Teachers as Caring Classroom Leaders:

A Case Study of Practices that Encourage the Hearts of Students

Beth K. Larkins-Strathy, Ed.D.

Teacher

Rochambeau Middle School, Regional District 15

Middlebury, CT

Diana J. LaRocco, Ed.D.

Assistant Professor

University of Hartford

Hartford, CT

Paper presented at the 39th Annual New England Educational Research Organization Conference

April 25-27, 2007

Portsmouth, New Hampshire

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to present select findings from a case study of a single suburban middle school. The purpose of the investigation was to explore and describe teachers' and students' perceptions of the caring leadership practices that seventh grade teachers used in their classrooms and the differences between those perceptions. The seven leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner's (2003) theory of "encouraging the heart" served as the conceptual framework. Data were collected using in-person interviews with 10 seventh grade teachers and two focus groups with 15 of their students. Both teachers and students reported that teachers mainly set and modeled behavioral standards, which were focused on students assuming responsibility for their own learning and demonstrating self-control. Neither group of participants described specific instances of the teachers setting academic standards or content-based goals. Implications for future research are offered.

Pedagogical Caring and Student Achievement

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) mandated that states use reform strategies that are founded in empirical evidence and lead to increased student achievement on standardized tests. One evidence-based practice that has shown promise in this regard is the notion of "caring" in the pedagogical sense. Pedagogical caring can be thought of as "shaping of meaningful, supportive, rewarding, and productive relationships" (Zins, Weisburg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004, p. 33). Notably, emerging data suggests that students who are in educational environments that can be characterized as caring achieve at higher levels on standardized tests than students who are in educational environments that are perceived as less than caring (Lee, Smith, Perry, & Smylie, 1999; Osher, Dwyer, & Jackson, 2004; Ryan & Patrick, 2001).

Ryan and Patrick (2001) found that students who believed their teachers cared about them performed better on standardized tests. Similarly, Lee et al. (1999) documented minority students achieving at high levels when they worked with teachers who expected them to succeed and provided a safe and warm environment in which to learn. Osher et al. (2004) identified three ways urban schools provided high-quality education and produced high-achieving students: (a) caring connections, (b) positive behavioral supports, and (c) social and emotional learning. Students who perceive their teachers as caring have also been found to have higher levels of: (a) motivation (Burleson & Picard, 2004; Wentzel, 1997, 1998), (b) effort (Frome & Dunham, 2002), (c) participation (Turner & Patrick, 2004), and (d) engagement (Klem & Connell, 2004; Ryan & Patrick, 2001).

Middle School Students and Pedagogical Caring

It is well known that when it comes to a child's rate of growth, adolescence is, with the exception of infancy, unlike any other time in a person's development. There are many important

physical and affective changes taking place in an incredibly short time (Wormelli, 2002). Concomitantly, middle school aged students are making the journey from childhood and adult direction, to the more demanding world of choice and adolescence (Stuhlman, Hamre, & Pianta, 2002). Because of this, early advocates for the modern middle school believed that it was critical for schools to move from a junior high school philosophy that mirrored a traditional departmentalized high school approach, to a philosophy that would be more appropriate for meeting the complex and rapidly changing needs and interests of young adolescents. Pedagogical caring was a foundational component of this shift and the development of the modern middle school (Richardson, 2001).

The research on early adolescents and their middle school transitions from elementary school to secondary schools has also shown that student-teacher connectedness and trust are critical mechanisms for achieving quality in middle school classrooms (Eccles & Midgely, 1989; Simmons & Blyth, 1987). Successful middle-level teachers appear to use practices that are characteristic of those used by exemplary leaders (Sommers, 2003). These practices include teachers setting and maintaining high academic and behavioral standards, while providing an environment in which the teacher demonstrates respect, empathy, fairness, and acceptance, and where students are free to ask questions and make mistakes. Research (Battistich, Hom, & Roberts, 1995; McCaughtry, 2004; Wentzel, 1997, 1998) has also shown positive relationships between caring teachers and the academic motivation and achievement of middle school students. Corbett and Wilson's (1999) research with middle school students revealed that they felt they could learn well when teachers went out of their way to help and never gave up trying. At the middle-level, caring teacher practices appear to be having positive effects on student achievement.

Teachers as Caring Classroom Leaders

Much has been written about the role of teacher as leader (Lambert, 2003; Leithwood, & Jantzi, 2000). Further, conceptualization of this role has been presented in a "wide variety of contexts" (Frost & Harris, 2003, p. 480) and evolved over time. Silva, Gimbert, and Nolan (2000) described the evolution as having advanced through three major phases. In the first phase, teacher leaders filled management positions such as department heads, master teachers, and union leaders. The focus of this type of teacher leadership was "maintaining an efficient and effective educational system" (Silva et al., p. 780). In the second phase, teachers were acknowledged as instructional experts who created curricula and provided staff development. Terms such as team leaders and mentor teachers became common. The third phase of teacher leadership emerged when teachers were encouraged to meaningfully participate and voice their opinions in matters of teaching and learning. This phase in the evolution of teacher leadership "highlighted the importance of empowering teachers who work from within the classroom . . . [and promoted the idea that] . . . leadership [should be] part of the work a classroom teacher does on behalf of children" (Silva et al., p. 781).

Harris and Muijs (2004) contended that irrespective of context, "teacher leadership is primarily concerned with developing high quality learning and teaching in schools" (p. 39). Critical to continuous learning and development are the relationships teacher leaders form with their constituents. Harris (2002) captured the essence of teacher leaders in this regard when she wrote:

> The vision and practices of these leaders were organized around personal values such as modeling and promotion of respect for individuals, fairness and equality, caring for the well being and whole development of students and staff, integrity and honesty. It was

> evident that their leadership values and visions were primarily moral, i.e. dedicated to the welfare of staff and students, with the latter at the center. These values underpinned their relationships with staff, students, and parents and guided their day-to-day actions. (p. 18)

This characterization is reinforced by Bowman (2005) who asserted that teachers should be "serving" leaders who help others to succeed by recognizing their interests, unleashing their capacity and building on their strengths, removing obstacles that stand in their path, and modeling the skills and attitudes they teach. Moreover, he emphasized, "In context of the No Child Left Behind reform law, teachers as serving leaders downplay their positional power, while displaying a fierce resolve to hold their students accountable to high, rigorous academic standards" (p. 259).

Despite the rich body of research that focuses on teachers as leaders in schools, few empirical investigations have specifically examined middle school teachers' reports of the caring leadership practices that they use in their classrooms to promote student learning. Further, little has been written about middle school students' perceptions of these practices and whether their reports are the same or different from their teachers' perceptions. Therefore, the purpose of this case study of a single suburban middle school was to explore and describe seventh grade teachers' and students' reports of the caring leadership practices that teachers used in their classrooms. Specifically, middle school teachers' and students' reports were examined through the lens of Kouzes and Posner's (2003) leadership practice "encouraging the heart." As such, the primary research question was: What are middle school teachers' and students' reports of the caring leadership practices that teachers used in their classrooms?

Conceptual Framework

Through empirical investigations spanning two decades and involving thousands of exemplary leaders worldwide, Kouzes and Posner (2002) identified five practices that leaders used to inspire extraordinary performance in others: (a) model the way, (b) inspire a shared vision, (c) challenge the process, (d) enable others to act, and (e) encourage the heart. Kouzes and Posner (2003) further contended that the foundation for motivating constituents and sustaining them in doing their best work was a leader's demonstrations of genuine caring. They coined the phrase encouraging the heart to describe the practice of caring leadership. In the case of the study described here, teachers were considered leaders in their classrooms and students were considered their constituents or followers. Given this conception, it was deemed appropriate to use a leadership framework that was founded on leaders' demonstrations of caring.

Encouraging the heart, according to Kouzes and Posner (2003), comprises seven dimensions: (a) set clear standards, (b) expect the best, (c) pay attention, (d) set the example, (e) personalize recognition, (f) tell the story, and (g) celebrate together (p. 18). Table 1 contains brief descriptions of each of these dimensions.

Table 1

Dimensions of Encouraging the Heart (Kouzes & Posner, 2003)

Dimension	Description
Set Clear Standards	The teacher typically sets clear and meaningful academic, behavioral, and ethical standards (goals and values or principles). The teacher holds students accountable, motivates them, and provides them with assistance.
Expect the Best	The teacher characteristically expresses the belief that all students can learn. The belief is so strong that students believe they can achieve success.
Pay Attention	The teacher routinely notices what the students are doing, saying, or feeling. The teacher watches, listens, and uses student cues as the points of interaction.
Set the Example	The teacher habitually models the standards (goals and values) students are expected to achieve. The teacher also models the behaviors students are expected to demonstrate.
Personalize Recognition	The teacher gets to know students personally and characteristically recognizes students in special, meaningful, or memorable ways.
Tell the Story	The teacher typically tells stories to motivate students, help them learn, and help them understand feelings and emotions.
Celebrate Together	The teacher routinely celebrates with students to create and maintain a sense of community, culture, unity, and mission.

Methodology

The purpose of this investigation, exploring and describing middle school teachers' and students' reports of the caring leadership practices that teachers used in their classrooms, suggested that a single-case study design was appropriate. Yin (2003) stated that a case study design is preferred when the aim of the investigation is to explore a contemporary event and relevant behaviors over which the researcher has no control, as was the situation in this study. Two techniques were used to collect data, in-person interviews with 10 seventh grade teachers and two focus groups with 15 of their students.

Procedures

Approval was received from the university's Human Subject Committee to conduct the investigation. To protect participant confidentiality, a pseudonym is being used for the name of the school.

A single suburban middle school's seventh grade constituted the case and unit of analysis for this study. The school's seventh grade was drawn from the population of 167 middle or junior high schools that were administered by 166 local public school districts within a single northeastern state. Located in a suburban school district, Water's Edge Middle School was selected because with 1020 students and 69 teachers it was typical of configurations and populations of the state's middle schools. Additionally, the principal expressed a willingness to participate in the investigation and the school was a reasonable distance from the investigator's home.

Study participants were recruited from the 248 seventh grade students and their 10 core academic subject teachers. Core academic subjects included mathematics, language arts, history, science, and Spanish. The teacher participants were recruited from this group because students

met with them daily. All 10 of them agreed to be interviewed. Fifteen student volunteers were recruited from a random sample of 100 of the seventh grade students whose parents or guardians responded to a mailing.

Teacher interviews. In-person interviews were conducted with 10 seventh grade teachers. The researcher developed interview guide contained 14 open-ended, main questions that were aligned with the seven dimensions of the conceptual framework (Kouzes & Posner, 2003). There was a main question for each dimension with a set of related questions or probes. For example, for the dimension set clear standards, interviewees were asked to talk about the academic, behavioral, and ethical standards that they set for their students. Follow-up probes included asking interviewees to describe the ways in which they communicated expectations to their students, how they motivated students to meet expectations, and the strategies they used when students did not do so.

The researcher followed recommended procedures for credible qualitative interviewing (Creswell, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Yin, 2003). All of the interviews proceeded in the same fashion and each interviewee's participation was encouraged by using a conversational tone. The interview guide was followed carefully, but informally. During each interview, the researcher listened for meaning, checked for understanding, and asked for examples and clarifications (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Participants were offered an opportunity to review the interview transcripts; none of them chose to do so. Each of the interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes. All sessions were audio taped, field notes were made immediately following each of the interviews, and verbatim transcriptions were created.

Student focus groups. Two focus groups were conducted with 15 seventh grade students participating in total. The researcher developed focus group interview protocol contained two

introductory questions, one transition question, as suggested by Krueger and Casey (2000), and nine main questions with related probes, which were connected to the conceptual framework (Kouzes & Posner, 2003). For example, for the dimension set clear standards, students were asked to provide examples of how their seventh grade teachers helped them to do well in school. The prompts focused on eliciting the academic, behavioral, and ethical standards that their teachers set for them. Each focus group lasted approximately 90 minutes. Both were audio taped and verbatim transcriptions were created.

Data Analysis

Verbatim interview and focus group transcripts served as the data set for analysis. Qualitative analysis procedures as suggested by Creswell (2002) and Marshall and Rossman (1999) were used for both. The interview data were analyzed, followed by the focus group data. Then cross group comparisons of findings were made. Each transcript was read several times to generate categories, themes, and patterns. With each reading, these categories, themes, and patterns were compared to the conceptual framework (Kouzes and Posner, 2003), modified, and refined. Data displays were created and occurrences of major themes were counted (Miles & Huberman, 1994; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). To maintain accuracy and rigor during the coding and analysis of the data, the authors conferred with each other throughout the process.

Results

The results and discussion are organized according to two emergent themes: *setting clear standards and supporting students in meeting standards*. The interviewee quotes are representative of participants' responses.

Setting Clear Standards

According to Kouzes and Posner (2003), caring leaders encourage the hearts of their constituents by setting clear standards that are inclusive of goals and values (or ethical principles). Teachers, as caring classroom leaders, set standards that comprise academic, behavioral, and ethical goals, while keeping national, state, and local guidance in mind.

Academic standards. A comparison of teachers' and students' responses to questions about the seventh grade teachers in Water's Edge Middle School setting clear academic, behavioral, and ethical standards for and communicating them to the students, revealed that the teachers mainly focused on setting clear behavioral standards in their classrooms. Neither group of participants described specific instances of the teachers setting academic standards (i.e., content-based goals or expectations). This held true even when students and teachers were provided with additional prompts. This finding will be discussed further in the conclusion section of this paper.

Ethical standards. Almost all of the teachers reported setting expectations focused on values or principles, notably respect and honesty. As she reflected on how she believed that middle school education should include the promotion of principled conduct, this teacher described how she developed and posted a list of expectations for her students. She put respect at the top of that list. She said: "Respect one another; your key phrase is 'do unto others.' I keep [the rules] posted in the classroom and on the website." One third of the students also discussed instances of teachers setting expectations related to values or principles: "The school pushes the values that many people view as a necessary value to be a good person: respect. It might change students' views and how they act."

Behavioral standards. By contrast, both teachers and students reported that the seventh grade teachers mainly focused on setting behavioral standards and clearly communicating related expectations, which would enable students to be successful in school and beyond. Specifically, nearly all of the teachers and slightly more than half of the students told analogous stories of teachers aiming to have students assume responsibility for their own learning (e.g., managing their time, completing homework). One teacher shared how she expected students to take charge of tracking their grades:

> I have the kids keep a record or journal of their daily work and we update it with each assignment and each quiz they take. . . . After a homework assignment has been corrected or a test passed back, I have them record their grades. . . . Then, at the end of every marking period, the students have to calculate their own grades and depending on their accuracy, that counts as a quiz grade.

In a similar vein, one student recounted how teachers expected them to be responsible for completing their homework and setting their own goals:

> Well, they set necessary standards like making sure you do your homework and get your assignments in on time. Sometimes our teacher lets us set our own goals and standards. So, we try to make them, which I like because then we are not only following what they want us to do, but what we think we should do.

Half of the teachers and slightly more than half of the students also offered comparable examples of seventh grade teachers setting behavioral expectations related to students demonstrating self-control (e.g., listening while others are speaking, waiting to take a turn) and acknowledging the effects of their actions on others and the classroom climate. In discussing these behavioral standards, one teacher talked about how he reminded his students that they are

"in a room with 25 other people and they should remember that everything they do affects everyone in the room. That's the standard they should try to use to keep their behavior on track." Likewise, a student called particular attention to the importance of self-control and the effects that student actions had on the learning environment: "My Spanish teacher is really nice, but when someone is acting out, she like focuses on that and that takes away from our learning."

Although students did offer similar examples of teachers' expectations related to students' displays of self-control, they also reflected on how these expectations varied somewhat by individual teacher: "Different teachers set different standards, yet they are basically the same." Students also perceived that teachers did not always enforce the rules with each student:

> There are people who really act up a lot. My teacher has favorites, and the kids who act out are her favorites, so she kind of lets it slide. She doesn't do anything about it and lets it go because she treats them different from the rest of us.

Supporting Students in Meeting Standards

Kouzes and Posner (2003) posited, "leadership is soft and demanding, caring and conscientious" (p. 45). It entails not only holding constituents accountable for meeting expectations but also encouraging their hearts by letting them know whether they are making progress towards goals and providing them with feedback and support to do so. Both the teachers and the participating students in this study perceived that the seventh grade teachers supported students in meeting the standards they set by providing extra assistance, motivating them, and holding them accountable.

Providing students with extra assistance. A comparison of teachers' and students' responses to questions about seventh grade teachers supporting students in meeting the standards and expectations they set, revealed that all of the students and nearly all of the teachers perceived

that teachers provided students with extra assistance. Among other examples, both groups of participants often shared stories of teachers spending additional time with students, outside the normal instructional periods, and coaching and giving students formative feedback about progress toward goals. A student, who was struggling with a math quiz, shared how he appreciated the time the teacher spent with him after school:

> I scored really bad and almost everyone did well. I took much longer than them, so my math teacher called home to say she could help me with it. The next day I stayed after and she walked me through it and I finished the quiz.

Teachers talked about meeting with students during corrective block (study hall), during lunch, and after school. Often, teachers used these times to work on behavioral or ethical concerns rather than academic issues. One teacher described:

> For instance, if a kid is doing something that is bad I will say, "How about we do lunch?" They know they are in trouble, but. . .I will do it in a positive way. "Let me book you a table by the window."

These teachers also recounted how they would ask students to be part of the solution: "How can we work on your attitude, your behavior, your motivation, whatever it might be, and homework? How can we get you to succeed?"

Motivating students. Students and teachers alike talked about how the seventh grade teachers motivated students by encouraging them verbally, telling them stories, and celebrating with them. Nearly all of the teachers and two thirds of the students reported that the seventh grade teachers used verbal praise to encourage students to meet expectations. Teachers often described encouraging their students with compliments for work well done: "Positive reinforcement is key. Just praising kids when they do well. 'Great answer. That is the best

answer I have heard all day.' Students shared many parallel examples: "If I do well, my teacher says, 'WOW! Good job,' or 'Well done,' and gives me a smiley face on my paper. I also like how they talk to me and notice when I do better." Likewise, another student said, "I like when the teacher cheers everyone on."

In addition to using verbal praise as a motivator, all of the teachers and nearly two thirds of the students reported that seventh grade teachers told stories to engage students and help them academically and behaviorally. Both groups of participants most often recounted teachers telling stories that included them or their family members. One teacher related, "We got through doing human body systems. The kids were absolutely fascinated with the circulatory system. So, I shared with them the heart problem I had and the procedure I had done. I showed them the catheters."

Finally, celebrations aimed at motivating students took many forms. Well over half of the teachers and students shared examples of seventh grade teachers celebrating to applaud whole class achievements. On such example comes from a teacher who recounted holding special parties with his students in celebration of their involvement and success with community service activities: "I let the kids have a party when they filled three boxes for the food drive . . . we had popcorn and a movie. Sometimes we have pizza parties." Similarly, teachers and students reported that the teachers celebrated to have fun for fun's sake. One student explained that his homeroom celebrated for fun's sake on the last Friday of every month, "Well, it is the last Friday of every month and there are party planners in my homeroom and it's like we have to plan everything and get kids to bring in stuff."

Holding students accountable. Nearly all of the teachers and slightly more than half of the students reported that the seventh grade teachers held them accountable for meeting goals

and expectations. Here again, it is not surprising that, for the most part, teachers and students talked about accountability in relationship to behavioral standards and the examples they provided were comparable. The teachers often described themselves as being proactive and providing predictable and relevant consequences that became stronger for repeated misbehaviors:

> We start off with lunch/recess detention. Then they make a phone call home themselves. Then we have a parent conference, and oh, before that, I put it to the team. I see if there is anyone else who is having a problem. Sometimes I make the call home first, and sometimes I talk to the team first. It depends on what is happening and how bad the situation is. Then we ask the parent to come in.

Conclusion

This paper presented select findings from a case study of a single suburban middle school. The purpose of the investigation was to explore and describe teachers' and students' perceptions of the caring leadership practices that seventh grade teachers used in their classrooms and the differences between those perceptions. The design of the study is both a strength and limitation as is the fact the primary author is a middle school teacher.

The emerging themes presented here confirm and extend research that suggests middle school teachers focus heavily on students' classroom behaviors. Lane, Wehby, and Cooley's (2006) study of teachers' expectations of student behaviors across grade levels, revealed that middle school teachers regarded self-control as very important. Chisom, Buttery, Chuckabarah, and Henson (2001) found that student behavior ranked third among the 11 items that teachers identified as discouraging them from rendering the best teaching of which they were capable. Further, Ingram, Schroeder, and Seashore-Louis (2004) reported that the teachers in their study

were “far less likely to mention measures of student achievement than measures such as student behavior and affect in class” (p. 1269) as an outcome by which they would judge their effectiveness. Instead, participants in that study said it was more important that their students learned to respect each other and to be responsible and accountable for their behavior.

Perhaps it is not then surprising that participating teachers and students in Water’s Edge Middle School most often recounted stories about seventh grade teachers setting clear behavioral standards and holding students accountable for meeting those expectations. Having high expectations for and supporting middle school students in developing self-control, personal responsibility, and other prosocial behaviors have been found to lead to improvements in academic performance and school related attitudes (Battistich, 2001; Zins et al., 2004). It seems the teachers in the study presented here understood this.

Importantly, Water’s Edge Middle School teachers and the students also reported that the seventh grade teachers supported students in meeting the standards they set by providing students with extra assistance, motivating them, and holding them accountable. These findings support those of researchers such as Corbett and Wilson (1999) who found that students identified teachers as the main factor in determining how much they learned. The teachers that stood out for the students in that study were willing to help them whenever and however the students wanted them to. Similarly, Mansfield (2001) demonstrated how students’ perceived levels of teacher caring and support can influence their motivation and have a significant effect on academic engagement and outcomes.

Considering the forces driving today’s educational reform and school improvement efforts, including NCLB (2001) and other public policies that are focused on the nature of teachers’ classroom practices and improving student achievement, it is remarkable that neither

the teachers nor the students in the present investigation spoke directly of teachers setting clear academic standards. This omission is puzzling because a fundamental precept of the middle level philosophy is that all middle school students should participate in a challenging, standards based curriculum with the goals of continual learning and high achievement in mind (National Middle School Association, 1995). Whatever the reason, academic standards were not foremost on participants' minds.

Recently, there has been ever-increasing attention on what critics say is the failure of middle schools to improve academic achievement. Yecke (2006), for example, noted that her research showed student achievement often started to drop in middle school. In calling for higher standards and increased accountability, she strongly opined that the middle school concept had "wrought havoc on the intellectual development of many middle school students" (p. 22). Beane and Lipka (2006), argued, however, that if the middle level concept of both high academic standards and a developmentally responsive approach was actually carried out, academic achievement and improved behavior would occur.

Further research is needed to better understand how middle school teachers set and communicate academic standards. As standards-based reform continues to drive curriculum, accountability, and rigor, the demands of the teaching profession will also increase. Such a study would inform policy makers and teacher preparation programs, for example, about whether teachers reference national and state education standards when they create their lessons and units, and what kinds of training and policies may be needed for the future.

References

Battistich, V., Hom, A., & Roberts, W. (April, 1995). *Assessing students' and teachers' sense of the school as a caring community.* A paper presented at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA. Retrieved June 16, 2005, from http://www.devstu.org/about/articles/AERA95.pdf

Bowman, R. F. (2005). Teacher as servant leader. *The Clearing House, 78*, 257-259.

Burleson, W., & Picard, R. (2004). Affective agents: Sustaining motivation to learn through failure and a state of "stuck". Retrieved February 21. 2005 from, http://affect.media.mit.edu/pdfs/04.burleson-picard.pdf

Chissom, B., Buttery, T. J., Chukabarah, C. O., & Henson, K. T. (2001). A qualitative analysis of variables associated with professional satisfaction among middle school teachers. *Education, 108*, 75-80.

Corbett, H. D., & Wilson, B. L. (1999). *No excuses: The eighth grade year in six Philadelphia middle schools*. Philadelphia Education Fund. Retrieved February 18, 2005, from http://www.philaedfund.org/pdfs/no_excuses.pdf

Creswell, J. W. (2002). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research.* Upper Saddle River. NJ: Pearson Education.

Eccles, J. S., & Midgley, C. (1989). Stage/environment fit: Developmentally appropriate classrooms for early adolescents. In R. E. Ames & C. Ames (Eds.)*, Research on motivation, in education Vol. 3*. (pp. 139-186). New York: Academic Press.

Frome, P., & Dunham, C. (2002). Influence of school practices on students' academic Choices. Retrieved June 16, 2005, from http://www.sreb.org/programs/MiddleGrades/publications/reports/Guidance_Research_Brief_4-30-021.pdf

Frost, D., & Harris, A. (2003). Teacher leadership: towards a research agenda. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 33*, 479-498.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1989). *Fourth generation evaluation.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Harris, A. (2002). Effective leadership in schools. *School Leadership and Management, 22*, 15-26.

Harris, A., & Muijs, D. (2004) *Teacher leadership: Improvement through empowerment: A review of the literature*. Nottingham, UK: National College for School Leadership. Retrieved December 13, 2004, from http://www.ncsl.org.uk/media/1D5/9E/teacher-leadership.pdf

Ingram, D., Louis, K., & Schroeder, R. (2004). Accountability policies and teacher decision making: Barriers to the use of data to improve practice. *Teachers College Record*, *106*, 1258-1287.

Klem A. M., & Connell, J.P. (2004) Relationships matter: Linking teacher support to student engagement and achievement. *Journal of School Health, 74*, 262-272.

Kouzes, J., & Posner, B. (2003). *Encouraging the heart: A leader's guide to rewarding and recognizing others.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2000). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lambert, L. (2003). Leadership redefined: An evocative context for teacher leadership. *School Leadership and Management*, *23*, 421-430.

Lane, K. L., Wehby, J. H., & Cooley, C. (2006). Teacher expectations of students' classroom behavior across the grade span: Which social skills are necessary for success? *Exceptional Children, 72*, 153-167.

Lee, V. E., Smith, J. B., Perry, T. E., & Smylie, A. (1999). *Social support, academic press, and student achievement.* Chicago: Consortium on Chicago School Research.

Leithwood, K., & Janzi, D. (2000). The effects of transformational leadership on organizational conditions and student engagement with school. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *38,* 112-129.

Mansfield, C. (2001). *Contextual influences on student motivation in the first year of middle school*. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education. Retrieved May 23, 2005, from http://www.aare.edu.au/01pap/man01473.htm

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (1999). *Designing qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

McCaughtry, N. (2004). The emotional dimensions of a teacher's pedagogical content knowledge: Influences on content, curriculum, and pedagogy. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education,* 23, 30-47.

McMillan, J., & Schumacher, S. (2006). *Research in education: Evidence based inquiry*, (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Allyn & Bacon.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

National Middle School Association. (1995). *This we believe: Developmentally responsive middle level schools*. Columbus, OH: author.

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-110, 115 Stat. 1425 (2001).

Osher, D., Dwyer, K., & Jackson, S. (2004). *Safe, supportive, and successful schools step by step.* Longmont, CO: Sopris West.

Richardson, V. (Ed.). (2001). *Handbook of research on teaching* (4th ed.). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2005). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ryan, A., & Patrick, H. (2001). The classroom social environment and changes in adolescents' motivation and engagement during middle school. *American Educational Research Journal, 38*, 437-460.

Silva, D. Y., Gimbert, B., & Nolan, J. (2000). Sliding the door: Locking and unlocking possibilities for teacher leadership. *Teachers College Record*, *102*, 779-804.

Simmons, R. G., & Blyth, D. A. (1987). *Moving into adolescence: The impact of pubertal change and school context.* Hawthorne, NY: Aldine de Gruyter.

Sommers, R. (2003). "Real" middle school teachers. *The Qualitative Report, 8*, 530-538. Retrieved June 18, 2005, from http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR8-4/sommers.pdf

Stuhlman, M., Hamre, B., & Pianta, R. (2002). Advancing the teen-teacher connection. *The Education Digest, 68,* 15-17.

Turner, J., & Patrick, H. (2004). Motivational influences on Student Participation in Classroom Learning Activities. *Teachers College Record*, *106*, 1759-1785

Wentzel, K. R. (1997). Student motivation in the middle school: The role of perceived pedagogical caring. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 89*, 411-419.

Wentzel, K. R. (1998). Social relationships and motivation in the middle school: The role of parents, teachers, and peers. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 90*, 202-209.

Wormeli, R. (2002). One teacher to another: Beating a path to the brain. *Middle Ground, 5*(5), 23-25.

Yecke, C. P. (2006). Mayhem in the middle: Why we should shift to K-8. *Educational Leadership, 63*(7), 20-25.

Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Zins, J., Weissburg, R., Wang, M., & Walberg, H. (2004). *Building academic success on social and emotional learning.* New York: Teachers College Press.