

One Rural Elementary School's Experience in Becoming A School of Distinction

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SCHOOL OF DISTINCTION

by
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(ABSTRACT)

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe overarching themes that were significant in helping a selected elementary school reach the standards for School of Distinction status. A descriptive case study design was used to identify answers to the overall guiding research question and subordinate questions formulated from the review of literature. A carefully planned sequence of questions was developed for each set of participants aimed at getting a detailed description of the school. Data collection procedures consisted of interviews, classroom observations, and review of school documents. Participants consisted of the principal, nine teachers and nine students from grades, 3, 4, 5 and a total of three parents who have children in these grades.

Data from this study were used to compare and analyze key words, phrases, and/or direct quotes in order to identify and describe emerging, overarching, and supporting themes from the following domains: principal's leadership, teacher involvement, class size, student achievement, and parental involvement. Based on literature reviews, these domains were considered to be characteristics that contributed to promoting high student achievement and successful schools.

Findings provided supporting themes that were organized around the study's domains. The supporting themes emerged from data triangulation on each of the domains.

Based on the data collected and analyzed, the following nine conclusions were identified as contributing to the school's success: (1) a successful school staff maintains an instructional focus; (2) in a successful school, communication occurs among all stakeholders; (3) collaboration among teachers, parents, and the principal occur often in schools; (4) a successful school has a class size below 20 students; (5) a variety of complimentary programs led to school success; (6) a successful school has strong parental involvement; (7) a successful school has a nurturing staff; (8) a successful school has a stable staff; and (9) students perceive a successful school differently than the adults.

Implications and recommendations for practice are provided for consideration for school districts with similar demographics to this study. Finally, recommendations for further studies are provided.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my son, Stacy; daughter, Deedra; my entire family; best friends, Deborah Mc and John, whose absolute support has been with me throughout this entire process.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	xvii
LIST OF FIGURES	xviii
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	1
National Perspective.....	2
Regional Perspective	3
State Perspective	4
Purpose of the Study	5
Overall Research Design	6
Theoretical Framework	7
Terminology and Definitions.....	9
Significance of the Study.....	12
Organization of the Study.....	13
CHAPTER II REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	15
Organization of Literature Review.....	17
Principal Leadership.....	17
Instructional Leader.....	20
Principal as Motivator	21
Teacher Involvement.....	23

Teacher Practices.....	24
Classroom Activities	26
Collaboration.....	26
Collegiality.....	28
Professionalism	29
Class Size.....	31
Class Size and Student Achievement	32
Differences in Enrollments	33
Advantages of Small Class Size.....	34
Student Achievement	37
School Environment.....	38
Student Motivation.....	39
Classroom Participation.....	40
Learning Theories	42
Metacognitive Skills.....	43
Parental Involvement.....	44
Parent-Teacher Practices	48
School Involvement.....	50
Summary.....	51
CHAPTER III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	53
Purpose of the Study	53
Significance of the Study.....	53
Research Design.....	54

Investigator’s Role	55
Gaining Access and Entry	58
Limitations and Advantages	58
Setting Selection	59
Participant Selection.....	60
Assurance of Confidentiality	62
Data Collection Procedures	62
Interview Procedures	63
Interview Protocols.....	66
Observations	67
Observation Protocol	68
Document Review Procedures.....	70
Documentation Protocol	70
Data Analysis Procedures.....	72
Data Management	73
Theme Development	74
Triangulation.....	77
Data Saturation.....	77
Implications	78
Summary.....	79
CHAPTER IV RESULTS OF THE STUDY	81
Overview of Results.....	82
Principal’s Leadership.....	83

Teachers' Involvement	83
Class Size	83
Student Achievement.....	83
Parental Involvement.....	84
Research Methodology	84
Interviews	84
Interview Procedures	86
Description of Participants.....	87
School Staff.....	87
Students.....	89
Parents.....	89
Observations	91
Document Review	92
Data Analysis.....	92
Data Management	93
Triangulation of Data	94
Theme Development	94
Report of the Findings.....	96
Demographics of Selected School.....	96
Discussion of Interview Findings Categorized by Research Questions.....	97
Research Question 1: In What Way Does the Principal's Leadership Contribute to the School's Success?.....	98

Principal’s Response to His Leadership Style.	98
Teachers’ Response to the Principal’s Leadership Contributions to the School’s Success.	101
Students’ Response to Principal’s Leadership Contributions to the School’s Success.	104
Parents’ Response to Principal’s Leadership Contributions to the School’s Success.	105
Research Question 2: In what ways do the teachers’ involvement contribute to the school’s success?.....	107
Principal’s Response to Teachers’ Involvement.	107
Teachers’ Response to Teachers’ Involvement.	108
Students’ Response to Teachers’ Involvement.	110
Parents’ Response to Teachers’ Involvement.	111
Research Question 3: Does class size contribute to success?.....	114
Principal’s Response to Class Size.	114
Teachers’ Response to Class Size.	115
Students’ Response to Class Size.	117
Parents’ Response to Class Size.	118
Research Question 4: What happens in this school to promote student achievement?	119
Principal’s Response to Promoting Student Achievement.	119
Teachers’ Response to Promoting Student Achievement.	121
Students’ Response to Promoting Student Achievement.	125

Parents' Response to Promoting Student Achievement	126
Research Question 5: In what ways are parents involved in supporting their child's education?	128
Principal's Response to Parent Involvement	128
Teachers' Response to Parent Involvement	129
Students' Response to Parent Involvement	131
Parents' Response to Parent Involvement	131
Research Question 6: What other characteristics contribute to the school's effectiveness?	133
Observations	133
Findings from Observations.....	135
Shadowing of the Principal	135
Staff and PTA Meetings	137
Classroom Observations	138
Documentation.....	140
Findings From Documentation	141
Student Assessment	141
School Improvement Plan.....	146
Committee Meetings.....	149
Report of Triangulated Findings	149
Themes and Supporting Findings from Data Triangulation.....	150
Principal's Leadership	150
Seek Funding.....	151

Support Staff Development Initiatives	152
Encourage Staff and Students	153
Communicate With School Staff and Parents	154
Demonstrate Concern For Students' Welfare	155
Teachers' Involvement	156
Teaches State Standards.....	157
Demonstrates Hard Work and Dedication	158
Communicate With Others.....	161
Care for Students	162
Class Size.....	163
Teachers Individualizing Instruction	163
Students Being in Close Proximity of the Teacher	165
Distractions Being At A Minimum	166
Student Achievement.....	167
The A+ Program.....	168
The Star Student Program.....	169
A Cooperative Staff.....	170
The Project Acceleration Program	172
The Instructional Program	173
The Comprehensive Management System.....	174
The Communication With All Stakeholders.....	175
Parental Involvement.....	176
Being Involved In School Activities	176

Assisting With Homework.....	177
Communicating With School Staff	177
Summary of Findings	178
CHAPTER V DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIOINS.....	
	181
Discussion of Findings	181
Finding 1: A Supportive Principal	182
Finding 2: Teachers’ Involvement In The School’s Success.....	185
Finding 3: Class Size	189
Finding 4: Programs That Contributed Toward Student Achievement.....	192
Finding 5: Parental Involvement.....	194
Finding 6: Care For Students	195
Conclusions.....	198
Conclusion 1: A Successful School Staff Maintains an Instructional Focus.....	198
Conclusion 2: In a Successful School, Communication Occurs Among All Stakeholders.....	200
Conclusion 3: Collaboration Among Teachers, Parents, and the Principal Occur Often in Successful Schools	201
Conclusion 4: A Successful School Has a Class Size Below Twenty Students	201
Conclusion 5: A Variety of Complimentary Programs Led to School Success	202
Conclusion 6: A Successful School Has Strong Parental Involvement	204
Conclusion 7: A Successful School Has a Nurturing Staff	204

Conclusion 8: A Successful School Has a Stable Staff.....	205
Conclusion 9: Students Perceive a Successful School Differently than the Adults	206
Limitations of the Study	207
Implications and Recommendations for Practice.....	208
Recommendations for Further Studies	210
REFERENCES.....	212
APPENDICES	223
Appendix A.....	224
A1. Request for Research Study.....	225
A2. Principal Thank You Letter.....	226
A3. Principal/Teacher/Parent Permission Form.....	227
A4. Student Release Form	229
A5. Student Consent Form.....	231
A6. Teacher/Student/Parent Thank You Letter.....	232
Appendix B	233
B. Virginia Tech’s IRB Form 4.....	234
Appendix C	235
C1. Principal Protocol and Interview Questions	236
C2. Teacher Protocol and Interview Questions.....	237
C3. Student Protocol and Interview Questions	238
C4. Parent Protocol and Interview Questions	239
Appendix D.....	240

Observation Form.....	241
Appendix E	242
Documentation Review Form	243
Appendix F	244
Themes That Emerged From Participants on Research Questions Form.....	245
Appendix G.....	246
G1. Reading Achievement Levels and Scale Scores Ranges for Grade 3 End-of- Grade Tests.....	247
G2. Reading Achievement Levels and Scale Scores Ranges for Grade 4 End-of- Grade Tests.....	248
G3. Reading Achievement Levels and Scale Scores Ranges for Grade 5 End-of- Grade Tests.....	249
G4. Math Achievement Levels and Scale Scores Ranges for Grade 3 End-of- Grade Tests.....	250
G5. Math Achievement Levels and Scale Scores Ranges for Grade 4 End-of- Grade Tests.....	251
G6. Math Achievement Levels and Scale Scores Ranges for Grade 5 End-of- Grade Tests.....	252
Appendix H.....	253
Mission Statement and Philosophy	254
Appendix I	255
I1. Matrix of Themes and Sources of Data Collection for Principal’s Leadership	256

I2. Matrix of Themes and Sources of Data Collection for Teachers’ Involvement.....	257
I3. Matrix of Themes and Sources of Data Collection for Class Size.....	258
I4. Matrix of Themes and Sources of Data Collection for Promoting Student Achievement.....	259
I5. Matrix of Themes and Sources of Data Collection for Parental Involvement	260
VITA	261

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Professional and Personal Data of Principal and Teachers.....	88
Table 2	Student Data Information.....	90
Table 3	Number of Students In Grades 3-5 Scoring Level III or IV on Reading From 1999-02.	143
Table 4	Number of Students In Grades 3-5 Scoring Level III or IV on Mathematics From 1999-02.	145

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Indicators for School of Distinction.....	10
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