

A Model for Enhancing Morale Among  
Middle School Teachers

by  
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## Abstract

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This applied dissertation was designed to enhance the morale among teachers at a middle school that experienced high teacher attrition each year. The solution strategies implemented addressed issues of administrative support, collegiality among teachers, parental involvement, reduction in nonteaching duties, and teacher recognition and appreciation.

The writer served in the capacity of assistant to the principal and devoted all of his time to activities intended to enhance teacher morale at the school. He made regular visits to individual teachers' classrooms in a nonevaluative capacity to express interest in the teachers' work and to offer encouragement and assistance where needed. He also initiated a short social period before schedule faculty meetings and on teacher workdays. To promote school pride, he spearheaded the organization of a club to coordinate school pride activities among faculty, students, parents, and community members. Collegiality among teachers was enhanced by the writer's substitution for teachers during times when they visited the classrooms of their peers to observe or otherwise do collaborative work. Veteran teachers were also encouraged to mentor and coach newer ones.

To reduce the number of nonteaching duties teachers had to perform, the writer promoted the use of volunteers for such responsibilities as clerical tasks and bus, hall, and cafeteria monitoring duty. He provided orientation to teachers on roles volunteers could play and the rules and regulations governing those roles.

Community involvement was encouraged through solicitation of goods and services from local businesses and industries. These goods and services were utilized as incentives for teachers, parents, and students and were awarded during recognition activities.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### *Description of Community*

The community in which the targeted school is located is a very rural area made up largely of lower socioeconomic families. It is situated approximately 24 miles from the nearest large city in the central region of a southeastern state. In 2000, the population was 3,670 and was projected to grow to approximately 3,800 by 2010. The community ranked below the state average on all major indexes: unemployment, the ratio of African Americans to Caucasians in the population, the number of college students, and the percentage of the population with a bachelor's degree or higher. The population was 66% African American, 32% Caucasian, 1% Hispanic, and 1% other races. In 2000, the median annual income in the community was \$24,400, 35% of children aged 5-17 lived below poverty level, 84% were classified as Medicaid eligible, and the unemployment rate was 9.3% (City-Data.Com, 2003).

School records indicated that in the county, 36% of the adult population had less than a high school education, 39% had a high school diploma, 19% had a bachelor's degree, and 6% had a graduate or professional degree. In addition to the nine public schools in the district, there is one

private academy, and five colleges are located within commuting distance of the community.

The community offers very limited social activities. Two major events take place community-wide each year: the Cotton Festival and a quilt festival and show. The Cotton Festival is held during the month of October to celebrate what was once the king of the local agricultural crops, cotton. The weeklong quilt festival is held in March of each year. Nearby communities play host to a magnolia festival and a river festival. For many, the church is the primary social organization in the community.

The government of the city has a council-administrator structure. The city council has nine members, who may serve terms up to 4 years.

#### *Writer's Work Setting*

The writer's work setting was the community's middle school, which served 433 students in Grades 7 and 8 during the 2003-2004 school year. The school building originally housed a middle school, then a high school, and then a middle school again. For the past 7 years, it has been a middle school.

*Mission of the school.* The mission of the school, as reflected in the school renewal plan of 2001, is to provide students a challenging, motivating, and relevant curriculum

that nurtures, guides, and prepares them for success at the next educational level and establishes their ability to function well in a global society while fostering a high level of learning that will positively impact them for a lifetime.

The vision for the work setting is also articulated in the school renewal plan:

1. Students will achieve test scores at or above the state average.

2. Students will demonstrate the ability to express ideas effectively through oral and written communication.

3. Students will think independently and creatively through the use of knowledge gained from real-life experiences and educational instruction.

4. Students will accept responsibility for their learning and behavior through their personal actions and choices by critically assessing situations.

5. Parents will be actively involved in their children's education by communicating frequently with teachers, attending conferences, and positively reinforcing the importance of education at home.

6. Teachers will work collaboratively to create a stimulating learning environment for students.

*Student and staff population.* At the time of this



applied dissertation, the school's student population was 97% African American, 2% Caucasian, and 1% Hispanic, and 88% of the students received subsidized meals because of their low-income status. The target school is a Title I school under U.S. Department of Education guidelines.

From 1998 to 2004, the school had six principals, the fifth of whom remained for 3 years. The principal for the 2003-2004 school year was new to the position but had served as assistant principal at the school during the previous year. The school had a total of 26 teachers. In 2003-2004, the teaching staff consisted of 18 females and 8 males. Seven of the teachers were aged 22-32, 5 were aged 33-43, 6 were aged 44-54, and 8 were aged 55-64. The principal was a 65-year-old male, the assistant principal was a 40-year-old female, the principal's secretary was a 35-year-old female, the office secretary was a 37-year-old female, the in-school suspension officer was a 50-year-old male, and the media specialist was a 45-year-old female.

Of the teachers, 7 had 1-5 years of teaching experience, 1 had between 6 and 10 years of experience, 4 had from 11-15 years of experience, 4 had from 21-25 years of experience, and 5 had from 26-30 years of experience. Of these teachers, 14 (52%) had taught in the district, if not in the target school, for only 1-5 years, 1 had been in the

district between 6 and 10 years, 4 had been in the district from 11-15 years, 2 had been in the district from 16-20 years, 1 had been in the district between 21 and 25 years, and 4 had been in the district from 26-30 years. In the 2003-2004 school year, 13 of the teachers were new to the school.

Survey responses were received from all faculty members except one. The reason he gave for not participating was that he was preparing to retire and had learned all he needed to know. Eight of the school faculty members were Caucasian, 12 are African American, and the rest were of other races.

Of the 26 teachers at the school during the 2003-2004 school year, 57% had bachelor's degrees, 19% had master's degrees, and 24% had master's degrees plus 30 additional hours of graduate study. Among the nonteaching staff, the principal had a doctorate; the assistant principal, in-school suspension officer, and the media specialist had master's degrees; and the principal's secretary and the office secretary had associate's degrees.

From 1999-2003, students fared poorly on the state-mandated Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test. In 2002-2003, as in every year since school report cards were initiated, the school received a below-average rating. Only

37.9% of seventh graders and 36.4% of eighth graders met or exceeded the state's basic performance standards in English language arts. Results were equally depressed in math. Only 30.4% of seventh graders and 35.5% of eighth graders achieved at or above the state's basic performance standards in math. In 2002-2003, these performance levels earned the school a place on the nation's list of impaired schools.

The poor academic performance of the students was no real surprise given some of the cultural factors the writer observed during the time he was associated with the school. The teachers and many of the students expected very little. The experiences of the students in their homes and communities were vastly different from what they encountered at school. For many of them, violence, crime, and drug abuse were accepted ways of life.

In the county where the school is located, 54.9% of all African American children under the age of 18 belonged to single-parent families, and a significant number were in out-of-home placements. In 1999, 59.5% of children under 18 in the target area lived below the poverty level. At the target school, 88% of the students received subsidized lunch.

The writer observed that the students employed what

could be called a people-oriented, relational, and field dependent approach to learning as opposed to an objective, field-independent approach. Teachers generally conveyed low expectations for the children based on their knowledge of the students' histories of poor achievement.

The writer overheard numerous students discussing such matters as drugs and alcohol use, sexual delinquency, and violent behavior. Although the official stance of the community was against such illegal behavior, it was evident that many people in the areas in which the children lived had more or less favorable attitudes toward such behavior. It was not uncommon for children to say openly in class that they wanted to be drug dealers because drug dealers were seen as glamorous people with a lot of money who did not need to finish high school. Even for those who did not favor criminal activity, career aspirations were limited. Many of the students aspired to careers as cosmetologists and construction workers, the occupations of their parents and other family members and friends.

On a survey, created by the writer, that asked teachers to list the reasons why teachers chose to leave the school, the district, or the profession altogether, student discipline and lack of administrative support were mentioned most often (see Appendix A). Explanations of lack

of administrative support entailed the principal's failure to support the teachers' efforts to deal with disciplinary matters.

At this school, students had a low commitment to their education. The students' attitude seemed to be that school is like death and taxes--a necessary evil. For the teachers' part, they simply rode out their time until the end of the school year, when approximately 50% "fled the scene" each year.

Cultural incongruence was evident in the school environment, which may have accounted for some aspects of the students' poor academic achievement and the teachers' dissatisfaction with their jobs. The student culture was African American oriented, whereas the culture of the school was based on traditional middle-class White values.

Of the 26 teachers who taught at the school, 15 did not live in the county where the school is located. They commuted from the nearby capital of the state. This was true of 9 of the teachers who had taught in the school or the district for 1 to 5 years. It was quite likely that these teachers felt isolated because they had no roots in the community and did not participate in the same cultural activities as the people in the community.

*The Writer's Role*

The writer's role at the school was that of assistant to the principal with the specific charge to raise teacher morale and increase teacher retention. Although this was an unbudgeted position, the writer had the full support of the district superintendent and the principal. During the implementation of the applied dissertation, the writer had full responsibility for providing administrative support to the faculty and for working with parents and others in the community to secure additional resources for the school.

The writer formed a working relationship with school personnel by volunteering to perform leadership tasks during which the writer became involved in coordinating staff development activities and a student incentive program as well as in assisting faculty and staff in promoting a warm and inviting, student-centered educational setting that emphasizes the belief that all children are expected to learn. The staff and students accorded the writer full respect and cooperation.

The writer attempted to exemplify an eclectic, human-oriented leadership style to empower teachers and focus on facilitative problem solving and cohesion. The writer practiced openness in communication and acceptance of cultural differences in hopes of generating synergy, enabling change, and promoting excellence.

Throughout his interactions with the staff, the writer tried to exercise good sense and demonstrate a willingness to make changes where necessary. Specifically the writer attempted to

1. Assist key staff, including administrators, at all levels of the organization in the development of a mission statement that stressed the values of collaboration, participation, and empowerment for employees throughout the organization. For the school, that meant including persons from the janitorial and cafeteria staff to the assistant principals.

2. Provide ongoing, interactive training that focused on (a) situational leadership skills, (b) collaborative problem solving and conflict resolution, (c) creative risk taking, and (d) interpersonal communication skills.

3. Assist in the development of a rewards initiative, both tangible and intangible, for both achievement and initiative.

4. Manage by example, encouraging input from and generating synergy among the members of the organization and those who supervised them.

5. Make himself visible and accessible to staff at all levels in the organization.

6. Coordinate efforts to recruit volunteers.

7. Spearhead efforts to form partnerships with local businesses and industry.

8. Coordinate staff development.

9. Spearhead a school pride initiative among faculty, students, parents, and the community at large.

In developing this applied dissertation, the writer was aware of the research that supported various leadership styles (Bock, 1998; Darcy & Kleiner, 1993) but kept in mind the fact that leadership style is not necessarily related to teachers' overall job satisfaction. The writer agrees with the research findings of Davis and Wilson (2000); Foels, Driskell, Mullen, and Salas (2000); Jones (1997); and Hunter-Boykin and Evans (1995) that although there may be a small tendency for groups that experience democratic leadership to be more satisfied than groups that experience autocratic leadership, these effects could be moderated by such variables as reality of the group, the size of the group, the gender composition of the group, and the potency of leadership style.

At the school, the writer noted a number of other factors that could affect teacher morale, including stress, burnout, and unsatisfactory working conditions. Although it was suggested in the literature that strategies such as reducing workload (Black, 2001), increasing workforce size



(Carpenter & Dial, 2001), and providing peer support groups (Griffin, 2001) could be effective in alleviating these conditions, the writer deemed them not feasible for struggling school districts and schools such as the one in which this writer was working. As a result, the writer engaged in periodic monitoring of employees' feelings about job satisfaction and organizational commitment and took steps to try to minimize negative effects.

## Chapter 2: Study of the Problem

### *Problem Statement*

In the 2002-2003 school year, the teacher attrition rate at the school was 41.7%, and there was evidence that the morale of teachers was low.

### *Problem Documentation*

Evidence of the teacher attrition problem included state department of education (SDOE) computerized archival records and teachers' responses to several informal surveys. SDOE records revealed that 11 of 25 teachers who worked at the school during the 2002-2003 school year did not renew their contracts, in spite of good performance evaluations. SDOE records also revealed that in 2002-2003, only 21 of 25 teachers had in-field permits. These statistics and an informal interview suggested that the 4 teachers with out-of-field permits may have had lower morale than teachers with in-field permits. Their out-of-field permit status may have contributed to these teachers' feelings that they were not supported and respected by their colleagues.

An informal survey of the 25 teachers at the school during the 2002-2003 school year, indicated the following: 20 wanted to return to teach in the school the following year, 15 were satisfied with their nonteaching duties, and

8 were satisfied with the quality of professional development activities that were offered.

#### *Causative Analysis*

Possible causes for the problem of low teacher morale were investigated in the 2003-2004 school year. Informal interviews revealed that 42% of the teachers (11 of 26) attributed their low morale to not using appropriate learning environment enhancement strategies on a regular basis. Further evidence of dissatisfaction was revealed on the 2003 school report card that indicated only 65% of teachers (17 of 26) were satisfied with the learning environment. The 2003 school report card also indicated that 19.2% of teachers (5 of 26) were dissatisfied with the school's social and physical environments.

A survey of teachers' morale (see Appendix B) revealed that 64% of teachers (17 of 26) felt isolated and lacked a sense of collegiality with other teachers at the school. Additional evidence of a possible cause of low teacher morale was gleaned from a school record form that revealed 56% of teachers (15 of 26) perceived little administrative support for their concerns related to the classroom, parents, or students.

#### *Relationship of the Problem to the Literature*

The writer reviewed the literature on low teacher

morale to gain greater insight into the problem. One factor that contributes to low teacher moral--the demands of the workplace--was cited by several authors as a primary factor in teacher attrition (Barak, Nwassly, & Levin, 2001; Hong, 2001; Norton, 1999; Oglesby, 2003; Reiger & Stang, 2000; Shen, 1997a, 1997b; Tye & O'Brien, 2002).

According to Oglesby (2003), mainstreaming children with special needs changes the role of the teacher. This author cited J. Horowitz, president of the American Teachers Federation, as saying, "You can't just teach English or teach math anymore. You have to be able to teach math and special education and be a nurse and deal with children with emotional problems who act out in class" (p. 1).

Hong (2001) included among the factors that affect teacher morale the many intrusions on instructional time, both the subtle ones and overt ones such as formal observations.

Poor working conditions may also contribute to teacher dissatisfaction. In the book, *Raising Teacher Morale*, First and Best in Education, Ltd. (2003) suggested that when people perceive poor working conditions, they may become demoralized, although good working conditions alone may not be enough to keep morale at a high level. In this book, the

term *working conditions* includes not only the physical environment of the school but also problems related to (a) teacher workload, (b) expectations for assuming extracurricular assignments, and (c) concerns about the evaluation of student performance and school grading practices.

According to information reported by Norton (1999) from the National Center for Educational Statistics, which confirmed findings by Shen (1997a, 1997b), workplace conditions are key factors in the determination of job satisfaction for teachers. These conditions include (a) administrative leadership and support, (b) school climate, (c) teacher autonomy in the classroom, (d) student behavior, and (e) parental support. Other problems cited by Norton included run-down and overcrowded classrooms and a shortage of teaching materials.

Tye and O'Brien (2002) also reported work conditions as a cause for teacher attrition. Based on their survey of a number of teachers who had already left the profession, these authors concluded that the causes of teacher disaffection were systemic rather than personal, often resulting from teachers blaming themselves for problems because their teacher-preparation institutions had not taught them to recognize how the system (of teaching) works

and because they did not have the time or the opportunity to talk about problems with other teachers and to discover that other teachers felt the same way.

Black (2001) indicated that worldwide, teachers feel burdened by time constraints, excessive workloads, and low salaries. Feelings of powerlessness (Weld, 1998) and perceived lack of administrative support (Corwin, 2001; Davis & Wilson, 2000; Ponessa, 1996), including lack of recognition, also contribute to poor teacher morale. The problem is further compounded by a perceived lack of respect from the public (Roberts, 2001). According to B. Chase, president of the National Education Association (as cited in Blair, 2000), "At the heart of the teacher shortage crisis is the fact that teachers often are badly treated, burn out quickly, and leave the profession" (p. 2).

Referring to lack of support, Ponessa (1996) summed up the problem in a quote from a teacher: "[Teaching is] the only profession where on your first day on the job, you're expected to do the exact same job as someone who's been there for 20 years" (p. 1).

Weld (1998) suggested that teachers often suffocate under a blanket of inertia as the result of a gross lack of receptivity to creativity and innovations of thoughtful

teachers by school administrators. Under these conditions, teachers become demoralized.

Sometimes, teachers' low morale may be a form of resistance to change. For example, when schools undergo extensive reform that individuals may perceive as harmful or negative, some employees may exhibit resistance through absenteeism, resignations, transfer requests, and a state of suppressed discontent. Darcy and Kleiner (1993) described four reasons why employees resist change:

1. Economic factors related to the concept that a person's current job or career prospects may be in jeopardy as a result of the proposed change.

2. Inconvenience related to uprooting familiar things and being exposed to new people, places, and procedures.

3. Uncertainty or fear of the unknown.

4. Loss of symbols, which is a concept related to those material or status items one accumulates through the years, such as a particular room or a key to the faculty washroom.

Personal factors that may contribute to low teacher morale include (a) lack of preparation in the teaching field (Adams & Dial, 1994), (b) stress (Adams & Dial; Black, 2001; Connolly, 2000; First and Best in Education, Ltd., 2003; Hancock, 1999; Lumsden, 1998), (c) teachers' perception of students and students' learning (Lumsden,

1998), and (d) problems related to student behavior (Ballinger, 2000; Haberman & Dill, 1993; Hardy, 1999; Norton, 1999).

According to Connolly (2000) and Hancock (1999), the universal answer to the question concerning why teachers have low morale and leave the teaching profession is stress brought on by (a) lack of public and parental support; (b) time demands; (c) discipline and attendance problems; (d) lack of texts and equipment; (e) student apathy and negative attitudes; (f) large class size; (g) society's negative attitude toward education; (h) low budgets; (i) lack of administrative support; (j) negative colleagues and incompetent co-workers; and (k) a lack of security, which results in fear for personal safety.

Black (2001) suggested that teachers who experience high stress levels may show symptoms of depression, anxiety, general mental distress, heart disease, ulcers, and chronic pain, which usually result in absenteeism, sickness, reduced productivity, and low morale. She further added that younger and less experienced teachers are more prone to feelings of alienation and powerlessness.

Barak et al. (2001) found three categories of conditions that may lead to low teacher morale:

1. Personal characteristics, such as age, gender, locus



of control, and life satisfaction, and work-related characteristics, such as education, income, and job tenure.

2. Professional perceptions, including organizational commitment and job satisfaction.

3. Organizational conditions, such as stress, lack of social support, unfair management practices, and physical discomfort.

Research concerning dispositional constructs related to both intrinsic and extrinsic factors revealed that factors labeled as positive self-concept (locus of control, positive affectivity, self-esteem, and self-efficacy) and risk tolerance (openness to experience, low risk aversion, and tolerance for ambiguity) were positively related to the ability to cope with change (Latham, 1998; Reiger & Stang, 2000; Richie & Vallerand, 1995).

Perception about learners is another factor that may contribute to low teacher morale. At times, student discipline problems can become too draining for teachers (Hardy, 1999). According to Haberman and Dill (1993), many teachers regard teaching as a job of managing classes and feel that any intrusion on this management of group learning is an inappropriate, added teacher responsibility. In short, some teachers believe that students who differ from their perceived norm of the normal, at-grade-level

child should not be in their classroom, or if such children must be placed in their classes, aides or some form of special assistance should be provided. The addition of students in poverty and mainstreamed students to regular classrooms can escalate the number of discipline problems beyond the coping ability of some teachers.

Several authors indicated that a principal's leadership style can also influence teacher morale (Ballinger, 2000; Dennis, 1998; Jones, 1997). For instance, Jones found that when principals practiced democratic leadership that involved teachers in the decision-making process, morale was higher. However, according to findings from an earlier study by Hunter-Boykin and Evans (1995), there is a low positive relationship between principals' administrative leadership style and teachers' morale because teachers' morale is influenced by a myriad of other factors.

### Chapter 3: Anticipated Outcomes and Evaluation

#### *Goal*

The goal of the applied dissertation was that the morale of all of the 26 teachers at the school would be satisfactory by the completion of the implementation activities.

#### *Expected Outcomes*

Five outcomes were projected for this applied dissertation. Outcome 1 was that 17 of the 26 teachers would have continuing contracts. The assumptions underlying this expected outcome were that teachers who performed well would be offered continuing contracts and teachers who were satisfied with their jobs would accept the contract offers.

Outcome 2 was that all of the 26 teachers would have in-field credentials. When teachers are adequately prepared in the fields of their teaching assignment, they tend to feel more secure and satisfied than teachers who have assignments outside their field.

Outcome 3 was that on an informal survey, all of the 26 teachers would indicate they wanted to return to the school the next year. When teachers are adequately prepared in their fields and also satisfied with working conditions at their school, they tend to want to return to that school year after year.

Outcome 4 was that responses to a survey of teachers would indicate that 17 of the 26 teachers were satisfied with the number and nature of their nonteaching duties. When teachers feel inundated by nonteaching duties, they may feel dissatisfaction with the teaching job itself.

Outcome 5 was that 11 of the 26 teachers would indicate satisfaction with professional development activities. Some professional development activities that are chosen by the administration are not relevant or interesting to teachers. When teachers help to select professional development activities, they tend to choose those that can help them do a better job in their classrooms. When they feel they are doing a good job, they are inclined to remain in that teaching assignment.

#### *Measurement of Outcomes*

Attainment of the outcomes was measured by a simple numerical count of results from an informal survey that was administered near the end of the implementation period for the applied dissertation. Attainment of Outcome 1 was measured by the number of teachers who were offered and accepted continuing contracts for the ensuing school year. Attainment of Outcome 2 was measured by the number of teachers with out-of-field permits as indicated in personnel files for teachers for the current year.

Attainment of Outcome 3 was measured by the number of teachers who indicated they wanted to return to the school the following year. Attainment of Outcome 4 was measured by the number of teachers who were satisfied with the number and nature of their nonteaching duties. Attainment of Outcome 5 was measured by the number of teachers who were satisfied with the quality of professional development activities.

#### *Instruments*

An informal survey was developed by the writer to collect the data needed to evaluate the outcomes (see Appendix C).

#### *Mechanisms for Recording Unexpected Events*

The mechanisms for recording unexpected events were the same mechanisms used for recording expected events. They included the following:

1. A journal kept by the writer of all activities related to the applied dissertation, recorded by date, participants, and outcome.

2. Reflection sessions held by the writer with participants to discuss (a) what took place, (b) problems encountered, (c) solution strategies employed, and (d) the feelings of the participants.

3. Pictures of selected events.

4. Participants' evaluations after each event.

Data from these sources are used to describe the implementation process in chapter 4.

## Chapter 4: Solution Strategies

### *Discussion and Evaluation of Solution Strategies*

Strategies for raising and maintaining teacher morale were cited throughout the literature. Some were feasible for this writer in this school setting, and some were not. For example, career ladders that align teachers' work with their abilities and responsibilities were suggested by Shen (1997a, 1997b). This matter could be addressed only by district administrators, not by the school principal or an assistant to the principal (i.e., the writer). Another strategy mentioned in the literature, improving the school's physical structure (Macdonald, 1999), could also only be accomplished at the district level.

Suggestions that could be implemented at the building level included (a) teacher empowerment (Lester, 1990; Lumsden, 2001; Rinehart & Short, 1994), (b) teacher participation in decision making (Black, 2001; Foels et al., 2000; Jones, 1997), (c) a reduction in the number of intrusions on instructional time (Hong, 2001), and (d) rewards and recognition for personal and professional accomplishments (Anthony, 2003; Dennis, 1998; First and Best in Education, Ltd., 2003; Governor's Commission on Teaching Quality, 1999; Latham, 1998; National Education Association, 2000; Norton, 1999).

Teacher empowerment was touted by Rinehart and Short (1994) as an effective way to improve or maintain teacher satisfaction, an important element in teacher morale. In their study of the relationship between empowerment and job satisfaction, Rinehart and Short found a strong relationship between teachers' responses to the Teacher Job Satisfaction Questionnaire and the School Participant Empowerment scale. This finding suggests that in schools where teachers are involved in decision-making and are provided with professional growth opportunities, the teachers experience greater job satisfaction, which is evidenced by their enhanced motivation and work effectiveness.

High-quality professional development activities, which might require funding from the district, were also suggested (Boyer & Gillespie, 2000; Carpenter & Dial, 2001; Collinson, 2000; Darcy & Kleiner, 1993; Governor's Commission on Teaching Quality, 1999; Hancock, 1999). A reduction in nonteaching duties, as suggested by Black (2001), could be achieved without district funding if volunteers can be recruited to help out at the school during the day. According to Black, keeping down *administratrivia*, such as paperwork and extra duties, helps to boost and maintain high teacher morale. Some of these



responsibilities can be assumed by volunteers; however, because school volunteers are often in short supply, creative ways are needed to entice them to help out at the school.

The literature offered other suggestions to help teachers take care of themselves and to eliminate high levels of stress (Black, 2001; Hancock, 1999; Hunter-Boykin & Evans, 1995; Lumsden, 2001). According to Black, to help teachers deal with stress, some schools sponsor wellness programs that emphasize stress relief, nutrition, and exercise.

It has been found that a principal's leadership style may affect teacher morale (Bock, 1998; Castaneda et al., 1999; Claes, 1999; Dennis, 1998; Graham, 1995; Richie & Vallerand, 1995), but any interventions entailing principal leadership style in this study had to be made by the principal himself, not by an assistant to the principal.

According to Foels et al. (2000), the effects of leadership style (i.e., democratic versus autocratic) are moderated by reality of the group, group size, gender composition, and the potency of the leadership style. From a meta-analytic integration of research of 19 studies that addressed this issue, Foels et al. found some support for democratic leadership, but they concluded that the effect

of democratic leadership on teacher satisfaction was quite small. In their study of principal leadership style that involved 411 teachers and 40 high school principals in Prince George County, Maryland, and the District of Columbia, Hunter-Boykin and Evans (1995) found a low positive relationship between principals' leadership style and teachers' morale.

The results of the studies by Foels et al. (2000) and Hunter-Boykin and Evans (1995) suggested to the researcher that the principal's leadership style might not be an important consideration for the applied dissertation. This was important in light of the small group size and because the teachers were predominantly female, the kind of group that these researchers found favored autocratic leadership. The principal of the school was not altogether autocratic, but in light of these research findings, no attempt was made to change his leadership style. Instead, the writer used his own eclectic style to seek input from teachers at every opportunity that presented itself. This was an effort on the part of the writer to avert a situation such as the one encountered by Black (2001). In Black's study of Texas high school teachers, 44% of the teachers were considering leaving the profession and accused the high school administrators of running a "bureaucratic jungle" (p. 2).

A number of other activities were suggested by the literature to encourage principals' support for teachers (Ax, Conderman, & Stephens, 2001; "Teacher Quality," 2001; Fredericks, 2001; Griffin, 2001). Ax et al., from their analysis of practices related to the retention of special educators, suggested that principals can (a) provide individualized support to reduce teachers' feelings of isolation; (b) encourage continuing education; (c) develop collaborative, work-related problem-solving and support systems; (d) develop peer support and collaboration programs; and (e) be flexible in allowing teachers to take professional days.

Fredericks (2001) suggested (a) empowering teachers by giving them administrative support in their efforts to experiment with new teaching techniques and to find the best way to teach their students, (b) going into the classroom, (c) praising the staff, (d) practicing unity by defusing conflicts before they escalate into something bigger, and (e) finding community business partners. The strategies suggested by Ax et al. (2001) and Fredericks were implemented by the writer. None of these strategies required any additional financial resources from the district.

Griffin (2001), based on a study of the DELTA

teacher-mentoring program in several Los Angeles area school districts, recommended teacher coaching, especially in a one-to-one relationship, wherein observation is used only as a diagnostic tool for determining areas that need to be addressed. This type of coaching does not involve evaluation. This coaching method was utilized by the writer in his work with the teachers.

Stress reduction as an aid to raising teacher morale was mentioned throughout the literature (Ax et al., 2001; Boyer & Gillespie, 2000; Darcy & Kleiner, 1993; Fredericks, 2001; Hancock, 1999). Hancock, in particular, recommended a person-situation interaction model of stress reduction to address demand-related, capability-related, and response-related stress. This strategy, as implemented by the writer, involved helping teachers to focus on the specific causes of stress and to avoid misdirection of time and resources toward activities that do not produce desired results.

Spitzer (as cited in Norton, 1999) suggested that traditional incentives, including financial rewards, do not result in significant long-term employee motivation. As an alternative, Norton recommended *power rewards*, such as (a) creating a climate of appreciation, (b) helping employees understand the importance of their work, (c) adding variety

and interest to work assignments, (d) increasing employee responsibility and authority, (e) encouraging continuous learning and personal improvement, and (f) allowing employees to use personal initiative and to participate in setting their own work goals. Other incentives suggested by Norton included (a) child care services; (b) on-site health care provisions, such as exercise rooms and diet clinics; (c) certain concierge services; (d) job placement services for spouses; and (e) other personalized services that focus on career planning and the extension of job opportunities within the system.

#### *Solution Strategies Selected*

The solution strategies selected for the applied dissertation setting that were implemented by the writer in his role as assistant to the principal included (a) improving the school's physical environment by encouraging participation in school pride activities by teachers, students, and parents; (b) keeping intrusions on teachers' instructional time to a minimum; (c) encouraging teachers to take better care of themselves; (d) creating a reward and recognition initiative; (e) reducing teachers' nonteaching duties through the use of volunteers; (f) offering stress-reducing activities; and (g) encouraging social interaction at faculty meetings and on teacher

workdays.

The writer helped the principal to provide higher quality professional development activities that were responsive to teachers' expressed needs and interests and to develop a more supportive, facilitative, and participatory principal leadership style. In addition, the writer was responsible for orienting teachers to the process of using volunteers and recruiting business partners to provide incentives for teachers.

*The Writer's Leadership Role in the Implementation of the Solution Strategies*

The writer's role in the implementation of solution strategies was primarily that of facilitator. This worked well because of the nonthreatening relationship the writer had with the teachers. The teachers knew they could count on the writer for administrative support and assistance, and they also knew the writer did not evaluate them. Therefore, the relationship between the writer and the teachers was open. Because the writer had less administrative responsibility for the school than the principal, the writer was able to devote more time to morale-building activities than the principal.

In the role of facilitator, the writer worked with the teachers, individually and in groups, to improve their

morale. He visited personally with each teacher to express interest in his or her work and to offer administrative support, and he encouraged veteran teachers to mentor more inexperienced ones. Six veteran teachers agreed to serve as coaches to new teachers, going beyond the roles prescribed by the SDOE. In instances where input was needed from the principal himself, the writer acted as an intermediary.

The writer was responsible for providing information about the use of volunteers and for coordinating interactions with local businesses and organizations to increase support for the school and the teachers. The writer led by example in recognizing and publicizing teachers' professional and personal achievements. He also spearheaded initiatives to increase staff collegiality and to alleviate teachers' feelings of social and professional isolation.

#### *Report of Actions Taken*

The success of this applied dissertation depended heavily on the writer's ability to create rapport with the teachers, to present himself as an advocate for them, and to empathize with them. This was achieved through continuous one-on-one interaction with the teachers, including visits with them in their classroom in a nonevaluative capacity and mingling with them in the halls

and in the cafeteria. Instead of putting all memos to them in their mailboxes, the writer delivered them personally. The writer was able to carry out the specified functions because they were his job responsibilities.

All activities were conducted in the teachers' natural environments: classrooms, auditoriums, and the cafeteria. Everything was done as naturally as possible. The writer needed no special educational materials such as tests or prescribed manuals.

At the beginning of the implementation period, a survey was taken to identify reasons why teachers leave the school, the district, and/or the teaching profession (see Appendix A). Results of the survey, which were based on information supplied by 10 teachers who continued to teach at the school, indicated that the top five reasons for teacher dissatisfaction were (a) lack of administrator support, (b) lack of parental involvement with and support of the school, (c) student discipline problems, (d) lack of collegiality and opportunity to network with other teachers, and (e) excessive nonteaching duties such as bus and hall monitoring. These responses, did not, however, point to the kinds of specific morale factors the writer was prepared to address based on his review of the literature. Therefore, the writer created a second survey



that addressed research-based factors related to teacher morale (see Appendix B) and administered it to the teachers. Results of this survey indicated the majority of teachers were concerned about these same matters although they did not openly discuss them with administrators.

As the writer visited each teacher individually in the classroom setting to establish greater rapport, to gain more trust, and to encourage veteran teachers to support new teachers, he engaged in conversations with teachers about their satisfaction with working at the school. At first, the teachers gave stock responses: "Discipline is a problem." "There is a general lack of respect and appreciation for teachers in this school." "Parents do not take an interest in their children." However, as the conversations continued between the teachers and the writer, more definitive reasons for low morale were discovered, such as (a) lack of opportunities for professional development, (b) little administrative attention to and appreciation of teachers, (c) insufficient clerical assistance, and (d) lack of support from local businesses and industries.

On the Survey of Teacher Morale, 20 of the 26 teachers disagreed with the statements, "My morale this school year is high" and "The morale of most other teachers I know at

my school is high." Appendix D shows the 19 statements with the highest number of responses.

Moreover, the survey asked respondents to rank those items in terms of importance to them, with 5 being of the highest importance. As shown in the table, all 26 teachers assigned a rank of 5 (highest in importance) to appreciation of teachers and reduction of nonteaching responsibilities. Twenty-two teachers also gave a ranking of 5 to personal interest of administrators in teachers' work.

The third highest ranked items were time for collaboration with peers during the day, information about professional development activities, and information about free or inexpensive resources for teachers; each of these items received a ranking of 4. A ranking of 4 was also given by 16 teachers to concern for nonprofessional well-being of teachers, by 17 teachers to attractive school surroundings, and by 14 teachers to accessibility of administrative staff.

These rankings were used as indicators of what teachers felt were most important to them and to support the rationale for implementing strategies that were selected by the writer. The writer made extensive efforts to include teacher input in plans for faculty forums and

regular in-service meetings, especially on matters that were not mandated by the district.

Table

*Matters of Importance to Teachers*

Item	Ranking				
	1	2	3	4	5
Attractive school surroundings	0	5	17	4	0
Appreciation of teachers	0	0	0	0	26
Time for collaborative work with peers	0	0	4	20	2
Concern for nonprofessional well-being of teachers	0	0	6	16	4
Accessibility of administrative staff	0	7	14	5	0
Reduction of nonteaching responsibilities	0	0	0	0	26
Information about professional development	0	0	1	20	5
Information about teacher resources	0	0	6	20	0
Administrators' personal interest in teachers' work	0	0	0	22	4
Help from volunteers	0	0	0	20	6

During the third week of the intervention, the writer spearheaded efforts to increase school pride by organizing

a club to coordinate school pride activities. Membership was open to students, staff, parents, and community members. The writer introduced some ideas and arranged for consultants or resource persons to present others. A representative of a commercial home retail supply business offered ideas about improving the appearance of the school grounds and made a commitment to provide some of the supplies that would be needed. A senior art student from a nearby college agreed to paint a mural on the wall near the school entrance with the help of art students. A paint store retailer offered free paint for any rooms or other areas that needed painting.

Near the end of the first month of the intervention, the writer began efforts to promote greater social interaction among the faculty and staff. One activity utilized was to provide a 30-minute social period before the faculty meeting scheduled at the end of the month. A local food chain retailer was asked to provide refreshments for the event. The store manager agreed and provided soft drinks, a sandwich tray, a fruit and vegetable tray, and cookies. Comments by teachers after the meeting indicated the get-together was a much-welcomed activity to create more collegiality among faculty and staff. A similar activity was provided before each faculty meeting. On

teacher workdays, refreshments were made available in the cafeteria.

A segment of the first faculty meeting was devoted to explaining to teachers how volunteers could be used at the school and encouraging them to recruit parent volunteers through their students. Some time was spent discussing the types of duties that volunteers could perform and the rules they needed to follow. Teachers expressed interest in having volunteers grade papers, assume hall and bus monitoring duty, and perform clerical duties. Except for scoring objective tests, the use of volunteers was discouraged for grading papers.

At this meeting, teachers were introduced to the Bulletin Board of the Month project. Teachers were encouraged to use their bulletin boards more creatively. They were told that the classroom selected by a special committee of parents and district personnel as having the best, most creative bulletin board each month would receive a prize. The writer solicited the prize items from local businesses.

To increase teachers' access to free or inexpensive teaching resources, the writer "surfed" the Internet and browsed professional journals to identify sources to which teachers could apply. Helpful Web sites and mailing

addresses were provided to the teachers.

A fitness program that emphasized exercise and diet was initiated. Teachers were encouraged to walk in the gymnasium and around the athletic field. On selected days, a local food chain retailer brought in low-calorie foods for teachers to sample and distributed nutritional recipes that teachers could try at home. At one faculty meeting, an expert in relaxation was invited to give teachers tips on stress reduction. The physical education and family and consumer services staff also helped out with these activities. Teachers' evaluations of these activities indicated they appreciated the interest being shown in their nonprofessional well-being.

During the first parents-teachers meeting, at which refreshments donated by the local food chain retailer were served, a state legislator presented information about parental rights and responsibilities related to No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. He also provided information about other relevant legislative processes and mandates. In their evaluations of this event, parents said the information provided was useful to them.

The writer worked with the organization president to ensure that subsequent meetings were of equally high quality. Because refreshments had been so popular at the

first parents-teachers meeting, the writer recruited churches to provide refreshments at all subsequent meetings. The turnout for each meeting was higher than it had been at any meeting during the previous school year. Parents showed enthusiasm for selecting a school improvement project for the spring, and with the writer's assistance and support from local businesses, they decided to paint all of the school hallways and to plant flowers and shrubs in vacant spots on the grounds that were not covered by grass.

Immediately after the implementation period began, the writer began to collect information to acknowledge the birthdays of all employees (unless the employees opted out of the activity and preferred not to have their birthdays acknowledged), by announcing the birthday over the school's public announcement system on the actual day of the event and sending a birthday card. Also, announcements concerning teachers' sickness or distress and major accomplishments were placed in each employee's mailbox.

As part of the effort to involve parents and to recruit volunteers, teachers were encouraged to invite parents to serve in their children's homerooms. Ten of the 26 teachers had a parent who served as a volunteer at least once each month. Teachers indicated that this activity provided them

with relief from nonteaching duties and the presence of the parent in the classroom served to help keep the students orderly. Once a parent served in his or her child's homeroom, it became easier for the teacher to recruit the parent to do other things around the school.

The writer substituted for teachers, one at a time, while they observed their peers or worked collaboratively with them. To facilitate this process, teachers were asked to plan activities suitable for the writer to handle during the time they would be engaged in peer observation or collaborative work. This intervention worked quite well, and teachers who participated were enthusiastic about this new opportunity. In all, 13 teachers participated in the activity during the implementation period. They took turns leaving their students with the writer. At the next scheduled faculty meeting following these sharing experiences, the participants told the whole faculty about the benefits and challenges experienced.

During the second half of the implementation period, the writer arranged a luncheon for teachers at a local dining establishment on one of their workdays and a night out together on a Friday.

Teacher of the Semester awards were presented at the end of the first semester and the second semester. Each



time, the teacher selected was nearly overcome by the students' outpouring of support for her or him. Other teachers, especially those who also had a high number of votes, expressed determination to win the next time around.

The writer developed a survey instrument to assess the effectiveness of the applied dissertation activities (see Appendix C). Responses indicated that the activities were effective in some areas and not so effective in others.

## Chapter 5: Results

### *Data Collection*

One expected outcome of the applied dissertation was that all of the 26 teachers would indicate they wanted to return to the school the next year. Teachers were asked to indicate "yes" or "no" on a form that asked if they wished to return to the school the following year. Comments were also solicited. A copy of this survey form is included in Appendix E. At the end of the first half of the implementation period when teachers were asked if they wished to return to the school the next year, 12 teachers indicated they wanted to return to the school in 2004-2005. By the end of the intervention period, 18 indicated they wanted to return. This was fewer than the 26 anticipated but more than the number of teachers who indicated that they wanted to return when they were first asked.

### *Analysis of Results*

Analysis of results for each of the outcomes consisted of a numerical count of the responses to the related survey item. Because the number of participants was less than 100, numbers, rather than percentages, are used in discussion of the findings.

### *Discussion*

Based on observations made by the writer, the

activities implemented to raise and maintain morale among teachers at the target school had a positive effect. After a few visits to their classrooms, the teachers began to be more trustful of the writer. Initially, the teachers were hesitant to ask for advice and assistance in areas they would be evaluated on, but as the intervention progressed, they began to ask for the writer's help in solving problems.

For example, one young, Caucasian, first-year female teacher had a class that consisted entirely of African American males who proved to be unruly most of the time. The teacher obviously dreaded having this class come to her because she felt and behaved as though she lacked the ability to manage these students successfully. The students took advantage of this fact and showed no mercy. She finally asked the writer, who was an African American male, for some insight into the behavior of her students. He referred her to several journal articles and books that dealt with young African American male students. After she began to read the materials to which she had been referred, she became more confident in her ability to work with these students. She started to incorporate methods of effective teaching that engaged the students to a greater degree and that were more relevant to the cultural experience and

aspirations of the students.

Because of her upbringing and education in predominantly Caucasian environments, this teacher had experienced a different cultural orientation. Also, she was one of the teachers who commuted to the school each day. Consequently, the differences in the cultural factors with which she was familiar and those that she encountered in the school created for her a cultural shock that tainted her whole perception of teaching. When the writer's visits to this teacher's classroom began, she frequently expressed her intent to leave at the end of the year. However, when the principal or assistant principal visited her classroom, she never admitted needing help. She said in the reflection sessions that she felt somewhat ill at ease admitting weaknesses before someone who would, later on, be evaluating her.

Although the principal made several visits to the teacher's classroom, her help-seeking behavior never changed. This reaction on the part of the teacher suggests that even though teachers say they want administrative support, they may not mean help in instruction or classroom management. Perhaps they mean having the administrators support their decision making with respect to students and parents, as was the case with another teacher at the

school.

The teacher dismissed two students from the class because of an infraction of class rules. The teacher expected the students to be placed in in-school suspension, but the assistant principal sent the students back to the classroom without consulting with the teacher. The teacher refused to admit the students, who appeared to be smirking and gloating over what they thought was a victory over the teacher. The teacher promptly sent these students out of the classroom again. Again they returned, saying the assistant principal told them to do so. The teacher finally told the students that either they would go or she would go. The assistant principal admitted them to in-school suspension but wrote the teacher up for being insubordinate by refusing to readmit the students to her classroom. The teacher responded in writing that her authority in the classroom was undermined when she sent the students out and they were told to return to the classroom. She indicated that she felt she did not have authority to make decisions concerning discipline in her own classroom.

In another instance, a student failed to do required assignments and received an F grade for the 9-week grading period. The parent became concerned and came to the school angry, demanding to see the teacher. Without any kind of

alert, the teacher was summoned to the conference room to meet with the parent and student in the presence of the assistant principal. The parent immediately attacked the teacher as being racist and "out to get all Black students." The assistant principal did nothing to arbitrate; the teacher was left on her own to defend herself. When the parent eventually calmed down enough for the teacher to inform her that the student had failed to do required work, the parent confronted the student who admitted the teacher was telling the truth. When the meeting was over and it was time for the teacher to return to the classroom, the assistant principal offered no words of support or encouragement. Instead, he only pointed out that the incident would be written up and placed in the teacher's folder.

When the writer acknowledged birthdays and illness or distress in the teachers' lives, several of them expressed appreciation but said that the action would not have taken place if the writer had not been present. Although the entire administrative staff signed birthday cards, some teachers still doubted the interest of the principal in such matters.

As a result of the writer's encouragement and orientation to the use of volunteers, teachers became more

willing to recruit volunteers, especially from among the parents who did not work and who seemed to have an interest in the school. The principal gave his full blessings to having parent volunteers perform clerical tasks and assume bus, cafeteria, and hall monitoring duties. Teachers used the time they would otherwise have spent in these activities to catch up on paperwork or to plan lessons. Instead of having to eat with their students, teachers found a little time for themselves. They seemed to be highly appreciative of their newfound freedom. As the word spread about how some teachers were using volunteers to their advantage, other teachers began to recruit parent volunteers. They indicated the process was much easier than they had thought it was going to be. Some had just assumed that when they were assigned such duties, they had to perform them by themselves. They thought that any suggestion that someone else act in their stead would be disapproved by the administration. They were pleasantly surprised to find the opposite to be the case.

Teachers began to look forward to the short social periods before staff meetings. When such meetings were held at the end of the school day, some teachers wanted to hurry home, but most of them saw the socials as an opportunity to spend time exclusively with adults. They were able to share

items of personal interest and explore matters with their colleagues that were not on the agenda for the day.

Local business representatives who were asked to provide refreshments or incentives for teachers indicated they had long wanted to take a more active role in school matters but did not know how to go about it. They said that having their names listed as sponsors on the various programs of the school advertised that they were civic minded and they could also write off the cost of these donations on their income taxes. Only one business that was contacted failed to provide any kind of product. The manager said she forgot the date of the event for which she had agreed to make a donation. When parents found out that a business was supporting the school, many said they made a special effort to patronize that business if they had not done so before.

Although some teachers were unable to participate in professional development activities in the summer, they were nonetheless pleased to know what opportunities existed. Three teachers took advantage of information they were provided by the writer and applied to programs mentioned in the materials.

The information on free or inexpensive teaching resources was put to use by 15 of the 26 teachers.



Previously, some had been using free resources provided by the textbook publishers, but only 1 had time to look for additional resources. To facilitate the sending off of requests to journals, the writer set up a box where the requests could be dropped off, and the writer personally mailed the requests. For requests from the Internet, teachers who wanted materials had only to circle their choices on the information sheet they were provided. The writer made the requests on-line at the end of each school day and provided the materials to the teacher as soon as they were received.

Parents were impressed by the information session with the state legislator. They indicated on the post-session evaluations that this was the first time any of their legislators had come to talk to them about anything except election or reelection.

The practice of serving food at the parents-teachers meetings proved to be a very effective method for getting parents to attend. The announcement they were sent in the mail encouraged them to bring their children with them, even if the children were not students at the school. When parents brought their children to the meeting and they enjoyed the refreshments together, the parents did not have to rush home to cook. The food for this meeting consisted

of hot dogs, chips, and drinks. Post-session evaluations indicated that the fact that refreshments were served had influenced some of the parents to attend who would not have come otherwise.

Inviting parents to the homerooms proved to be quite successful in getting parents involved with their children's homeroom classes. Some parents who could not physically be present during the day volunteered to purchase needed items for the classroom, such as dictionaries and grammar guides that could be inserted into students' notebooks. In all, 28 parents volunteered or made donations, all of which supplemented what the school provided.

The writer substituted for teachers while they collaborated with or observed their colleagues teach. After a slow start, the writer had more requests than he could handle. As word spread among the teachers, more and more requests were received. At first, only 2 or 3 days notice was required, but by the end of the intervention period, a 2-week notice was required, and teachers who had not received the service previously were given priority over those who made repeat requests. Out of this grew professional learning communities, which included an interdisciplinary program presented to the entire school by

the language arts, social studies, music, and art teachers. In the past, it had been every one for him- or herself. During this implementation period, teachers were able to work together on common themes and to share information about students each of them had in their classes. As a result of this improved communication, teachers were better able to provide instruction for these students.

Prior to the implementation of the applied dissertation, some teachers tended to use the bulletin boards in their classrooms for routine messages or reminders to students. When they put materials on the boards at the beginning of the school year, they generally left the materials up from August to June either because they said they did not have time to change them or they thought no one would notice. The Bulletin Board of the Month initiative encouraged them to change the bulletin board monthly in order to win a prize. The judges were a panel of parents, district administrators, and building administrators. Each classroom, including teachers and homeroom students, soon wanted to outdo others and win. The writer took pictures of all the bulletin boards.

Nutrition and fitness were things everyone talked about but did nothing about until the writer spearheaded the initiative. A few teachers dropped out of the nutrition and

fitness program, but over half of those who began the activities were still participating when the intervention period ended.

Students were more excited about the Teacher of the Semester award than the teachers. The students made the project a real contest and campaigned for various teachers. The teachers themselves were more self-effacing and did not "toot their own horns." Ninety percent of the student body took part in the voting.

No teachers had out-of-field permits; therefore, no activities had to be undertaken to address this issue. Also, the staff development schedule for the 2004-2005 school year had already been determined by the administration before the school year began. Even though the writer obtained suggestions from teachers as to what they felt would be more beneficial, few, if any, changes were made to the schedule.

The writer constructed a questionnaire to ascertain teachers' perceptions of the applied dissertation activities (see Appendix C). Responses from teachers indicated that some persons seemed to be positively affected. Very few were negatively affected, but a number of teachers responded that they did not have an opinion on some of the survey statements. This was to be expected

because some of the teachers, for various reasons, were unable to participate in the observation and collaboration activities and the Friday night out.

Appendix F presents a summary of the teachers' responses to the survey. The writer felt quite gratified that 22 of the 26 teachers checked *strongly agree* in response to the statement, "Activities coordinated by the assistant to the principal made a big difference in the morale of teachers in the school." All of the teachers strongly agreed that parental support was higher this academic year than it had been previously.

Half of the teachers indicated they felt the administration was appreciative of them. However, several teachers indicated in their comments that they believed the appreciation expressed toward them came primarily from the writer instead of the principal and assistant principal. The teachers still lacked complete confidence in these individuals. Although 25 teachers indicated they would like to see teachers have more input into school decision making, a number of them indicated in their comments they did not believe it would happen. These teachers believed that the principal and the district office personnel would continue to exclude teachers from the decision-making process. Half of the teachers indicated dissatisfaction

with the professional development activities that were offered during the 2003-2004 school year.

With respect to anticipated outcomes, the following results occurred. Outcome 1, which was that 17 of the 26 teachers would have continuing contracts, was achieved. In fact, 18 of the 26 teachers, 1 more than anticipated, indicated they would like to return to the school the following year. Outcome 2, which was that all of the 26 teachers would have in-field credentials, was achieved. Outcome 3, which was that all of the 26 teachers would indicate they wanted to return to the school the next year, was not achieved. Only 18 of the teachers indicated they wanted to return to the school the next year. Outcome 4, which was that responses to a survey of teachers would indicate 17 of the 26 teachers were satisfied with the number and nature of their nonteaching duties, was not achieved. Although teachers did not indicate satisfaction with their nonteaching duties, 18 of them did say that they now used volunteers to assist them with their nonteaching duties. Outcome 5, which was that 11 of 26 teachers would indicate satisfaction with professional development activities, was not achieved. Only 8 teachers indicated satisfaction with the professional development activities offered during the 2003-2004 school year.

*Recommendations*

The writer makes the following recommendations based on the results of this study:

1. Suggestions from teachers should be considered in developing the schedule of staff development for the 2004-2005 school year.

2. The administration should provide more support to teachers in disciplinary and parental matters.

3. Teacher support activities that are similar to those undertaken by the writer during this intervention should be continued into future years.

*Recommendations for Further Research*

Although many teachers reported more job satisfaction and higher morale, there were still some who did not want to return to the school the following year. Although the writer performed tasks the teachers appreciated and benefited from, the teachers still saw him as an extra person, not as one of the school's administrators. If teacher-support activities are to be effective in raising teacher morale and increasing teacher retention, it appears that teachers need to feel that those who evaluate them also appreciate them. Because teacher satisfaction is moderated by a number of factors and may be related to (a) perceived teacher support, (b) the absence of physical

stress, (c) perceived parental support, (d) the learning environment, and (e) perceived teacher appreciation, the school administrators' awareness of these factors needs to be enhanced.

Admittedly, the situation surrounding the implementation of the interventions of this applied dissertation was atypical because most schools do not have a full-time person who does nothing but provide teacher support. Because that is the case, research needs to be done on administrator behavior when there is no special agent present.

#### *Dissemination of Results*

The writer disseminated the results of this applied dissertation to the principal of the school and to all of the teachers. Results were also presented at district meetings where other principals were present and included in proposals for papers to be presented at county and state teachers' organization meetings.

The writer submitted an article that was based on this study to several journals, including the *NASSP Bulletin* and the *American School Board Journal*, for consideration for publication. The applied dissertation was also submitted to Proquest, a dissertation publishing company.



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Appendix A

Teacher Survey: Why Teachers Leave

This survey was administered to 10 teachers who had been at the school for at least 2 years and had at least some association with teachers who left.

### Survey

Survey No. \_\_\_\_\_

In the past year, 18 teachers chose not to return to this school. The purpose of this survey is to identify some of the reasons you have heard given for teachers' decision not to return. Please assist us by placing a checkmark beside each one you have heard given in the past 2 years. Do not write your name on your survey form. Your answers will be kept confidential. They are for research purposes only and will not be used to make personnel decisions. Please return at the end of this meeting.

1. Number of teachers who left that you knew fairly well

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Which of the following have you heard given by teachers who left in the past 2 years as reasons why they would not return?

\_\_\_\_\_ Salary

\_\_\_\_\_ Availability of fringe benefits such as insurance

\_\_\_\_\_ Lack of administrator support

- \_\_\_\_\_ Lack of incentives
- \_\_\_\_\_ Educational level of students
- \_\_\_\_\_ Student discipline
- \_\_\_\_\_ Parental involvement with and support of the school
- \_\_\_\_\_ Class size
- \_\_\_\_\_ Paper load
- \_\_\_\_\_ Lack of collegiality and opportunity to network with other teachers
- \_\_\_\_\_ Nonteaching duties such as bus and hall duty
- \_\_\_\_\_ General lack of respect and appreciation for teachers

2. Of the reasons you have heard given, which would you rank as the top five, with 1 being the most frequently mentioned.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Salary
- \_\_\_\_\_ Availability of fringe benefits such as insurance
- \_\_\_\_\_ Lack of administrator support
- \_\_\_\_\_ Lack of incentives
- \_\_\_\_\_ Educational level of students
- \_\_\_\_\_ Student discipline
- \_\_\_\_\_ Lack of parental involvement with and support of the school
- \_\_\_\_\_ Class size
- \_\_\_\_\_ Paper load



\_\_\_\_\_ Lack of collegiality and opportunity to network with other teachers

\_\_\_\_\_ Nonteaching duties such as bus and hall duty

\_\_\_\_\_ General lack of respect and appreciation for teachers

Appendix B

Survey of Teacher Morale

Please complete this survey as accurately and as honestly as you can. Your responses will remain strictly confidential.

In Part 1, indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement by checking SA if you *strongly agree*, A if you *agree*, SD if you *strongly disagree*, D if you *disagree*, or NA if you *have no opinion*.

In Part 2, rate each item on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest.

Part 1:

Statement	SA	A	SD	D	NA
I am completely satisfied with my working conditions.					
I would prefer not to have nonteaching responsibilities, such as cafeteria or hall duty.					
The administrative staff at my school is always visible and accessible.					
The administrative staff at my school makes frequent nonevaluative visits to my classroom.					
I participate in numerous out-of-school professional development activities.					
I am kept informed of professional development activities.					
I know of several sources of free or inexpensive resources for teachers.					

In my spare time at school, I research resources for teachers.					
Local businesses and industries take an active, visible part in the activities of my school.					
Local businesses and industries support the program at my school in a tangible way.					
The administrative staff of my school expresses personal interest in my work.					
All teachers have an open invitation to visit administrative offices and to seek support.					
Volunteers are available to assist teachers in various ways.					
Clerical assistance is provided to teachers.					
The administration always acknowledge teachers' birthdays, sickness and distress, accomplishments, etc.					
The administration at my school shows appreciation for teachers' hard work.					
Teachers feel welcome to approach administrative staff for support.					
My morale this school year is high, and I am happy to come to school each day.					
The morale of most other teachers I know at my school is high.					
I often feel overextended in my work at my school.					

At my school opportunities exist for staff to observe peers and offer encouragement.					
I have time for collaborative work.					
I am pleased with how attractive my school surroundings are.					
My school regularly recognizes and celebrates outstanding achievement of its teachers.					
My school has a wellness program to encourage teachers to stay mentally and physically fit.					
I am strongly considering not returning to this school next year.					

Part 2: On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the highest, rank each of the following in terms of importance to you.

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	Ranking				
Item	1	2	3	4	5
Attractive school surroundings					
Appreciation of teachers					
Time for collaborative work with peers					
Concern for nonprofessional well-being of teachers					
Accessibility of administrative staff					

---

Reduction of nonteaching responsibilities

Information about professional development activities

Information about free or inexpensive resources for teachers

Administrators' personal interest in teachers' work

Help from volunteers

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Appendix C

Survey of Teacher Perceptions of the Applied  
Dissertation Activities

Instructions: During the past school year, the assistant to the principal has conducted a number of activities in our school. Please indicate the effect those activities had by checking the appropriate response to each item below. Your answers will remain anonymous.

Statement	SA	A	SD	D	NA
Activities coordinated by the assistant to the principal made a big difference in the morale of teachers at the school.					
I appreciated the social activities coordinated by the school.					
I use more volunteers to assist me in nonteaching duties.					
I appreciated the time I had to work with colleagues during the school day.					
I believe the administration is appreciative of teachers.					
Parental support has been greater this year than ever before.					
Parents and the community at large express more interest in and support for the school.					
I have been able to improve my teaching through the use of free or inexpensive teacher resources.					
I am more knowledgeable about professional development opportunities outside the school and district.					



There is greater collegiality among teachers.					
Administrative support has been available to me.					
The school's physical environment has improved.					
I feel good about my school and administration.					
I would like to come back to this school next year.					
I would like to see the activities spearheaded by the assistant to the principal continue next school year.					
I will definitely recruit more volunteers to help me next year.					
I would like to see teachers have more input into school decision-making.					
My morale has improved over the past academic year.					

Comments:

Appendix D

Responses to Survey of Teacher Morale

Statement	SA	A	SD	D	NA
I am completely satisfied with my working conditions.	0	4	0	19	3
I would prefer not to have nonteaching responsibilities, such as cafeteria or hall duty.	0	26	0	0	0
The administrative staff at my school is always visible and accessible.	0	6	4	16	0
The administrative staff at my school makes frequent nonevaluative visits to my classroom.	0	1	0	20	5
I am kept informed of professional development opportunities.	0	2	0	24	0
I know of several sources of free or inexpensive resources for teachers.	0	6	1	19	0
All teachers have an open invitation to visit administrative offices and to seek support.	0	6	0	20	0
Volunteers are available to assist teachers in various ways.	0	4	2	20	0
The administration always acknowledges teachers' birthdays, sickness and distress, and accomplishments.	0	0	0	26	0
The administration at my school shows appreciation for teachers' hard work.	0	0	0	26	0
My morale this school year is high, and I am happy to come to work each day.	0	6	0	20	0
The morale of most other teachers I know at my school is high.	0	4	0	20	2
At my school, opportunities exist for staff to observe peers and offer encouragement.	0	0	0	26	0
My school regularly recognizes and celebrates outstanding achievement of its teachers.	0	6	0	20	0
My school has a wellness program to encourage teachers to stay mentally and physically fit.	0	0	0	26	0

*Note.* SA = strongly agree; A = agree; SD = strongly disagree; D = disagree; NA = have no opinion.

Appendix E

School Choice, 2004-2005

Instructions: Please assist us in planning for 2004-2005 by indicating by checking the appropriate answer if you would like to return to this school next year.

\_\_\_\_\_1. I would like to return to this school next year.

Comment:

\_\_\_\_\_2. I would not like to return to this school next year.

Comment:

Appendix F

Results of Survey of Teacher Perceptions of the  
Applied Dissertation Activities

Statement	SA	A	SD	D	NA
Activities coordinated by the assistant to the principal made a big difference in the morale of the teachers at the school.	22	1	1	1	1
I appreciated the social activities coordinated by the school.	3	15	0	0	8
I use more volunteers to assist me in nonteaching duties.	10	8	0	6	2
I appreciated the time I had to work with colleagues during the school day.	8	5	0	0	13
I believe the administration is appreciative of teachers.	7	7	5	0	7
Parental support has been greater this year than ever before.	26	0	0	0	0
Parents and the community at large express more interest in and support for the school.	19	7	0	0	0
I have been able to improve my teaching through the use of free or inexpensive teacher resources.	16	2	0	0	8
I am more knowledgeable about professional development opportunities outside the school and district.	15	5	0	0	6
There is greater collegiality among teachers.	3	18	0	1	4
Administrative support has been available to me.	5	10	4	5	2
The school's physical environment has improved.	6	20	0	0	0
I feel good about my school and administration.	4	15	0	3	4
I would like to come back to this school next year.	3	15	0	0	8
I would like to see the activities spearheaded by the assistant to the principal continue next school year.	4	21	0	0	1
I will definitely recruit more volunteers to help me next year.	2	18	0	2	4

I would like to see teachers have more input into school decision making.	3	15	2	2	4
My morale has improved over the past academic year.	2	18	0	3	3
I was satisfied with professional development activities this year.	0	8	5	10	3

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*Note.* SA = *strongly agree*; A = *agree*; SD = *strongly disagree*; D =  
*disagree*; NA = *have no opinion*.