made a difference. For example, the role of instructional leadership varies according to level because of the subject matter expertise which is expected of the principal (high in elementary, lower in middle and high school). Second, the "size of school" made a difference in teacher expectations. For example, in small schools there was a greater expectation for administrator knowledge of what happened in each classroom. Third, as described in an earlier section of this chapter, differences in teachers who felt high or low "levels of administrator support" influenced the advice of teachers.

While these three patterns emerged from the interviews, other contextual dynamics were not mentioned but might be expected to influence teacher priorities or recommendations. These include differences in public and private schools (Johnson, 1990), high vs. low achievement schools (e.g., college attendance, SAT scores), schools in transition vs. stable schools (e.g., administrator tenure, teacher turnover), and schools with high parent participation and schools with low parent involvement and concern (Lortie, 1975). Each of these hypothetical variables could be explored in future research concerning teacher perceptions.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDING OF HIGH LEVELS OF  
TEACHER REPORTED NEEDS FOR POSITIVE  
INTERPERSONAL SUPPORT

The finding of highest priority for a "culture of caring" (Concern #1) has interesting implications. As reported in Chapter IV, the theme of interpersonal support, appreciation, recognition, and reassurance was strong in the teacher interviews. This finding raises questions of how interpersonal support works in the dynamics of administrator/teacher interactions and why this teacher sample appeared so "needy" in terms of human support.

Lortie (1975) lends insight to this finding when he describes the lack of feedback, recognition and rewards provided for public school teachers. He outlines the "endemic uncertainty" and isolation that is the plight of classroom teachers. Lortie describes their lack of "authoritative reassurance." These conditions probably lead to high need for person to person contact, and make interpersonal support a highest priority.

A second reason for the expressed need for interpersonal support in this study lies in the population served by these teachers. In general, students and parents in a category described as at risk do not provide teachers with many of the reassurances, recognitions, rewards, and appreciations available for teachers of general populations (Capuzzi & Gross, 1989). Appreciations for academic success, college entrance, SAT scores, school participation,

and job success are less frequent for teachers of at-risk students. Even internally driven teachers eventually need socially accepted rewards for their efforts (Lortie, 1975). Lacking these external rewards, it is likely that teachers in this sample turn to administrators for recognition of their efforts and results.

A final possible explanation for the finding of high need for interpersonal support comes from the specific recommendation presented in Chapter IV to include "care for all groups" (teachers, students, staff and parents) and "care for 'difficult' students" (failing and rebellious). What these teachers appear to call for is an educative environment which emphasizes caring. In other words, the culture of caring is not merely a supportive working climate for teachers, but is a recognition of the significant role of human caring in the entire educative process. The conclusion of these teachers is that teaching and learning are highly human and personal experiences, and that the creation of an organizational culture of caring one for another is the highest priority for a successful administrator.

Thus, the appearance of at-risk teachers as an unusually "needy" group may be a combination of the fact of relatively little feedback experienced by "all" teachers, work with a population of teachers and parents that is inherently low in professional support, "and" a professional

recognition of the role of human caring in the conduct of teaching and learning.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study identifies a number of needs for additional research on the topic of administrators of teachers of at-risk pupils.

One finding of the study is the limited perspective that teachers have of administrator responsibilities and realities. A line of productive research may be to explore the preparation of teachers to understand and thoughtfully use administrative services. Just as expectations for administrators were identified in this study, administrators have needs and expectations for support from teachers. Future research might well focus on ways of preparing teachers to support administrators and to better participate in the reciprocal support exchanges and transactions described by Butterworth (1981).

A second area of needed research is to focus on hypothetical variables that might affect teacher advice for administrator support. Contexts identified in this study, and described in an earlier section of this chapter, include levels of parent participation, school stability, school success, and public or private school settings.

The topic of "humor" arose frequently in discussions of positive administrator attributes. For example, the

focus group review of findings indicated that humor was a top priority for administrator effectiveness. This suggests a fruitful topic for additional study. (How many principals does it take to . . .?)

Administrator reactions to the findings, recommendations, and discussions would be interesting. The views presented in this study are those of teachers. Administrator perspectives on the same topics could illuminate the dynamics of administrator/teacher interactions. One useful product might be reciprocal recommendations of administrators on how teachers might best enhance administrator support in a variety of settings and contexts.

While administrator support is important, it could be productive to identify possible alternatives. For example, teacher networks could assume responsibility for teacher recognition and leadership. The purpose would not be to displace principals, but to lessen some responsibility that teachers in this study placed on administrators and to increase the notoriously scant reward structure of public school teaching (Lortie, 1975).

A post-study replication might prove interesting after the newly installed site councils have been in place for two to three years. Some of the teachers' perceptions of their involvement and worth might be significantly different as a result of site-based management experience.

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**APPENDIX A**

**PRELIMINARY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

**Preliminary Interview Questions**

**Teacher Name**

**Interviewer**

**Site/Assignment**

**Date**

**Initial Interview Or Follow-Up Interview**

**Teaching Style**

**Class Size**

**Ethnic Code**

**General Ethnic code of Students In Class**

1. In what ways are you supported by your building administrators?
2. What additional supports would you appreciate?
3. Is there any inservice not currently available that you feel you need?
4. In what ways do you feel that you are supported by the Central Administration?
- 5a. How do you and your colleagues support each other?

- 5b. How can the building administration help such support occur more?
6. How do your administrators empower you?
7. How do your administrators help provide a positive climate in your building?
8. Are there any changes or additions that would improve the school climate in your building?
9. Do you feel that there is any difference in how you are supported in relation to how your colleagues are supported because of the uniqueness of your at-risk population?
- Example: Do you get more or less recognition than others?
- More or less of the available resources?
10. Were there any courses in your teacher preparation program that especially prepared you to teach the at-risk population?
11. Is there any training that you feel would help your administrators support you more?

12. In what ways does the current teacher evaluation system give you the feedback that you need to improve your teaching?
13. Are your successes as a teacher of at-risk students adequately recognized by the current teacher evaluation system?
14. What are the rewards of being a teacher of at-risk students?
15. Any additional comments?