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#### ABSTRACT

With a renewed emphasis on student achievement, school improvement, and shared decision making, and in an effort to create and maintain effective schools, researchers try to delineate those characteristics that positively affect student learning and behavior. In exploring the different views that persons have regarding the characteristics of effective schools, the authors reviewed research studies to identify factors considered to be determinants of an effective school. Specific topic areas examined were the views of teachers, parents, and administrators regarding effective schools, as well as an examination of the related research literature. Consistent across the 4 areas was the importance of a positive school climate and strong leadership. Implications for educational leaders are provided.

In the last 2 decades, local, state, and national media have challenged the effectiveness of schools and have made parents and educators more aware of the ineffectiveness within and inequities among some schools. Demographic data reflect disparities in schools regarding such variables as family income levels, racial representation, and effective use of limited resources. An example of increased attention to education reform occurred in 1997 when Congress appropriated funds to support schools interested in implementing research-based reform programs (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1997). Successful reform strategies (i.e., those reform strategies that result in improved student achievement) reflect clear goals, commitment, collaboration, support, and leadership.

Designing an effective school is the vision and driving force behind much of the research in the field of education. Time (Wulf et al., 1997) devoted 26 pages to a series of articles titled "What Makes a Good School? Special Report." Lemann (1997) appealed to readers in the final article to guarantee to every American child the key ingredients of a good education. Yet, the key ingredients that Lemann proposed, in direct opposition to the beliefs of many Americans, were government money and external government control.

Understanding stakeholder viewpoints (Scieszka, 1996) has been beneficial to educational leaders who want to address school improvement issues. A number of the questions in "The 1996 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward Public Schools" were designed to determine how well the public is informed on education issues (Elam, Rose, & Gallup, 1996). The results were that the public has been affected negatively by distorted, biased, or inadequate media coverage, especially in the areas

of dropout rate, number and cost of special education students, and the international standings of American students. Boards of education and the public they serve have disagreed often on which issues are most important (Cohan, 1993). Additional Gallup polls on education (Elam, 1990; Elam, Rose, & Gallup, 1993; Rose et al., 1997) accentuated the need to analyze clearly the factors that people believe are the most important indicators of a good school.

## METHOD

In this study, we explore the beliefs that parents, teachers, and others have regarding the characteristics of effective schools. This investigation was conducted through extensive searches of journal articles, textbooks, and on-line materials from the ERIC Clearinghouse, GALILEO, and web-based search engines. We used relevant materials that were published or presented within the last 25 years. Specifically, we reviewed numerous research studies to identify factors considered by different stakeholders (i.e., teachers, parents, administrators) to be determinants of an effective school. We examined the views of teachers, parents, and administrators regarding effective schools and effective school research. Embedded within each section are critical analyses. Finally, implications for school leaders are discussed.

Blase and Kirby (1992) presented unique detailed portrayals from a teacher's viewpoint of what effective principals (i.e., an essential component of effective schools) do to improve teacher motivation, commitment, and innovation in order to enhance teachers' ability to help students achieve high academic and social goals. Similarly, Wilson and Cameron (1996) conducted a qualitative study in Australia of student-teacher beliefs concerning effective teaching. Comments from students' unstructured journals traced how they moved from a teacher-centered to a pupil-centered view of instruction, from a personal to a professional view of relationships with pupils, and from a controlled to a holistic view of classroom management. More than 70 categories evolved from the coded data representing teacher views of effective instruction, management, and relationships. Wilson and Cameron suggested that educators, given the research on pupil-teacher relations in models of effective teaching, should encourage people-centered, rather than managerial, perspectives.

Scieszka (1996) expanded the research into teachers' views of effective schools by studying the key indicators of effective rural elementary schools. In this investigation, rural Vermont teachers agreed that the following phrases were indicative of effective schools: (a) strong leadership, (b) safe, orderly environment, (c) clearly defined curriculum and goals, (d) parent involvement, (e) high expectations, (f) monitoring student progress, and (g) professional staff development. One final point made by Scieszka was that some teachers disagreed with a basic tenet of the effective schools movement--that all students can learn and can master the skills needed to be successful in school.

Rock (1988) found that high expectations by teachers for student performance were significantly related to reading achievement when controlled for socioeconomic status (SES). In contrast to Rock's

study, Venrick (1995) stated that teachers' views of the importance of a positive school climate were statistically related to student achievement test performance, regardless of SES. Other than that finding, Venrick discovered little evidence that teachers' beliefs of effective school characteristics were strongly related to student achievement.

Some teachers are much more willing and interested in working with parents than others, and parents are quick to notice this difference. Teachers' responses on "The Fourth Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of Teacher Attitudes Toward the Public Schools" reflected that teachers were at odds with parents; 70% of the 714 teacher respondents gave parents Cs and Ds for their efforts to raise their children (Langdon, 1997). Only 41% of the teachers believed that parents who were told their child was misbehaving in class would take the teacher's side. An overwhelming majority of the teachers (69%) were opposed to President Clinton's call for new national tests in reading and mathematics. According to Kashdan (1997), that finding may indicate that teachers do not seem to share the public's sense of urgency about higher standards. From the teachers' perspective, order and civility, not higher standards, are essential elements of effective schooling. Kauffman (1997) found that teachers were most concerned with lack of motivation and apathy from their students.

The literature on teachers' views regarding effective schools indicates that they recognize the importance of effective leadership and people-centered management. Teachers expressed concern regarding (a) lack of parent involvement and support that they believed to be serious problems that interfere with their ability to teach students and (b) students' ability to learn. Also found was teacher disagreement with one of the basic tenets of the effective schools movement--that all children can learn. That disagreement may be cause for concern.

## PARENTS' VIEWS REGARDING EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

Factors indicative of an effective school have been highlighted in articles in which parents' concerns about school choice issues have been expressed. Martinez, Thomas, and Kemerer (1994) noted that parents' school choices were based on educational quality; a finding that conflicted with prior studies in which school choice often was based on nonacademic reasons related to convenience, the general school environment, or student activities.

Grandmont (1997) stated that parent involvement is more indicative of a child's success in school than any other factor, but he recognized that many parents who would like to participate in school activities were too busy, tired, or stressed to do so. Conveying the value of parent involvement is a critical role in creating a good school (Bushweller, 1996; Education Commission of the States, 1996; Griffith, 1996; Lopez & Schultz, 1996; Mills, 1997; Myhan, 1996; Roe & Drake, 1980; Solo, 1997). Herrera (1996) stressed that parent participation and involvement is a vital component of an effective multicultural program. Effective promotion of parent partnerships is often one of the hallmarks of an effective school. Van Der Burg (1987) suggested that parents who are active within the school system should become

acquainted with research on effective schools to become more knowledgeable about making informed decisions regarding appropriate school goals and practices. For example, the term time on task would need to be clarified specifically for parents with little familiarity of instructional language. Whereas high student achievement was an indicator of an effective school for administrators, parent responses in Van Der Burg's study suggested that meeting the needs of individual students on a personal level was a more important component of an effective school.

Using nationally recognized schools in her sample, Van Der Burg (1987) focused on differentiating characteristics in effective schools by surveying parents. The parents in Van Der Burg's study indicated that the following phrases were indicative of effective schools: (a) orderly, safe environment, (b) frequent monitoring of student progress, (c) emphasis on basic skills, (d) school climate, (e) philosophy and mission statement, (f) time on task, (g) high expectations, (h) socioeconomic variables, (i) adequate facility, (j) parent involvement, (k) strong leadership, (l) development of staff, and (m) support services. Those parents also ranked strong leadership first out of 13 domains as necessary to establish an effective elementary school. Staff development was ranked sixth, and parent involvement was ranked fourth by the elementary parents.

Nevelle (1994) used a qualitative, case-study approach to obtain parents' beliefs of factors that most positively affected student learning and behavior within the schools. The open-ended questions in Nevelle's study, similar to the final two questions in Van Der Burg's (1987) study, contained responses regarding the role of the instructional leader, school climate, monitoring of student progress, evidence of high expectations, parent involvement, and the school mission. Nevelle cited three key factors most frequently noted by parents that positively affect student learning and behavior: (a) positive teachers/staff, (b) atmosphere, and (c) recognition. In agreement with the parents in Nevelle's study, the school board members in Moran's study (1995) emphasized the importance of nurturing the talents and the individuality of each child in establishing an effective school. Johnson (1996) concurred with Moran (1995) and Nevelle (1994) in acknowledging that recognition of individuals is a characteristic perceived to be present in effective schools.

Morrison (1988) recognized that parents have become more forceful in their demand for quality education and that schools and other agencies have responded by seeking ways to involve parents. Specific legislation, especially in relation to programs that receive state and federal funds, mandate parent involvement. Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, and Chapter I guidelines mandated parent involvement when services are provided by federal funds (Morrison, 1988). The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 mandated that Head Start programs require maximum feasible participation of the families served; the Head Start Policy manual specified performance standards for four areas of parent involvement (Gestwicki, 1992). Also, Zehr (1997) and Johnson (1995) urged schools to involve parents by recognizing that once persons become connected with a school, they tend to continue to help. Forde and Butler (1996) recognized that when local citizens volunteer in schools, they feel ownership of the schools and their views of the district improve.

The National Education Data Resource Center (1995) collected data on whether parents' views of their schools differ when they choose the school for their child. Parents who chose schools were more likely

than parents who did not to be satisfied with the school their children attended. Eighty-two percent of private school parents and 61% of parents who chose a public school were very satisfied with the schools their children attended, compared with 52% for parents with a child in an assigned public school. When surveyed in 1993, 47% of parents responding stated that their choice of where they lived was influenced by where their child would go to school (Glenn, 1998; National Education Data Resource Center, 1995).

Meador (1997) reviewed results of a telephone survey of 20,792 parents concerning their attitudes on school practices, effective and ineffective, and found that parents rated schools very well in two areas: letting parents know how children were doing between report card times and making them aware of opportunities to volunteer at school. The size of the school size also appeared to affect survey results; parents of children in smaller schools reported more favorable school practices than did parents of children in larger schools. Parent education reflected differences in levels of parent satisfaction with school practices. Parents who had not completed high school, as compared with parents who had graduated from high school, technical school, or college, reported that more practices were implemented very well. De Bello and Guez (1996) found that parents do not have an accurate perception of their children's learning styles, so they are unaware of the study environments that enhance learning-style strengths and lead to an increase in achievement.

Scieszka (1996) found that rural parents, to a higher degree than rural teachers, believe that elementary schools with parent involvement are the most effective. Teachers in rural areas needed to be sensitized to those parent beliefs and administrators needed to find ways to increase communication and parent participation. Griswold (1989) found that when parents indicated their beliefs of effective school practices, there were no differences in their gender or education level.

Griswold (1989) conducted a telephone survey with parents to determine their views of effective elementary schools characteristics. Similar to Wiebe (1991) and Nevelle (1994), Griswold identified the following effectiveness indicators: (a) building leadership, (b) instructional leadership, (c) school climate, (d) high expectations for behavior and academics, and (e) monitoring/assessing students. From Griswold's study, two indicators of effective schools that parents unanimously agreed upon were that schools and classrooms must be safe and comfortable and that parents need to be kept informed about their child's progress.

Mink (1996) focused entirely on parents as customers in a study designed to determine what parents believed were the most important issues of customer service in a public school. Results of the study were to provide practicing administrators information to foster the school improvement process by comparing importance scores with satisfaction scores. The 10 dimensions of customer service measured by Mink were tangibles, courtesy, security, access, communication, reliability, responsiveness, credibility, competence, and understanding the customer. Parent focus groups were one of the vehicles for gathering information. Approaching customer service in a school setting following those dimensions was a unique use of a business tool.

Maeroff (1989) heightened parent awareness when he proposed that selecting a school for a child was one of the most important decisions a family would make. With 90% of the nation's elementary and secondary school students attending public schools, school choice is usually linked closely to the selection of a home. Unless the family chooses a private or parochial school, the location of the home usually will determine which school the children must attend. Maeroff noted that the quality of the public schools is an important consideration to all homeowners, with or without children, because real estate values are almost always affected by the perception of school quality. Cohl (1996) and Heath and Vik (1996) encouraged administrators to work on bonding the schools to the community and extending school decision making to parents and other community members. By participating in school activities, stakeholders would be more likely to recognize and respect what is good in schools.

Bushweller (1995) reviewed results of a study undertaken by the Institute for Educational Leadership, which investigated issues of most concern to parents about their children's education. Sixty-four percent of the parents were concerned about the quality of teachers, 26% with the number of students in each class, 20% with school safety, 18% with quality of teaching materials, 16% with availability of computers and other technological resources, 10% with the school's budget, and 3% with the condition of the school buildings. In addition, Bushweller noted that parents saw lack of time as the stumbling block to more involvement in their children's education, even though 70% of the parents said they checked almost every day to see if their children had completed their homework. Cottrell (1991) found evidence that parents of both elementary and secondary students value principals' critical leadership behaviors for providing effective learning environments.

#### ADMINISTRATORS' VIEWS REGARDING EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

In analyzing effective schools, one variable that should not be overlooked is the site administrator (Barth, 1990; DeSpain & Livingston, 1996; Donaldson & Marnik, 1995; DuFour 1991; Schulman, 1995; Squires, 1984; Starratt, 1995; Stolp, 1994; Stolp & Smith, 1995). Using nationally recognized schools in her sample, Van Der Burg (1987) focused on differentiating characteristics in effective schools by surveying administrators. Strong leadership ranked first out of 13 domains as necessary to establish an effective school for elementary administrators; socioeconomic variables were ranked lowest. The elementary administrators ranked staff development, sixth, and parent involvement, eighth.

Blase and Kirby (1992, p. 3) emphasized the following factors associated with strong school leadership, which have often been regarded as caveats of an effective school: initiative, confidence, tolerance for ambiguity, analytic abilities, resourcefulness, vision, democratic-participatory style, listening, problem-centeredness, openness, time management skills, high expectations, knowledge of curriculum, and ability to allocate resources effectively.

In Wiebe's 1991 study, principals regarded instructional leadership as being most essential to increase test scores. Wiebe reported further that the respective order of priorities, according to principals, was

as follows: (a) clear school mission, (b) safe and orderly environment, (c) high expectations, (d) student time on task, (e) home-school relations, and (f) monitoring student progress. Wiebe emphasized that previous research has yet to identify a particular school effectiveness characteristic that has been associated significantly with an increase in student achievement.

The care ethic addressed by Noddings (cited in Marshall, 1995) emphasizes connection, responsibilities, and relationships. Caring by effective administrators is demonstrated by actively reflecting and listening while supporting others to do their best. Marshall described a new vision of school leadership based on caring and how it conflicts with some past formal and traditional practices. Halsey (1996) and Greenberg (1995) purported that the key ingredient for an effective school is a caring, active administrator. More energy and support is committed when administrators show respect and concern for others, have shared learning goals, and share responsibilities for solving problems. Students work harder, achieve more, and attribute more importance to schoolwork in classes in which they feel liked, accepted, and respected (Evans, 1996; Kohn, 1996; Lewis, Schaps, & Watson, 1996).

School leaders are perceived to be largely responsible for developing and maintaining an appropriate school climate in which teachers and students are valued and where parents and the community are welcome. Rather than supporting the superiority of one leadership style over another to produce a more effective school, the literature reviewed here suggests that school leaders who demonstrate support and caring for their teachers and students, who provide instructional leadership, and who involve parents and community members are likely to have effective schools. A care ethic, demonstrated appropriately by administrators, appears to be an important characteristic of the leadership in effective schools.

## EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS RESEARCH

Hallinger and Heck (1996) conducted an in-depth review of the empirical research over 15 years (1980-1995) on the relationship between the principal's role and school effectiveness. Clearly recognizing that principals have an impact on teachers, students, and learning, Hallinger and Heck declared that because of the complexity of the relationship, the nature and degree of this effect is not easily measured. At the outset, the authors recognized the intricacies of extraorganizational and intraorganizational processes and how they present a challenge for researchers studying causal relationships. The following two criteria were present in the 40 empirical studies in which Hallinger and Heck reviewed the relationship between principal leadership behavior and school effectiveness: (a) The purpose of the study had to be designed explicitly to examine the effects of the principal's leadership beliefs and behavior and (b) the study had to include an explicit measure of school performance as a dependent variable.

A third criterion was to include in the study international perspectives by seeking researchers who examined effects of principals outside the United States. Upon conclusion of their research study,

Hallinger and Heck (1996) found a need for more mixed-method studies on administrator effects, continued concern for documenting instrument reliability and validity, and attention to conditions under which effects are achieved. However, the most theoretically and empirically robust models that have been used to study leadership effects suggest that effective principal leadership is linked directly to student learning via the principal's influences on internal school processes. The internal processes range from school policies and norms regarding academic expectations, school mission, student opportunities to learn, instructional organization, and academic learning time.

Rock (1988) investigated the relationship between the nine effective school characteristics and the academic achievement of elementary students' reading and mathematics. The effective school characteristics were (a) time on task, (b) school climate, (c) high expectations, (d) student behavior, (e) instructional monitoring/feedback, (f) instructional effectiveness, (g) leadership, (h) organization of instruction, and (i) parent feedback. Rock found that parent involvement was significantly related to mathematics achievement and that high expectations had a significant relationship to reading achievement when controlled for SES. In contrast to Rock's study, Venrick (1995) determined that the characteristic of positive climate, as judged by teachers, had the most direct relationship with student achievement test performance, regardless of SES. Other than that finding, Venrick found little evidence that teacher beliefs of effective school characteristics were strongly related to student achievement.

With the barrage of negative criticism and a national climate of skepticism facing public schools (Anderson & Resnick, 1995; Bradley, 1997; Jennings, 1996), as well as the concern of being responsive to different stakeholders (Christmas, 1996; Furst, 1997; Jacobson, 1997; Sokoloff, 1997), attention continues to be directed at rethinking and redesigning schools to make them more effective by improving the quality of instruction and student achievement. Belden, Breglio, Kernan-Schloss, and Plattner (1997) found that the public strongly believes that schools can be improved, although they agree "that there are more than enough doomsayers predicting the Apocalypse for public schools" (p. 48). The researchers believe that those who care about the survival of public schools must begin to understand what the public believes and expects from the schools. A poignant example of public power is the remark that "public education is the number-one-quality-of-life issue that concerns relocating businesses" (White, 1997, p. 7). For example, a group formed in 1996 by the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce to bolster job creation in the region identified local public schools as the area's largest barrier to economic development (White, 1997). Fantini (1980) believed that quality education has become the single means by which a community can hope to realize the full potential of itself as well as its constituent members. Recognizing that quality education remains undefined as a generalization like peace and justice, Fantini stated that quality education has meanings as numerous as its advocates.

The National School Board Association (1995) issued a report to inform school board members how national testing data were used and misused and what local school board members could do to build understanding in their communities about tests and other indicators of student achievement. Cooper (1996) presented formats through which board members could determine if schools were providing a quality education. The Council for Basic Education (1996) encouraged board members to review several areas in school assessment: (a) academics, (b) technology, (c) community, (d) leadership, (e) program progress, (f) student progress, and (g) climate.

Acknowledging that expectations lie at the foundation of all collaborative human endeavors, one group of school board members in a New York district (Cook & Buehler, 1996) presented a generic letter regarding effective teacher expectations to teachers in their district. In an outline, three main areas of expectations were listed: (a) role in the school and community, (b) preparation, and (c) attitude toward the job. Murphy, Hallinger, and Peterson (1985) noted that districts with excellent student achievement had superintendents who were personally involved in supervision and evaluation of principals. The credit for student achievement that was given in part to superintendents was not usually reported in other studies. Jones (1998) suggested that it is almost impossible to identify exact cause-and-effect relationships for improving student achievement because districts are usually in the midst of several initiatives at any given time. Darling-Hammond (cited in Jones, 1998), executive director of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, emphasized that "every dollar you spend on improving the quality of teachers has a bigger effect on student achievement than any other dollar spent," and the commission "determined that the single most determinant of how students achieve is their teacher's qualifications" (p. 30).

School board members in Moran's (1995) study identified four elements as critical to a good school: (a) focusing on the needs of the individual student; (b) promoting a mutually supportive relationship between parents and school personnel; (c) staffing with teachers who establish affirming, motivating relationships with their students; and (d) having a building administrator who articulates the vision of the school. Those same school board members noted five specific characteristics shared by the principals of good schools: (a) articulating the vision of the school, (b) maintaining and enhancing the facility, (c) involving the community, (d) supporting his or her personnel, and (e) keeping the board informed. Moran (1995) and Ballentine (1993) concurred on the premise that change occurs more effectively when it is focused at the building level rather than at the system level.

Hoy and Miskel (1987) suggested that organizational effectiveness is a multidimensional concept that reflects values and biases as well as multiple constituencies that define and evaluate school effectiveness with a variety of criteria. In other words, the authors noted that stakeholders require different kinds of effectiveness measures. A diverse set of interest groups debating the definition of a good school within an educational setting might include scholars, parents, students, teachers, politicians, government officials, taxpayers, and employers. Board of education members may emphasize facilities usage or budgetary procedures, whereas teachers may maintain that effectiveness should be measured in terms of instructional methods and processes. Taxpayers and employers may focus on outcomes and the value of graduates (Hoy & Miskel). Medway and Cafferty (1992) emphasized that schools, similar to all complex organizations, are attitude arenas with diverse groups developing and maintaining attitudes toward each other and toward relevant policies and practices.

Comer and Edmonds (cited in National Center for Effective Schools Research and Development, 1989) each developed an effective schools model according to the belief that all students can learn. Comer's focus was on parent involvement, whereas Edmonds stressed equity. However, the two researchers agreed that instructional leadership, high expectations, and a positive school climate were critical and fundamental for effective school improvement.

During the 1980s, a pervasive theme in many reform reports was a call for effective schools. Over the past 20 years, a considerable number of researchers have attempted to identify the characteristics of effective schools. One of the first studies concerning the influence of school on achievement was published by Weber (1971; cited in Reynolds, 1996) who identified several factors that contributed to student achievement at higher-than-anticipated levels, above national norms, and in four inner-city schools in New York City (cited in Reynolds). All but the last three of the following effective factors contributing to school achievement have been confirmed by subsequent studies: (a) the principal sets for the school, (b) high expectations, (c) quiet, pleasant learning atmosphere, (d) acquisition of reading skills, (e) evaluation of pupil progress, (f) additional reading personnel, (g) phonics instruction, and (h) individualization of instruction (Reynolds).

Dyer (1972; cited in Reynolds, 1996) developed a method for predicting school effectiveness by using student SES combined with current and past achievement test scores. He calculated a measure of school effectiveness on the basis of a prediction of expected mean scores for a school and the discrepancy between predicted scores and actual scores. Brookover and Lezotte (1977; cited in Reynolds) examined schools that had improved achievement scores and compared them with schools with declining scores. The following eight factors were found in the schools with improved scores on standardized measures of achievement: (a) Staff placed more emphasis on basic reading and mathematics objectives; (b) staff and the principals believed that all students can master basic learning objectives; (c) staff believed that most of their students would finish high school; (d) staff believed they could make a difference in student learning regardless of students' home backgrounds; (e) principals tended to exert more leadership in areas of instruction, discipline, and evaluation of student performance; (f) staff tended to accept responsibility for accountability as measured by criterion-referenced tests; (g) staff were less satisfied with student achievement than were their counterparts in declining schools who tended to be complacent; and (h) parent-initiated contact was more prevalent (Reynolds, pp. 2-3).

Soon the focus of effective school research was directed toward building-level analysis. While holding socioeconomic factors constant, researchers analyzed which factors in matched schools encouraged high student achievement. Reynolds (1996) found that in higher achieving schools, the following behaviors occur: (a) Students believe they have control of their academic work, (b) teachers believe that students can master their academic work, (c) teachers are committed to having their students learn reading and mathematics, (d) students understand that they are expected to learn, and (e) teachers consistently reward students for their demonstrated achievement (p. 3).

One of the leading researchers in the area of school effectiveness was Edmonds (cited in Reynolds, 1996) who studied effective schools in Michigan. He found that the most effective schools were those that had strong leadership, a climate of high expectations, an orderly atmosphere, constant monitoring of student progress, and a schoolwide focus on acquisition of basic skills. Reynolds stressed the importance of the correlates designated by Smith and Purkey (p. 5) after their extensive review of literature on effective schools. Those researchers created the following list of organizational/structural variables common in effective schools: (a) school-site management, (b) instructional leadership, (c) staff stability, (d) curriculum articulation and organization, (e) schoolwide staff development, (f) parent

involvement and support, (g) schoolwide recognition of academic success, (h) maximized learning time, and (i) district support.

Lezotte (1997b), a well-known spokesperson for effective schools research and implementation, subscribed to the premise that the purpose of schooling is to help each child reach his or her learning potential. School culture, a safe and orderly environment, instructional leadership, a clear and focused mission, high expectations, frequent monitoring, and time on task are correlates of effective schools that Lezotte (1997a) used as a framework to provide practical strategies for school improvement and reform (Cohen & Seaman, 1997). Lezotte emphasized that the effective schools research concepts direct a focus on quality and equity; seek observable or measurable results; have the school site as the critical unit for the on-going change process; allow school-based professionals to implement change; and use data-driven monitoring for analysis of current organizational functions (Taylor, 1990).

Schaps, Lewis, and Watson (1996) recognized how a strong sense of classroom community contributes to many positive student outcomes. Students with a heightened sense of community apparently show significantly greater academic motivation and performance, positive attitudes toward school, empathy for others, and conflict resolution skills. To measure students' sense of classroom community, Schaps et al. developed questionnaire subscales that tapped students' beliefs about the degree to which their classmates care about and are helpful to one another and measured students' participation in classroom decision making.

After adoption of an effective schools framework in North Carolina, Prince and Taylor (1995) attempted to investigate the relationship between changes in achievement and success. Achievement scores over a 2-year period did not correlate with changes in the presence of effective school correlates. Limited by the fact that all 20 schools in the study were from one district, Prince and Taylor noted that the most obvious implication of the study was that schools involved in school-improvement initiatives on the basis of the effective schools framework should not spend excess time increasing and refining the correlates. Donsky (1995) contended that effectiveness measures are unique to each institution on the basis of its mission, relative to the needs of the constituency.

The central premise of school effectiveness research is that schools do have major effects on children's development. Sammons (1996) asserted that school effectiveness is perhaps best seen as a relative term dependent on the time period, educational outcomes, and student age groups. Sammons reviewed school effectiveness research and specified five issues that are relevant to the development of better methods of judging and measuring relative effectiveness. The issues that Sammons (p. 113) found most relevant were (a) size and significance of effects, (b) consistency across outcomes, (c) stability over time, (d) long-term effects of schools, and (e) differential effects for different student groups.

Riley (1996), former U.S. Secretary of Education, reported the findings of 30 years of research on the direct involvement of family and community members in education. Results indicated that students supported by family and communities (a) produce higher scores, (b) achieve much higher reading comprehension, (c) graduate at higher rates, and (d) behave better than unsupported students. Goens (1996) defended Riley's effort in a compassionate approach to supporting students when he described

an effective school as a place where imagination, caring, and creativity are the norm when upheld by intimacy, safety, and a sense of belonging. Also, Goens emphasized that the best school improvement may not result from flow charts and total quality management strategies but from a structure based on values, ethics, attitudes, and ideals that allow schools to withstand pressures in a humane environment. Goens imagined schools as sanctuaries (rather than businesses) that provide exciting, comforting, and fulfilling environments for children. Smith and Andrews (1989), who also recognized the value of positive relationships within a school, emphasized the crucial role that principals play when they interact daily with teachers. Thus, when administrators focus on a positive teacher work environment, teacher behavior improves, and, in turn, so does student learning.

Wagner (1996), in his study supporting school reform, maintained that school choice is important because students learn in different ways, and parents and communities will never agree on philosophies and approaches. He purported that educational leaders must put standardized tests in context, create smaller schools where faculty can agree on high standards, attend to student needs, and continue dialogue on basic core issues. The effective schools movement, launched around 1980, focused on effective school improvement (Brandt, 1989). The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development published a bound volume of articles from Educational Leadership titled "Effective Schools and School Improvements" (Brandt). One of the articles (p. 59) highlighted a 4-year study in London that collected data on three topics: (a) student characteristics, (b) student learning and development, and (c) school characteristics. Twelve key factors of effectiveness were defined: (a) purposeful leadership of the staff by the principal, (b) involvement of the assistant principal, (c) involvement of teachers, (d) consistency among teachers, (e) structured sessions, (f) intellectually challenging teaching, (g) work-centered environment, (h) limited focus within sessions, (i) maximum communication between teachers and students, (j) recordkeeping, (k) parent involvement, and (l) positive climate.

Regarding effective school research, Doll (1996) indicated that effective principals are close physically and psychologically to individual classrooms and the school. Those principals are comfortable monitoring teachers, talking with their staffs, informally visiting classrooms, and often helping to improve curriculum. Boyer (cited in Raymond, 1996) used the term "community" to describe the atmosphere of an effective school. Emphasis was given to the warm camaraderie that exists among the staff and students in such a school. *The Basic School: A Community of Learners* describes Boyer's findings from his nationwide search to uncover what works best in elementary school practices. Boyer, a past president of The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, stated that the purpose of school is to keep the urge to learn alive in every child. Boyer defined the essence of an effective school as follows:

An effective school connects people, to create community. An effective school connects the curriculum, to achieve coherence. An effective school connects classrooms and resources, to enrich the climate. And an effective school connects learning to life, to build character. (p. 42)

The movement to create effective schools has resulted in descriptions of various school improvement models. Taylor (1990) edited *Case Studies in Effective Schools Research*, which was written by practitioners in school districts that had successfully implemented school improvement programs on the basis of effective schools research. The National Center for Effective Schools Research and Development used the phrases effective schools research and effective schools model or process to denote the comprehensive model that it supported. Within the model, seven correlates blend together to foster organizational dynamics in the context of shared values that provide a culture conducive to teaching and learning for all. A key feature of the model is the shared decision making at the school site, which is based largely on data collected by schoolwide and districtwide monitoring systems. Taylor (1990, p. 203) stated that the following school characteristics are present in effective schools: (a) clear and focused mission, (b) strong instructional leadership, (c) positive learning climate, (d) high expectations for success, (e) opportunity to learn and time on task, (f) frequent monitoring of student performance, and (g) positive home/school relations.

The research reviewed in the effective schools literature clearly supports the importance of parent and community involvement as well as the significance of the care ethic. Schools in which emphases are placed on (a) academic instruction in a caring and supportive environment, (b) strong and supportive relations with parents and community members, and (c) a sense of community are more effective than schools that do not emphasize these areas.

## SUMMARY

Education efforts to improve teaching and learning are in place in virtually every city and state in America. However, only limited information is available on the manner in which these school reform efforts are viewed by those closest to students--teachers and parents. Better communication about reforms must occur by listening to those most affected by the changes and by facilitating their involvement in the reforms.

In this article, we examined the views held by teachers, parents, and school administrators regarding effective school characteristics; we also analyzed effective school research. Even though variability exists in effective school characteristics, many of the effective school indicators were consistent across the three groups of stakeholders. Recognizing that polls or questionnaires rarely differentiate respondents according to their experience in and around schools creates limitations in using research data. Kaufman (1995) reminded persons interested in school improvement that problems in education cannot be attributed to any single source. If schools are to be viewed as effective, then school leaders should be ready to change, to restructure the way their schools operate, to rethink their goals and priorities, to create a climate within their schools where students and teachers can take risks, to involve parents and community in a meaningful way, and to plan strategically for the future. School leaders also should be willing to develop policies that address student achievement, to encourage an ethic of caring and sense

of community, to make wise use of technology and resources, and to retain strong, instructional leadership capable of developing a shared vision of educational excellence.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

On the basis of our understanding of the literature, we have tried to communicate the view held by teachers, parents, and administrators concerning the importance of school-parent-community relations. The extent to which that view is supported by the extant literature is unclear. Instead of the current method of communicating through report cards, notes regarding school activities, and the like, schools may need to develop reciprocity. Parents have valuable insights to offer schools about their children. Similarly, teachers have valuable insights to offer parents about their children's learning styles. Unfortunately, typical school involvement activities are not conducive to this two-way communication. In addition to school-parent communication, we believe in the importance of school-community relations. School leaders and teachers need to be proactive by involving community members in school activities rather than simply responding to events (that are usually negative) as they occur. Therefore, we encourage schools to be creative in the strategies and activities they use to develop and maintain strong school-parent-community relations.

A suggestion derived from our interpretation of the literature is the importance of having a supportive and caring school climate, with a strong emphasis on academics. A belief that all children can learn, along with teachers and school leaders who demonstrate that belief through their behavior, can result in improved student achievement. Treating teachers, parents, and children with respect is an essential ingredient of this suggestion.

Another idea comes from one of the consistent findings in the empirical research literature; that is, schools must have a high level of expectations for their leaders, teachers, and students. Concomitant with the high expectations is the care ethic. Showing students and their parents that we believe all students can learn at a high level, combined with the support students need to meet our expectations, is likely to result in improved student performance.

Finally, we suggest that schools interested in improvement should examine carefully the extant literature in the effective schools movement, as well as in other areas. Schools in which the characteristics of effective schools are present have the types of outcomes deemed desirable by the American public. Demonstrating those characteristics in a consistent manner over time should result in improved student achievement.

#### ADDED MATERIAL

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