Exposing Star Teachers of Children in Poverty

Bobbi Morehead
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EXPOSING STAR TEACHERS OF CHILDREN IN POVERTY

by

Bobbi Morehead

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Submitted to the
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EXPOSING STAR TEACHERS OF CHILDREN IN POVERTY

Bobbi Morehead, Ph.D.
Western Michigan University, 2007

Public schools have control over whom they choose to hire to serve as teachers. When quality teachers are hired, all students have a better chance at achieving academic success. It is the responsibility of every public school principal to truly understand common patterns, which can assist teachers to become outstanding teachers, defined in this study as Star Teachers. It is also the principals’ responsibility to make sure the work conditions of such Star Teachers are conducive to personal and professional renewal.

The passion to educate all children drives the following research questions:

1. How do Star Teachers describe the significant factors, events, and people that have shaped them as educators and people?
2. How do Star Teachers describe who they are now as teachers?
3. What do Star Teachers need to sustain them as Star Teachers?

The purpose of this phenomenological, qualitative study is to further describe performing Star Teachers of children in poverty as well as to better understand how administrators can support Star Teachers of children in poverty both professionally and personally.

Overall, the study revealed that Star Teachers come from all backgrounds. The significant people, events, and factors that have shaped them as people and educators vary greatly. No common theme emerged as to how Star Teachers came to be; however,
Star Teachers do describe themselves as teachers in a similar fashion. They are collaborators with each other and their principal. They build positive relationships with students. They value classroom routines and procedures. They practice the instructional strategy of teacher modeling. They enjoy and seek leadership positions in their school, and they deeply believe that all students can learn and know it is the role of the teacher to make sure that happens. Additionally, Star Teachers in this study indicated a need for supportive principals who are positive role models and collaborators. The need for collaboration at all levels in the school community is one major overriding message from this study.
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CHAPTER I
OVERVIEW OF STUDY

Introduction

Public schools are under scrutiny because too many students are not experiencing success in school as evidenced by low standardized achievement scores as well as high graduation drop out rates (Meier, 2002a). Simply put, the problem is high rates of student failure, which supports the view that public schools are failing to provide students with a competitive education, especially public schools that serve large urban populations (Hochschild & Scovronick, 2003). The solution to this problem is to increase student success rates.

What factors related to student success can schools control? The most important control the public school can exert is through the quality and effectiveness of the teaching staff. A teacher’s sense of efficacy—teachers’ beliefs about their abilities to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning—was identified almost 30 years ago as one of the teacher characteristics related to student achievement (Bandura, 1989). Teachers who are found to be highly efficacious in their teaching beliefs and strategies typically find it easier to both confront and to correct educational pitfalls in the classroom. Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, and Pastorelli (1996) found that teachers who are highly efficacious have more students who are highly efficacious. This is important because students who report high self-efficacy perform better than students who do not report high self-efficacy (Bandura, 1989). Furthermore, self-efficacy beliefs are related to
academic performance and self-regulated learning (Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994). Self-regulated learning is critical to future success during the school years and beyond.

Background

Schools serving large numbers (greater than 50%) of disadvantaged students have been highlighted in the press as not serving their students well. Results from the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 reveal that our poor students are being left behind within public education settings. Thus, the NCLB law was created to mandate public schools to educate all students, including the poor children, or suffer sanctions. This law requires states to establish adequate yearly progress (AYP) target goals for student performance on standardized tests and raise the bar each year until 100% of the students demonstrate proficiency on state assessment tests by the 2013–14 school year (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). With all the public pressure, urban school districts, which serve the majority of America’s poor students, are fighting hard to stay alive.

As one Midwestern urban school district, Battle Creek Public Schools is entrenched in the struggle to educate all children. The demographics of the school district are as follows: 45% Caucasian, 44% African American, 9% Hispanic, 1% Native American, and 1% Asian. The school district is approximately 75% poor as measured by free and reduced lunch students, and serves approximately 7,125 students. The district recently fell “victim” to the No Child Left Behind Act. Many of its schools did not make AYP and therefore found themselves in various correctional phases. Each phase, according to the NCLB Act, implements sanctions. These progressive sanctions include a
school first being identified for school improvement, then identified for continued school improvement, then identified for corrective action, and finally, identified for restructuring (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). One middle school in this district entered the last (Phase 4) and according to the sanctions would have been restructured. However, the school was closed due to declining enrollment. Four elementary schools and three middle schools found themselves in various correctional phases from Phase 1 to Phase 3. However, according the most recent AYP report from the state of Michigan, all schools in Battle Creek Public Schools have made AYP for at least two consecutive years and are all presently in Phase 0 which has no state sanctions attached to it.

Part of the struggle to improve rests with hiring a quality teaching staff. In order to better prepare administrators to do this, The Battle Creek Public School District in 2002 provided the opportunity for interested administrators to attend a 5-day training seminar conducted by Martin Haberman and Associates. The workshop instructed administrators as to how to administer Haberman’s interview protocol as well as how to score it. This interview protocol is built upon 40 years of research, and assesses the belief system of educators. Interview candidates who score high (between 40 and 45) are believed to be individuals who will be highly successful at teaching students of poverty (Haberman, 1995a).

In choosing to use this interview protocol, the Battle Creek Public School Human Resource Department stood on the overwhelming research that supports that the most important factor affecting student learning is the teacher (Marzano, 2003). Since Haberman’s research suggests that teachers with certain belief systems and
predispositions will be more successful working with students of poverty, the school district invested in training administrators with the Haberman interview protocol. Principals who use this protocol do so with the expectation of hiring people who will perform as Star Teachers according to Haberman’s definition. Once hired, however, it is important for principals to understand the people they select really do make the difference for students in their schools. Yet no research can be found that define these Star Teachers, how did they come to their belief systems about students and teaching, and how they are actually experiencing their work as teachers working with children of poverty?

Problem and Purpose of Study

If teachers have the greatest impact on student achievement (Marzano, 2003) and if Star Teachers of children in poverty have the greatest potential to educate at-risk students (Haberman, 1995b), then Star Teachers of children in poverty need to be further described, both personally and professionally. Additionally, administrators need to better understand how to support, sustain, and protect identified Star Teachers. For the purpose of this study, the Haberman frame for describing and predicting Star Teachers will provide the operational definition. In addition, Haberman’s frame for describing the characteristics of Star Principals will be used to look at the intersections between the role of the principal and sustaining Star Teachers.

This study examines the experiences of teachers who were hired, in part, based on Haberman’s survey of predictor factors associated with Star Teachers, and who are strong performers in their classrooms as identified by their principals. Through a dialogue in
which these teachers process their experiences becoming and being teachers, the researcher further describes the performing Star Teacher for children in poverty. The study desires to looks deeply into the person who makes up the Star Teacher, addressing various key questions such as what is his/her background? Why did she/he decide to become a teacher? What motivates this Star Teacher personally? Equally important is the teacher side of the Star Teacher. What keeps Star Teachers going? What role, if any, does the building leader play in the professional or personal life of a Star Teacher? Does the Star Teacher need a certain type of work environment to survive/thrive? What does a Star Teacher’s classroom feel like and look like? Are there patterns among Star Teachers? Overall, the purpose of this study is to better describe and understand Star Teachers because they have the potential to educate the most difficult group of students to educate, America’s poor. If an instrument like the Haberman interview protocol is useful in selecting people who are predisposed to be Star Teachers for children in poverty, what do we need to know about the teachers who score highly on the predictor measures once they actually are part of a school’s staff?

*Research Questions*

Public schools do control whom they decide to hire to serve as their teachers. When quality teachers are hired, all students have a better chance at achieving academic success. It is the responsibility of every public school principal to truly understand common patterns which lead teachers to be Star Teachers. It is also the principals’ responsibility to make sure the work conditions of Star Teachers are conducive to personal and professional renewal. Administrators may have the influence and ability to
impact the work environment for Star Teachers to help keep them excited and energized as they continue the difficult task of educating all of America's children regardless of the level of difficulty.

The passion to educate all children drives the following research questions:

1. How do Star Teachers describe the significant factors, events, and people that have shaped them as educators and people?
2. How do Star Teachers describe who they are now as teachers?
3. What do Star Teachers need to sustain them as Star Teachers?

Methodology Overview

This study is a phenomenological study because it seeks to explore how Star Teachers create and understand their daily lives. Phenomenology seeks to understand lived experiences of the individual (Schwandt, 2001). The fieldwork in this study includes interviewing identified Star Teachers of children in poverty in their own setting—their schools. It is important to conduct such a phenomenological study in the natural setting (Creswell, 2003) in order to capture the lived realities in the field setting. To this end, the setting for this research project is an urban school district that serves approximately 7,000 students of which 75% are poor as evidenced by the free and reduced lunch data. The setting chosen has the appropriate characteristics that include poor students and teachers who have been interviewed according to the Haberman process as outlined in *Star Teachers of Children in Poverty* by Martin Haberman (1995b).

The research subjects included 15 teachers within the Battle Creek Public School District: 5 teachers at the elementary level, 5 at the middle school level, and 5 teachers at
the high school level. The teachers identified for this study are teachers who scored between 40 and 45 according to the Haberman Star Teachers of Children in Poverty interview process. This interview process examines the following characteristics of those being interviewed for teaching positions: their persistence, response to authority, application of generalization, approach to at-risk students, personal versus professional orientation, burnout, and fallibility. Teachers who score in the high category (40 to 45) are considered prospective teachers who will not only last in the urban setting, but also flourish and show tremendous success with at-risk students. The Star Teachers selected for this study not only scored between 40 and 45 during the interview process, but are also currently performing as Star Teachers in their classrooms according to their direct supervisors.

The method of choice for this research proposal is semistructured interviewing. Semistructured interviewing combines the flexibility of the open-ended interview with the directionality and agenda of the semistructured interview to produce focused qualitative data (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999). Although the questions on a semistructured interview guide are preformulated, the answers to those questions are open-ended. Thus, this method is fashioned after a conversation, and the interview process is shaped as a natural dialogue (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The interview method was also chosen based on the skills of the interviewer. The research interviewer has exceptional listening skills, which are essential to the process (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Also, the research interviewer has had numerous experiences asking probing questions. Her work as principal has afforded her many experiences in classroom content
coaching which is based on asking questions and allowing the participant to explore issues fully; important factors for a qualitative researcher (Danielson, 1996).

Significance of Study

The results of this qualitative study will further enlighten administrators concerning Star Teachers who serve children in poverty. This study is of particular significance and interest to the researcher. She is currently serving her sixth year as a building principal. When she first began as principal, her building demographics consisted of less than 50% of her students designated at the poverty level. Currently, her school demographics include 85% of the student population as children of poverty. Thus, her desire to better educate her growing population of students in poverty drives this research study.

This study describes the classrooms of Star Teachers through the eyes of the Star Teacher, which can serve as a powerful blueprint to help other struggling teachers employ best practices conducive to helping educate at-risk children. This study also seeks to enlighten administrators concerning their chief responsibility to make sure the working conditions of Star Teachers are conducive to personal and professional renewal. One of the major purposes of this study is to gain a better understanding of what Star Teachers need from their leadership, it is important to look at those needs in light of what the research says concerning effective leadership, especially effective school leadership. Mobility of the teaching staff in minority schools is extremely high, approximately 50% leave within the first year (Haberman, 1993). Thus, this research study is of particular importance because it looks deeply into the personal and professional lives of Star
Teachers with the anticipation that the analysis may lend to a fuller description of how Star Teachers develop and sustain, especially as related to the dynamics of the teacher/administrator relationship. This deeper analysis may also lend administrators to additional knowledge as to how to support and retain the Star Teachers.

Definition of Terms

Martin Haberman (1995b), distinguished professor of education at the University of Wisconsin, developed an interview process to determine Star Teachers. He defines Star Teachers as a teacher who has the potential to and/or actually successfully teaches students in poverty. His interview process tests seven functions that he claims must be present in an individual in order for that teacher to be considered a good prospect to teach disadvantaged children. The seven domains include persistence, protecting learners and learning, application of generalizations, approach to at-risk students, professional versus personal orientation to students, burnout, and fallibility. Star Teachers continually look for new ways to engage even the most resistant learner. They never give up. Star Teachers are highly efficacious teachers. They believe in their own abilities to get the job done.

A Star Teacher is a teacher who can successfully educate at-risk students based on Haberman's seven functions which include persistence, protecting learners and learning, application of generalizations, approach to at-risk students, professional versus personal orientation to students, burnout, and fallibility.

A Star Principal is a principal who can successfully educate at-risk students based on Haberman's 11 traits which include use of power, protecting students' learning,
teamwork, approach to at-risk students, persistent instructional leader, school climate, evaluation, decision-making model, fallibility, change agent, and politician.

An at-risk student is a student who is at risk of dropping out of school due to experiencing school failure.

A poverty student is a student who receives free or reduced lunch.

NCLB is the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 that requires states to set clear standards for what every K–8 student should know and be able to do in math and English language arts.

AYP is Adequate Yearly Progress and is an underpinning of NCLB. AYP requires that all school districts demonstrate continuous academic improvement for all major subgroups each year until 100 percent of students achieve proficiency on state standardized assessment tests by the 2013–14 school year.

Phases describes what happens to schools who do not make AYP whereby they enter a continuum of phases according to the NCLB Act, with corresponding sanctions. The sanctions include a school being identified for school improvement, identified for continued school improvement, identified for corrective action, and identified for restructuring.

Delimitations and Limitations of Study

According to Creswell, “[d]elimitations address how the study was narrowed in scope, whereas limitations identify potential weaknesses of the study” (Creswell, 1998, p. 150). Therefore, it is important that the researcher understand the restrictions and indicates that they have been considered throughout the study (Locke, Spiruduso, &
Silverman, 2000). As Marshall and Rossman (2006) point out, “All proposed research projects have limitations; none is perfectly designed” (p. 42). This dissertation is no exception. One key limitation is that the researcher did not have access to externally valid methods of assessing the actual performance of the selected Star Teachers. Instead, the researcher had to accept the evaluation process of respected administrators that the Star Teachers selected to participate in this study are actually performing as Star Teachers. Additionally, the purposive sampling procedure in this research study decreases the generalizability of findings. Therefore, this study is not generalizable to all Star Teachers, nor can the findings be generalizable to all school districts serving children in poverty. Also, the presence of the researcher in the district may have caused participants to act differently (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study is to describe performing Star Teachers of children in poverty, as well as to better understand how administrators can support such Star Teachers both professionally and personally. This phenomenological study describes and analyzes 15 Star Teachers who work in one urban Midwestern district, Battle Creek Public Schools. The participants in this study are elementary, middle school, and high school teachers who were initially identified as Star Teachers when hired, according to Martin Haberman’s interview protocol, as well as identified by current administrators as performing Star Teachers. In this qualitative study, the data is collected through semistructured interviews.
Chapter II examines research literature in the broader context as related to Dr. Haberman's research lens concerning Star Teachers and Star Principals. Then, Chapter III explains the qualitative research approach to this phenomenological study. Chapter IV describes the results of the study using rich quotations as Star Teachers tell their own stories of who they are and what they need from leadership. Finally, Chapter V wraps up the research project by posing additional ideas for further study topics as a result of conducting this study.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of related literature cross-referenced to the research lens of Dr. Martin Haberman. Dr. Haberman’s research lens must be carefully analyzed because, according to his research, school officials who are properly trained to administer his interview protocol will hire potential Star Teachers of children in poverty who turn into performing Star Teachers, with 95% accuracy (Haberman, 1993).

This research is of particular interest to the researcher in this study because she has been trained to administer this interview protocol. She has utilized this protocol during the hiring process in her school for the last four years. She has first hand experience interviewing and hiring potential teachers utilizing Dr. Haberman’s protocol. She also can report that 100% of her new teacher hires over the last four years have turned out to be high performing Star Teachers of children in poverty based upon subsequent teacher evaluations. While further examination of student learning impact would make for a more powerful verification of a teacher’s actual performance status, for the purposes of this study, it is assumed that the district performance review system holds, at least, some measure of reliability for judging a teacher’s performance standing based on principal observation. Admittedly, common performance review systems for teachers rarely reflect all the critical aspects of a teacher’s performance nor do they draw upon evidence of student learning in any systematic way. They can, however, reflect observable teacher behaviors associated with student learning such as setting learning
goals, aligning instruction, effective and timely feedback to students, and classroom management practices (Platt, Tripp, Ogden, & Fraser, 2000).

The principals who identified performing Star Teachers for this study use such a performance review system for the purpose of tracking individual teacher performance after selecting teachers using the Haberman interview screening. Follow-up with traditional performance review systems after the initial hire is, an admittedly limited, but commonly applied method principals use to confirm that the people they have hired actually perform as effective teachers based upon the performance criteria set for their school district (Platt, Tripp, Ogden, & Fraser, 2000).

Dr. Martin Haberman, distinguished professor of Education at the University of Wisconsin has made it his life's work to better predict and prepare teachers who are most likely to successfully teach children of poverty. He has interviewed thousands of performing successful teachers of at-risk students to identify the seven key functions as illustrated in his book, *Star Teachers of Children in Poverty*. He has also developed an interview protocol based on those seven functions to be used to predict Star Teachers of children in poverty. He observed 124 student teachers over a 3-year period in New York City schools from 1958 through 1961 to identify the star functions.

In 1962, Dr. Haberman utilized the seven functions of teachers who work effectively with children in poverty to develop an instrument for interviewing teacher candidates. The interview questions were derived from the seven functions he isolated in his research. The first selection interviews were conducted in Milwaukee in 1962. At that time, Dr. Haberman was also asked to develop a fifth year intern program for liberal arts
graduates to become teachers in the Milwaukee Public Schools. This model became the National Teacher Corps in 1965.

During the three years of Dr. Haberman's research (1962–1965), 108 interns were admitted to the program and followed through their first year of teaching. Beginning in 1966, Dr. Haberman's Urban Teacher Selection Interview instrument was used to select participants for the Milwaukee Intern Teaching Program. In the 11 years that this program was operational, approximately 1,500 interns completed the interview and the program. During this time frame, five different Directors who utilized different pairs of individuals to conduct these selection interviews reported less than a 5% error between prediction and performance. Since the inception, numerous urban school districts have used the interview protocol, especially in states where alternative teacher certifications are in place. According to Dr. Haberman, so long as the individual being interviewed is a college graduate and the teaching position subsequently performed is in an urban school serving poverty students, the interview is being used with the population and for the purpose it was developed (Haberman, 1986).

The first-hand experience of the researcher, as principal, coupled with Dr. Haberman's extensive research (Haberman, 1965, 1986, 1989, 1991, 1992, 1993, and 1995b) builds a strong argument for carefully examining both the professional and personal lives of predicted and performing Star Teachers as another means of understanding the characteristics of teachers who have the greatest potential for successfully educating the most challenged group of students—children living in poverty (Hochschild & Scovronick, 2003).
Organization of Chapter

The first part of Chapter II examines the seven functions associated with Star Teachers of children in poverty as defined by Dr. Haberman's research (Haberman, 1995b). These functions are persistence, protecting students' learning environment, applications of generalizations, approach to at-risk students, personal versus professional orientation, burnout, and fallibility. The second part of Chapter II deals with 11 traits associated with Star Principals who serve children in poverty (Haberman & Dill, 1999). These traits are power, protect students' learning, the ability to implement teamwork, persistent instructional leader, school climate, evaluation, decision-making model, fallibility, change agent, and politician (see Appendix E for a listing of these teacher and principal star functions and traits).

The third part of Chapter II elaborates on the significance of this particular study, which examines the experiences of teachers who were hired, in part, based on Haberman's survey of predictor factors that are associated with Star Teachers. Additionally, the third part of Chapter II closely examines the parallel characteristics shared by Star Teachers and Star Principals. These parallel characteristics will be used to understand and analyze how Star Teachers experience the impact of their school leaders. Chapter II ends with a summary.

Definition of Star Teacher

The definition of a Star Teacher in this research study results from the research of Dr. Martin Haberman. His research is significant because he has refined an interview protocol that with 95% accuracy can identify a prospective teacher who will become a
successful performing teacher with students of poverty (Haberman, 1993). The interview protocol tests for seven functions, all of which Dr. Haberman defines as necessary in order for a person to be able to successfully teach students who live in poverty. This section of the literature review elaborates on all seven functions (Haberman, 1995b) and cross-references them to other research on effective teachers.

According to Dr. Haberman (1995b), a Star Teacher must be persistent. It is not easy to teach students who live in poverty due to increased academic gaps as well as poor classroom behavior routines. A successful teacher must constantly try new things. For example, an after school detention or a trip to the principal’s office cannot be their only classroom management tool. They have to be persistent. They try multiple techniques to correct behavior as well as to activate student learning. They do not give up. If one tool does not work, they have a host of other tools to employ. Failure is not an option.

Second, Star Teachers, according to Haberman (1995b), protect student learning. They find ways around bureaucratic practices and rules that interfere with student learning or that inhibit greater opportunities for students’ learning. For example, a Star Teacher may choose to bring in a life passion or hobby to the classroom, which activates previously disengaged students. Administration may decide that the teacher’s practice is getting in the way of district pacing guides and mandate that the teacher stop the creative practice. However, the Star Teacher will find a way to continue the practice either through ongoing negotiations with administration or by offering the passionate learning opportunity after school. A Star Teacher finds a way to protect student learning.
Third, a Star Teacher can take generalizations and make applications in the classroom (Haberman, 1995b). For example, if a Star Teacher believes that all students can learn then the classroom will reflect that belief. You will actually see all students engaged in learning. Differentiated learning opportunities will be available so that all students will be engaged—the visual learner, the auditory learner, and the kinesthetic learner.

Fourth, a Star Teacher’s approach to at-risk students is different from the average teacher (Haberman, 1995b). The Star Teacher believes that “any” student who is not achieving is at risk of failure. They believe that the school and teachers play a role in making students at risk as well as helping students move from being at risk to success. An at-risk student simply needs a connected school environment where relevant learning is part of the curriculum with a teacher who can relate to the student. This type of school environment will be able to educate an at-risk student and then he/she will no longer be at risk of failure because he/she will be achieving.

Fifth, a Star Teacher takes a professional orientation to teaching over a personal orientation to teaching (Haberman, 1995b). He or she understands that student success is not dependent on how the teacher feels about the student personally, but that student success is related to high teacher expectations. The teacher must believe that the student can learn and that the teacher can teach the student. The student also believes this expectation.

Sixth, a Star Teacher understands that all teachers fall prey to burnout (Haberman, 1995b). However, the Star Teacher does not believe that burnout is caused by difficult
students. The Star Teacher understands that burnout is closely related to the bureaucracy of teaching as well as the enormous responsibility and challenge of teaching students who have a variety of strengths and weaknesses. A Star Teacher knows in order to survive in this business; he must work with his colleagues. The synergy of planning and examining data is a cycle that requires collaboration. Collaboration is the key to reducing burnout. Star Teachers know they need other teachers.

Seventh, Star Teachers know they are fallible. They understand that they are simply human beings who make mistakes (Haberman, 1995b). A Star Teacher is quick to apologize to a wronged student. A Star Teacher who makes a mistake publicly has no problem apologizing to a student publicly and using the opportunity as a learning moment to teach their students about fallibility. A Star Teacher is well respected by her students because of her ability to “be real.”

Purpose

The reason it is so important to study Star Teachers in actual practice is because Dr. Haberman’s research reports that prospective teachers who embody the above mentioned seven functions are more likely to educate children of poverty successfully. According to Marzano’s work (2003) the teacher is the most important factor affecting student learning. Also, according to Jim Collins, in the book Good to Great (2001), one has to have the right people on the bus to be successful. So in the case of education, one must have the right teachers in the school in order to educate the students. It is important to acknowledge that Dr. Haberman’s conclusions need to be vetted against the research of other educational experts. If Dr. Haberman’s assumptions hold up against other bodies of
research, then it is important to carefully consider the utility of his assumptions for both
hiring and for ongoing engagement and support to help predicted Star Teachers actually
become and remain high performing teachers in terms of student learning. Ongoing
engagement and support can only happen when principals truly understand the people
they select to make the difference for students in their schools. Who are they, how did
they come to their belief systems about students and teaching, and how are they actually
functioning within the school that employs them?

The next part of this literature review takes the seven functions of a Star Teacher
according to Martin Haberman, and connects the functions to the larger body of research
concerning effective teaching and learning practices.

Persistence. Bandura (1989) is known for his research on student self-efficacy
and how that relates to academic achievement. Self-efficacy is another word for
persistence. If a person believes he can accomplish a task, then he most likely will
accomplish the task. Teacher persistence, much like student persistence, also leads to
success. When the teacher is successful, students are learning and academic achievement
is increasing.

Teacher persistence is so important in establishing a classroom environment that
is conducive to learning. Students of poverty are at-risk students. Many times they come
to a classroom with a history of not behaving as a student in school. Therefore, they may
be accustomed to acting out in order to avoid showing learning gaps. The persistent
teacher is the consistent teacher. According to Canter and Canter's research (1977) the
most significant teacher behavior in correcting student misbehavior in the classroom was
persistence and tenacity in consistently delivering the consequences when a student misbehaves. He found when a teacher was persistent, even the most difficult student would eventually acquiesce. A teacher who is persistent about creating a classroom atmosphere conducive to learning has set the stage for all students to achieve academic success.

Equally important is the teacher who persistently tries different learning techniques to ensure that all students learn. Carol Ann Tomlinson (1999) is known for her depth of knowledge concerning the importance of the differentiated classroom to ensure academic success for all students regardless of their backgrounds, experiences, interests, readiness levels, and learning profiles (Tomlinson & Kalbfleisch, 1998). According to Tomlinson a teacher in a differentiated classroom illustrates her persistence by offering a variety of learning opportunities at a variety of degrees so that all students can be challenged. The differentiated teacher also gives students choices about topics of study as well as choices about assessment options. The differentiated teacher understands that he must also present the information in a variety of ways, which would relate to the oral, visual, and kinesthetic learner. Tomlinson clearly points out that the differentiated classroom is conducive to brain research (Sousa, 1995), which stresses emotional safety, appropriate challenge, and self-constructed meaning. This cannot occur in a one-size-fits-all classroom. A persistent teacher understands that she must continually utilize a variety of instructional strategies (Marzano, 2003) in order to ensure academic learning for all students.
A persistent teacher believes that all students can achieve academic success. According to Howard’s research (1993), when teachers ascribe to the notion that all children can perform rigorous academic material at high standards then the teacher looks at his own practice knowing that he is a teacher of good strategies as well as a teacher of content because he believes if he matches the right strategy with the right student, the student will perform. The persistent teacher knows that it is his responsibility to diversify teaching style to match learning style. The persistent teacher is not satisfied until he finds a way to reach all students.

Protect students’ learning. Saphier and Gower (1997) found that “twenty-five percent of time allocated for academics seems, inescapably, to go into management tasks and student inattention” (p. 66). It is so important for high performing teachers to protect the remaining 75 percent of instructional time because as Stallings and Kaskowitz (1974) point out, the more interactive instruction that students experience, the better. Interactive instruction includes important attributes: clear explanations, prompt feedback, knowledge of results, and appropriate guidance. Simply put students are more likely to be learning when teachers are teaching.

Caldwell, Huitt and Graber (1982) found during their research that teachers who have students who perform above average provide as much as six times more academic time on task than teachers who have students who perform below average. Time on task is important, as shown by Leinhardt, Zigmond and Corley’s (1981) study whereby they found that the average student was off task 15% of the time, but that some students were off task more than 30% of the time. High performing teachers understand how
devastating off-task behavior is as related to student achievement. They search for off-task students, figure out who they are and how the time is being lost and seek to rectify the situation.

The high performing teacher understands the importance of the beginning and ending of class (Anderson, 1975). In order to protect student learning, such teachers do not waste time at the beginning of class with roll taking or the end of class with clean up. They begin class with an important launch activity, and get students quickly engaged into the learning activity. They also take advantage of the last five minutes of class with some type of summary activity or challenge for students to further ponder the learning activity. High performing teachers understand the large research base, which directly connects time on task with levels of academic achievement.

Applications of generalizations. High performing teachers understand that they must plan lessons that accurately reflect their beliefs about student learning and best practices. Haberman found that Star Teachers believe that in order for students of poverty to be engaged in their learning it must be relevant. This idea is supported by Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde (1998). The researchers analyzed national curriculum reports from a variety of organizations including the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the Center for the Study of Reading, the National Writing Project, the National Council for the Social Studies, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the National Council of Teachers of English, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, and the International Reading Association. The researchers identified 13 important principles that are central to effective teaching and learning. The first principle
is grounded in the idea that school must be student-centered. “The best starting point for schooling is young people’s real interests; all across the curriculum, investigating students’ own questions should always take precedence over studying arbitrarily and distantly selected content” (p. 8). This connects to the well-known American educator, John Dewey who explains that the starting point must always be students’ questions (Gredler, 2001). This natural student curiosity coupled with the teacher’s questions and passion makes for a truly authentic learning environment.

Zemelman et al. (1998) also points out the need for “more diverse roles for teachers, including coaching, demonstrating, and modeling” (p. 5). Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis (2000) also mirror this idea of the importance of teacher modeling in effective lesson design. “For too long, we have been telling kids what to do… rather than showing them how” (p. 31). Effective teachers know that they must scaffold learning experiences through modeling. They intentionally plan teacher modeling into their lesson design.

Additionally, effective teachers plan with the end in mind. Wiggins and McTighe (1998) point out through their research that student achievement increases when the teacher clearly sequences his curriculum. They offer the backward design process as a way for teachers to clarify the end result of the lesson. Teachers must first identify the desired results. Then the teachers determine acceptable evidence, and, finally, the teachers plan learning experiences and instruction. Also, part of this design includes the teacher filtering the most important learning outcomes, termed “enduring
understandings" which are different from “important to know and do” and “worth being familiar with.”

Wiggens and McTighe’s research is conducive with Marzano’s meta-analysis research concerning his action plan to translate principles into effective classroom curriculum design. According to Marzano (2003) teachers must first identify the important declarative and procedural knowledge in their lessons. Second, teachers must present the new content in a variety of ways, multiple times. Third, teachers must make a distinction between the skills and processes that must be mastered versus those that do not have to be mastered. Fourth, teachers need to present information based on sameness. This strengthens connections in the brain and allows for more information to be stored. Lastly, teachers need to engage the student in the content in a new way. One example is through debate. When a student can justify his deep thinking then true conceptual changes are taking place. The common components concerning lesson design for effective teachers, according to the research, include beginning with the end in mind, in other words, knowing what teachers want students to learn and differentiating between knowledge and skills which are peripheral and central to the learning objective. Also, it is extremely important to keep the student at the center of all learning applications and realize the enormous impact of the role of the teacher in lesson design.

Approach to at-risk students. Effective teachers, such as performing Star Teachers, do not excuse lack of student achievement as a by-product of the ills of society (Haberman, 1995b). Such teachers believe that many students are at risk of failure due to
their schooling and therefore believe that the answer to at-risk academic success can be found at school.

Ruby Payne (2005) offers her explanation concerning the framework for understanding poverty. She has gathered data for the past 24 years both observing situational and generational poverty through family members as well as working with school districts filled with children of poverty. Out of her research, Dr. Payne developed a framework for understanding poverty consistent with other research findings pertaining to educating students of poverty. This framework underscores several key points which impact schooling for students of poverty: schools operate from middle class norms and rules which are hidden (meaning they are not taught in school), and schools need to teach the rules and norms from which they operate. For example, three of the most significant hidden rules of poverty are the following: an extremely high noise level, the most important information is transmitted nonverbally, and the main value of the individual to the group is his ability to entertain. It is clear how the most valued, hidden rules of poverty severely clash with school rules. Students who are loud and seek to be the class clown are often removed from the school setting through suspension. Additionally, the most important information is not relayed nonverbally in school. Instead, the important information is usually transmitted through speech or written material.

Payne (2005) points out through her analysis of the research on learning and children of poverty three important words as related to improving student achievement among students of poverty: insistence, expectations, and support. She says that schools provide insistence and expectations, but support is the notion we must provide to students
now. She says the supports students need are cognitive strategies, appropriate relationships, coping strategies, goal-setting opportunities, and appropriate instruction both in content and discipline.

Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu (2002) agrees with Payne by insisting that middle class norms and teachers regulate school. He sees middle class teachers, regardless of their race, as one of the challenges in educating African American youth (which are mostly children of poverty). He believes the most significant characteristic of an excellent teacher is high teacher expectation, which leads us to the next critical component of a performing Star Teacher, personal versus professional orientation toward teaching.

*Personal versus professional orientation.* As Kunjufu (2002) points out, “master teachers,” as he calls effective teachers know that they must have high expectations of their students. They also believe they can make them learn. Master teachers believe it is their job to motivate students to learn. They believe if the student has not learned, then the teacher has not taught—teaching is not separate from learning. Kunjufu’s research is consistent with Haberman’s research concerning Star Teachers (Haberman, 1995a). They both believe in the “coach” model of effective teaching. Kunjufu (2002) says, “Coaches understand the child and their neighborhood and provide complementary curriculum and pedagogy” (p. 47). Star Teachers coach students to success by emphasizing the significant role of effort in learning over ability. Resnick (1995) also reflects this sentiment. She believes that effort actually creates ability. Thus, our education system needs to be designed primarily to foster effort.
Saphier and Gower (1997) strongly advocate through their research that what teachers expect is what they will get. These expectations turn into self-fulfilling prophecies for students. Teachers who believe this idea follow the Mastery Learning paradigm (Dembo & Gibson, 1985). This ideology advocates the teacher breaking down learning tasks into the number of small steps required for the student to succeed. This teacher will not give up. He believes that all students can learn and his instructional delivery illustrates this belief.

According to Cooper (1979), students receive important messages from teacher’s responses to student answers. Teachers who believe they are interacting with intelligent students smile more and nod their heads when students are answering. Teachers who believe the students are smart also use more wait time. They believe the student will come up with an answer. In the event that the student does not come up with the answer, the teacher stays with the student and provides scaffolding so that the student can come up with the right answer. Also, teachers who believe students are bright provide more feedback to their students. All of these behaviors contribute to making bright students more successful. Per Haberman (1995b), Star Teachers treat all students, including students of poverty, as bright students. They have high expectations for all students.

Teacher burnout. Star Teachers understand that teacher burnout happens to everyone (Haberman, 1995b). Such teachers know the only real way to minimize or avoid teacher burnout is through collaboration with their colleagues. Collaborative environments allow for teachers to vent frustrations and then work together to solve
problems. The old cliché "two heads are better than one" plays out vividly in high-stakes, learning environments.

The National Middle School Association set forth to further advance its recommendations in the important book, *This We Believe...And Now We Must Act* (Erb, 2001) in order to give educators a picture of what a total school program should look like for adolescents: it should be both academically sound and developmentally responsive. One of the key components stressed in this report is the need for flexible organizational structures within the school such as teachers and students operating within teams. A team refers to a group of teachers assigned to a group of students. The idea is that teams establish shared responsibility for student learning and in turn reduce the stress of isolation among students and teachers. In order for teams to experience success, they need to have common planning time to work on improving instruction, which ultimately will improve student success. Also, the longer a team has been together, the more effective that team may operate. Stable teams lead to greater productivity because higher order team operations happen when teams move beyond the beginning stages of learning to work together. Stable, productive teams have at their center discussions about instruction and assessment. In a similar manner, per Haberman (1995b), Star Teachers understand that through ongoing collaboration with colleagues frustrations are reduced and synergy to tackle the many learning problems associated with students of poverty is activated.

Another example of the importance of teacher collaboration is illustrated in the writings of Deborah Meier (2002b) concerning New York’s popular public school,
“Central Park East.” Deborah says, “For the kinds of changes necessary to transform American Education, the work force of teachers must do three tough things more or less at once: change how they view learning itself, develop new habits of mind to go with their new cognitive understandings, and simultaneously develop new habits of work—habits that are collegial and public in nature, not solo and private as has been the custom in teaching” (p. 140). The third tough thing required of teachers according to Meier is what Star Teachers know to be necessary: collaboration (Haberman, 1995b). Teachers learn from teachers as well as from their students. Meier goes on to stress the importance of making all public school classrooms labs for learning about learning. Students will gain from this horizontal and vertical learning, and teachers will survive through vertical and horizontal learning.

Effective teachers, such as performing Star Teachers, understand that it is not bureaucracy that expedites adults from fleeing the teaching field. It is isolation. The Bible is filled with nuggets of age-old, time-tested wisdom. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 (King James Version) sums up this whole idea of the importance of collaboration, “Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.”

Fallibility. Star Teachers understand their limitations (Haberman, 1995b). They know they are simply human beings destined to make many mistakes. They do not try to pretend any different. They are transparent with their students, admitting mistakes
publicly and also asking for forgiveness publicly. Herein lies part of their success—their ability to be transparent or as students may coin it—the ability to be real.

Parker Palmer (1998) is known for his work exploring the inner landscape of the teacher as he calls it. He says that we teach who we are. You can never separate the teacher from the person. He says, “Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher” (p. 10). He says the most important thing a teacher can do is to be vulnerable with students. He says that you cannot truly be vulnerable with students unless you know who you are and are comfortable knowing who you are and therefore willing to share who you are with your students; scary, but ultimately rewarding. Haberman (1995b) found that a Star Teacher understands this sense of realness that students crave from their teachers. Especially students of poverty, they must feel that the teacher understands who they are and their difficult situations in life. This trust is so essential to learning and the teacher taking the risk to put who she is on the table first builds this trust. The Star Teacher believes that no significant learning will happen without first developing significant relationships.

Significant relationships are built by all members of the learning community, teacher and students, living by an agreed upon set of rules. Mendler and Curwin (1983) refer to this idea as the social contract. The social contract is not simply rules that the students will abide by, but the rules are rules everyone will abide by including the teacher. The learning community agrees upon a set of consequences for violation of the rules. During this process the teacher has an incredible opportunity to model fallibility for her students. She lets them know that she is simply a human being and will make
mistakes and that she is willing as an equal member of this learning community to be held accountable for her mistakes. This role modeling with students creates trust and harmony. It helps create an environment of risk taking both socially and academically for students. It makes for a rich learning environment where discourse can authentically take place.

Kottler, Zehm, and Kottler (2005) reemphasize the importance of the teacher as a human being. Their research identifies six attributes of a great teacher which all hinge on the personal traits of the teacher. First, they describe the charisma of the teacher. Charisma is manifested when the teacher allows his/her personality to shine through his/her subject matter. The second trait is compassion. Compassion is when a student feels respected, deeply cared for, and even sometimes loved by their teacher. The third trait is egalitarianism. Students appreciate an environment with rules and order. They want teachers who carry out rules in a fair manner. The fourth trait involves the teachers’ ability to work with diverse students. This means the teacher can differentiate instruction, assessment, and grading based on the specific, individual needs of the student. The fifth trait deals with gender issues. The teacher treats boys and girls consistently. Girls have the opportunity to contribute in class discussions and receive feedback the same as boys. The last trait is a strong sense of humor. The teacher is able to convey that learning is fun. All of the above traits help further define the teacher as a human being. The person cannot be separated from the teacher.

In a similar fashion, Arthur Jersild (1955) was among the first of modern day educators to emphasize the strong connection between teachers’ personal lives and their
professional effectiveness. He firmly stood on the premise that understanding yourself is prerequisite to developing healthy attitudes of self-acceptance. He believed in order to help others you had to be keenly aware of your own human strengths and weaknesses so that you present yourself in ways that are optimally effective for your students. Effective teachers, such as performing Star Teachers, know they are human beings with flaws, so instead of trying to cover up the flaws, they use that knowledge to uncover learning opportunities for their students which in turn makes the classroom truly a life lab of authentic learning experiences.

*Star Teacher function summary.* In summary, the functions of a Star Teacher as reported by Dr. Martin Haberman include persistence, protecting students’ learning, applications of generalizations, approach to at-risk students, personal verses professional orientation to students, and teacher burnout. Each of these functions has been supported by the research of other educational experts as being important functions of effective teachers. Thus, this research study is of particular importance because it examines the personal and professional lives of performing Star Teachers who embody the characteristic of effective teaching as outlined in this literature review. This deeper analysis lends to a fuller description of how such Star Teachers develop and sustain themselves over time. This is important knowledge for additional administrators who want to become Star Principals (Haberman & Dill, 1999) in supporting and retaining their Star Teachers.
Definition of a Star Principal

The definition of a Star Principal serving children of poverty in this research study is defined through the research lens of Dr. Martin Haberman. Dr. Haberman has devoted his life to helping school districts that serve children and youth in poverty. Part of his important work is centered on developing programs for preparing principals for schools in low-income communities. Like his teacher interview protocol, he has also developed a principal interview protocol to determine prospective principals who will become successful performing Star Principals serving students in poverty. The interview protocol tests for 11 traits, all of which Dr. Haberman defines as necessary in order for a person to be able to successfully lead a school serving children of poverty. This section of the literature review will elaborate on all 11 traits (Haberman & Dill, 1999).

First, a Star Principal understands the different sources of power. She focuses on using her power to create work conditions that enable all members of the school community—staff and students—to be successful. A Star Principal only resorts to legal or coercive power when she has given up on the staff member and simply needs this person removed from the learning environment. A Star Principal knows that her greatest source of power rests within persuasion. Therefore, she focuses her energy on the use of expert power and personal power. Expert power refers to the expertise of the principal and how she uses those abilities to favor the school. For example, a Star Principal may be an expert in navigating central office bureaucracy and therefore able to secure more resources for her school. Equally important is personal power. The Star Principal may be charismatic and therefore able to gather support for new ideas by the manner in which
she presents the need. Regardless of whether the Star Principal uses expert or personal power, she understands that her chief power is through persuasion. She must elicit voluntary commitment to shared purposes and help create the conditions of school that will enable all staff to be successful.

Second, the Star Principal is committed to student learning above everything else. The Star Principal understands the pedagogy of poverty as it relates to learning. Dr. Haberman (Haberman & Dill, 1999) refers to the following core functions of urban teachers as the pedagogy of poverty: giving information; asking questions; giving directions; making assignments; monitoring seatwork; reviewing assignments; giving tests; reviewing tests; assigning homework; reviewing homework; settling disputes; punishing noncompliance; marking papers; and giving grades. Dr. Haberman stresses that there are occasions when any one of these 14 acts may have a beneficial effect. But the problem is when the 14 acts are performed at the exclusion of other acts. He claims that this type of learning environment is the pedagogy of poverty and that it does not work. A Star Principal recognizes good instruction. He regards generating interest, instilling motivation, and engaging students in learning as the primary function of the teacher. Star Principals support what Dr. Haberman refers to as the project method of instruction. This involves interdisciplinary units of study. Children in poverty learn best when they see the big picture of their learning and can see how it can be applied to their lives. Children of poverty regard problem solving and answering questions as meaningful when they can relate the problems to their own lives. This will lead to higher levels of thinking and understanding. The job of the Star Principal is to protect this type of project learning.
environment. Teachers who participate in this type of inquiry are often times scolded by Central Office for not adhering to strict pacing guides and other mandates. Other forms of intimidation may come from the colleagues of Star Teachers. Out of jealousy they may complain about the noise, etc... The Star Principal’s job is to protect the teachers. This in turn protects the learning environment for the children.

Third, Star Principals are guided by three principles of leadership. First, the Star Principal must strive to create an environment which illuminates unity of purpose. This is no easy task. Staff members come to the table with divergent ideas concerning what the purpose of the school should be. Some believe the goal should be keeping kids out of jail. Other staff members have higher expectations which include preparing students for postsecondary education. The principal must help the staff reach consensus of purpose and then create a few achievable goals that support the purpose. This leads to the second principle of leadership whereby the principal must find a way to get the staff to work together as a team. A cooperative, collaborative environment must be established for teachers to collectively work to achieve goals related to the school’s purpose. Third, the star principal must illicit commitment to the task. The Star Principal must find ways to motivate the staff to work hard and persist until the goals have been reached. Although many fields of research—psychology, sociology, and business just to name a few—have offered principles of leadership, Dr. Haberman claims the Star Principal only needs to focus on three principles to guide his school leadership: unity of purpose, team building, and commitment to the task.
Fourth, the Star Principal must truly believe that students in poverty can learn and that the school has the ability to set the stage for learning. Star Principals understand that children of poverty face terrible conditions that the school did not cause, nor can the school fix, such as neighborhood problems like gangs, drugs, violence, and crime. However, Star Principals do recognize the factors that the school can control. Star Teachers know that many students are at risk of failure due to the school. Factors such as poor teachers, disconnected curriculum, poor facilities, and overcrowded classrooms all may contribute to students failing or dropping out of school. The Star Principal believes that the school can make a difference. The Star Principal accepts responsibility for learning which in turn may lead the staff to the same level of accountability regarding student learning.

Fifth, the Star Principal is persistent above all else. He is able to simultaneously absorb upward and downward stress. This means he shields teachers from the downward stress associated with the bureaucracy of central office so the teachers can focus on teaching. At the same time he absorbs the upward stress from ineffective staff members. The Star Principal’s chief trait is persistence in problem-solving abilities. Star Principals are committed to the struggle required to improve their school. The most significant stage for the Star Principal’s persistence is concerning staff. The Star Principal will persistently work until he is rid of ineffective teachers regardless of the amount of paperwork because he knows that students in poverty will not survive educationally with mediocre to low performing teachers.
Sixth, Star Principals must foster a positive school climate. This can be accomplished by modeling three essential principles. First, whatever is illegal outside of school must also be illegal inside of school. If a child carries a gun to school and no one gets hurt, the school must still treat the act as a crime and deal with it accordingly. Second, the process of school discipline is more important than the outcome. The manner in which a school handles discipline issues teaches students more than the suspension. It is important to treat each situation personally. The process for administering discipline must involve taking the time to teach the student and show in-depth concern for the individual. Third, problems of violence must be viewed as an integral part of the school program. Students must be taught to predict and care about the consequences of their behavior. They must be taught other options instead of violence like peer mediation and conflict resolution. A Star Principal knows that school involves more than academic subjects. School must also include skills for living and getting along with one another.

Seventh, the Star Principal views evaluation in terms of student achievement success. The Star Principal evaluates herself in terms of how well the building is serving the children as measured by achievement gains. She then evaluates the teachers according to the same criteria. Star Principals understand that their role as evaluator is tricky. They know that they are the chief supporter for teachers, yet at the same time they have to take on a judgmental role as evaluator. The Star Principal has exceptional human-relations skills because she must be both supportive and judgmental.

Eighth, the Star Principal views decision making through both people-oriented and task-oriented lenses. Star Principals also differentiate decisions as either “S”
(supporting the system) or “I” (supporting the individual). Decisions that support the individual often circumvent the rules of the system. The Star Principal makes few “S” decisions. Instead, they often make “I” decisions if they believe students will benefit. Star Principals know they must seek the input of others when making difficult decisions, but they also realize that the ultimate decision is their responsibility. They are accountable for their decisions. Star Principals seek to make decisions that move the school forward in light of the stated objectives, but at the same time Star Principals seek to build strong, positive human relations with the staff.

Ninth, a Star Principal admits fallibility. In order for a school to be healthy, the leaders must role model for the students the idea that all people are fallible—everyone makes mistakes. Admitting error is a sign of strength. Principals model for teachers and students that they make mistakes and do not have all the answers. This allows for an open environment where all members of the learning community can question one another without fear of threat. This lets the whole school community know that “we are all in this together.”

Tenth, the Star Principal has a clear plan for administering change in the school. Many times a variety of social and educational entities want to bring their programs to the school. The Star Principal protects the school from too many or divergent programs. The Star Principal understands that in order for true change to occur which results in gains in student achievement, the staff must all be on the same page and going in the same direction. This cannot happen if the vision of the school is constantly being interrupted to appease an outside organization with funds to spend. The Star Principal
must stay true to the course that the school has outlined. If additional monies are made available, the Star Principal will use those monies for efforts such as reducing class size, which will only enhance the mission of the school improvement plan.

Lastly, per Haberman, the Star Principal understands her vital role in the community. She focuses on parents as equal stakeholders in the school. The Star Principal knows that she must treat her parents in a respectful manner regardless of their level of education. Star principals also realize that often times they do not match the ethnicity, race, and/or class of the parents connected with the school family. This potential obstacle can be overcome by being part of the community. Attending church and other community events bonds together principal and parent and builds a sense of trust. A Star Principal must find a balance among all the voices of the community. This takes time to get everyone on the same page. True buy-in only happens if the Star Principal makes sure the stakeholders have a role in decision making.

Purpose

The reason it is important to study Star Principals is because Dr. Haberman’s research supports that prospective principals who embody the above mentioned 11 traits are more likely to successfully lead a school which predominately serves children in poverty. According to Jim Collins, in his book *Good to Great* (2001), you have to have the right people on the bus to be successful. So in the case of education you must have the right principals leading the school in order to educate the students of poverty successfully. It is important to acknowledge that Dr. Haberman’s conclusions need to be vetted against the research of other educational and leadership experts. If Dr. Haberman’s
assumptions hold up against other bodies of research, then it is important to carefully consider the utility of his assumptions concerning building level leadership, especially since the leader of a Star Teacher may impact the overall experience and performance of the Star Teacher.

The next part of this literature review will take the 11 traits of a Star Principal according to Martin Haberman (Haberman & Dill, 1999) and connect the traits to the larger body of leadership research.

**Power.** First, a Star Principal knows, according to Dr. Haberman (Haberman & Dill, 1999) that her greatest source of power rests within persuasion. Therefore, she focuses her energy on the use of expert power and personal power. Expert power according to French and Raven (1959) refers to the leader's capacity to solve problems and perform important tasks on the basis of her expert skills. The more dependent the followers are on the expert for problem solving and advice relates to the amount of power the expert holds over the followers. However, an effective principal knows that expert power alone will not accomplish the school goals, and that she must couple expertise with her personal persuasive powers in order to enlist the help of the teachers.

This idea can be framed in terms of the collegial model (Bush, 2003). The collegial model involves teachers in important decision-making activities as related to the school. According to Brown, Boyle, and Boyle (1999), “You need the collective support of your staff to implement any worthwhile change, so involvement in the decision-making process is vital” (p. 322). The collegial model rests on three school leader qualities. First, the leader is responsive to his colleagues. He relies on the expertise and
personal skills of his teachers. He uses this professional knowledge base to benefit the students by everyone working together bringing his or her best skills to the table. Second, he is part of the team. He does not esteem himself as above his colleagues. He takes part in all facets of the school day including teaching, bus duty, and hall supervision. Third, the leader is more like a facilitator. He looks to the collective body of professional knowledge represented by the entire staff to make decisions regarding the school.

The transformational model of leadership is relevant to the collegial model. According to Leithwood (1994), transformational leadership can be conceptualized along eight dimensions: building school vision; establishing school goals; providing intellectual stimulation; offering individualized support; modeling best practices and important organizational values; demonstrating high performance expectations; creating a productive school culture; and developing structures to foster participation in school decisions. Transformation leadership will only occur in schools when the leader has found a way to enable others to act (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). Leaders enable others to act by giving power away. Teamwork, trust, and empowerment are everyday words in the vocabulary of a Star Principal. He realizes that very little will be accomplished within the school if he is the only one with the power. Instead, he shares his power collectively with the entire staff and together they tackle the many obstacles associated with schooling children who live in poverty.

Protect student learning. The Star Principal understands that his chief responsibility is to protect student learning (Haberman & Dill, 1999). He knows that teachers who promote the constructivist approach to learning may come under fire from
parents and colleagues as well as from central office administrators because their approach to teaching and learning may not conform to traditional ideas of good instruction. Constructivist teachers believe that the keys to learning for all students—disadvantaged or not—are experience, immersion, and engagement in a safe, interactive community (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1998). Constructivist teachers do not think their primary job, as teacher, is to give direct instruction. Instead, the constructivist teacher knows that deep learning occurs when students are allowed to gradually construct their own understandings.

Best practices (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1998) based on the constructivist model of teaching and learning include less of the following: whole class, teacher directed instruction (lecturing); student passivity (sitting, listening, receiving, and absorbing information); presentational, one-way transmission of information from teacher to student; prizing and rewarding of silence in the classroom; classroom time devoted to fill-in-the-blank worksheets, dittos, workbooks, and other seatwork; student time spent reading textbooks and basal readers; attempts by teachers to thinly cover large amounts of material in every subject area; rote memorization of facts and details; emphasis on the competition and grades in schools; tracking or leveling students into ability groups; use of pull-out special programs; and use of and reliance on standardized tests.

Conversely, best practices based on constructivist ideology includes more of the following: experiential, inductive, hands-on learning; active learning in the classroom, with all the attendant noise and movement of students doing, talking, and collaborating;
diverse roles for teachers, including coaching, demonstrating, and modeling; emphasis on higher-order thinking (learning a field’s key concepts and principles); deep study of a smaller number of topics, so that students internalize the field’s way of inquiry; reading of real texts (whole books, primary sources, and nonfiction materials); responsibility transferred to students for their work (goal setting, record keeping, monitoring, sharing, exhibiting, and evaluating); choice for students (choosing their own books, writing topics, team partners, and research projects); enacting and modeling of the principles of democracy in school; attention to affective needs and the varying cognitive styles of individual students; cooperative, collaborative activity (developing the classroom as an interdependent community); heterogeneously grouped classrooms where individual needs are met through inherently individualized activities, not segregation of bodies; delivery of special help to students in regular classrooms; varied and cooperative roles for teachers, parents, and administrators; reliance on teachers’ descriptive evaluations of student growth, including observational/anecdotal records, conference notes, and performance assessment rubrics. Understanding, acknowledging, encouraging, and protecting good teaching and learning activities based on constructivist practices are among an effective principal’s highest priorities.

Dr. George Wood (1992) cites good instruction as well as connected curriculum design as integral parts of successful school reform. He states that in order for at-risk students to achieve academic success, they must be privy to a connected curriculum. The curriculum must connect or be relevant to the student as well as connect to the other subject areas. This idea relates to Dr. Haberman’s project method of instruction. Star
Principals support what Dr. Haberman refers to as the project method of instruction. This involves interdisciplinary units of study. Children in poverty learn best when they see the big picture of their leaning and can see how it can be applied to their lives. Children of poverty regard problem solving and answering questions as meaningful when they can relate the problems to their own lives. This will lead to higher levels of thinking and understanding. The job of the Star Principal is to recognize and protect this type of project learning environment, which is conducive with sound constructivist approaches to teaching and learning.

*Teamwork.* The third trait of a Star Principal involves his ability to build and activate a team to unity of purpose (Haberman & Dill, 1999). The principal must help the staff reach consensus of purpose and then create a few, simple achievable goals that support the purpose and focus the attention and energies of everyone involved (Joyce, Wolf, & Calhoun, 1993). For too long schools have made the school improvement process unrealistic and unachievable by convoluting it with elaborate, complex programs and plans (Schmoker, 2002). Schools are guilty of gathering so much data that reveals so many needs for improvement and setting too many goals with subsequent initiatives that we overtax our teachers (Fullan, 1996). Realistically, the way to get staff excited and energized concerning school improvement rests within the simplicity and achievability of a plan. It is the job of the school leader to facilitate the process of simplifying the school improvement plan and therefore creating a sense among the staff that the goals are achievable. This will lead to an effective school team, which demystifies data analysis and seeks to make real change (Schmoker, 2006).
An effective principal must find a way to get the staff to work together as a team. A cooperative, collaborative environment must be established for teachers to collectively work to achieve goals related to the school’s purpose. According to Kouzes and Posner (2002) this would fall under the practice of enabling others to act. Kouzes and Posner claim the best way to get the members of your organization activated to perform is by enabling them to act. You strengthen each member on the team by giving power away, providing choice, developing competence, assigning critical tasks, and offering visible support. This notion of giving power away is critical to activating a team. If there is only one leader, the principal, in a school, then the school’s capacity to learn and grow is limited. However, if the entire school is a learning organization filled with teacher leaders, then the school will learn faster and enter the fifth discipline as coined by Senge (1990) making the whole of an organization more effective than the sum of its parts.

An effective principal must illicit commitment to the task and discover ways to motivate the staff to work hard and persist until the goals have been reached. According to Kouzes and Posner this can be achieved by modeling the way and encouraging the heart. The principal can set the example by behaving in ways that are consistent with the shared values of the school. For example, if a value of the school includes consistently monitoring specific student achievement data, then the leader models the way by setting aside staff development time to monitor that data. The other important practice in which the leader must partake is encouraging the heart. This is accomplished by recognizing individual contributions to the success of each project.
Additionally, this is accomplished by setting time aside to celebrate team accomplishments regularly. For example, if part of the school improvement plan calls for a 3% increase in math scores as evidenced by a standardized assessment, then when the 3% increase happens, much attention needs to be devoted to publicly recognizing the achievement and publicly celebrating the achievement. Parker Palmer (1998) is quite clear in his research concerning the importance of encouraging the teacher’s heart. Teachers are human beings who teach who they are. They must be fed by their leaders in order to continue the important work that they do. Administrators build their team productiveness by building their team spirit and heart.

Although many fields of research—psychology, sociology, and business, just to name a few—have offered principles of leadership, Dr. Haberman claims the Star Principal only needs to focus on three principles to guide his school leadership: unity of purpose, team building, and commitment to the task.

*Approach to at-risk students.* Star Principals must truly believe that students in poverty can learn and that the school has the ability to set the stage for learning. They must understand the pedagogy of poverty as it relates to learning. Dr. Haberman (Haberman & Dill, 1999) refers to the following core functions of urban teachers as the pedagogy of poverty: giving information; asking questions; giving directions; making assignments; monitoring seatwork; reviewing assignments; giving tests; reviewing tests; assigning homework; reviewing homework; settling disputes; punishing noncompliance; marking papers; and giving grades. When teachers ascribe to pedagogy of poverty, they make students at risk of failure. It is extremely important that the principal recognize and
insist upon teachers utilizing good instructional practices with at-risk students to keep them from succumbing to failure. Best practices (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1998) based on the constructivist model of teaching and learning include less of the following: whole-class, teacher directed instruction (lecturing); student passivity (sitting, listening, receiving, and absorbing information); presentational, one-way transmission of information from teacher to student; prizing and rewarding of silence in the classroom; classroom time devoted to fill-in-the-blank worksheets, dittos, workbooks, and other seatwork; student time spent reading textbooks and basal readers; attempt by teachers to thinly cover large amounts of material in every subject area; rote memorization of facts and details; emphasis on the competition and grades in schools; tracking or leveling students into ability groups; use of pull-out special programs; and use of and reliance on standardized tests. Conversely, best practices based on constructivist ideology includes more of the following: experiential, inductive, hands-on learning; active learning in the classroom, with all the attendant noise and movement of students doing, talking, and collaborating; diverse roles for teachers, including coaching, demonstrating, and modeling; emphasis on higher-order thinking (learning a field’s key concepts and principles); deep study of a smaller number of topics, so that students internalize the field’s way of inquiry; reading of real texts (whole books, primary sources, and nonfiction materials); responsibility transferred to students for their work (goal setting, record keeping, monitoring, sharing, exhibiting, and evaluating); choice for students (choosing their own books, writing topics, team partners, and research projects); enacting and modeling of the principles of democracy in school; attention to affective needs and...
the varying cognitive styles of individual students; cooperative, collaborative activity (developing the classroom as an interdependent community); heterogeneously grouped classrooms where individual needs are met through inherently individualized activities, not segregation of bodies; delivery of special help to students in regular classrooms; varied and cooperative roles for teachers, parents, and administrators; reliance on teachers’ descriptive evaluations of student growth, including observational/anecdotal records, conference notes, and performance assessment rubrics. The constructivist method of teaching and learning is an essential approach when educating at-risk students. It is the responsibility of the Star Principal to protect student learning by mandating the use of constructivist practices among his staff in order to save children of poverty from the pedagogy of poverty.

Persistent instructional leader. The Star Principal is persistent above all else (Haberman & Dill, 1999). He is able to simultaneously absorb upward and downward stress. This means he shields teachers from the downward stress associated with the bureaucracy of the central office so the teacher can focus on teaching. At the same time he absorbs the upward stress from ineffective staff members. The Star Principal’s chief trait is persistence in problem-solving abilities, and these individuals are committed to the struggle required to improve their schools.

Deborah Meier (2002a) is an excellent example of the persistent leader. She is founder of the Central Park East Schools in East Harlem and the Mission Hill School in Boston. She knows the persistence required of the school leader to activate real change in schools that educate at-risk students. Her prescription for real school reform includes
higher expectations for students and teachers. This leads us to the most important job for the persistent instructional leader of the school; such leaders must persistently work until they are rid of ineffective teachers regardless of the amount of paperwork because they know that students in poverty will not survive educationally with mediocre to low performing teachers.

Every aspect of school reform depends on highly skilled teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1999). It is the job of the effective principal to identify incompetent and/or mediocre teachers. Earlier research concerning changing teacher quality has emphasized getting rid of incompetent teachers (Bridges, 1992). However, Platt, Tripp, Ogden, and Fraser (2000) focus on identifying and improving mediocre teaching. The researchers stress the need for administrators to recognize mediocre teaching practices. Most administrators have no problem recognizing excellence and incompetence but mediocre seems to slide by. However, the mediocre teaching is doing an extreme injustice to our students. The mediocre teacher is not skilled enough to help most children learn, especially those students who are already at risk of failure. Effective Principals must either get rid of incompetent and mediocre teachers or find a way to help them improve so students do not suffer. Children at risk will not flourish with inadequate teachers. Therefore, the principal must have as his number one commitment a quality teaching staff.

*School climate.* Star Principals must foster a positive school climate (Haberman & Dill, 1999). According to Owens (1991) an open climate school is favored over a closed climate school. In a closed climate school teachers are not highly engaged in their
work, they do not work well together, and their achievement as a group is minimal. Teachers view their principal as an ineffective leader and as someone who creates meaningless tasks that hinder important work. They think the principal is not concerned about their personal welfare. In this type of climate teacher morale is low and teacher turnover is high. The teachers in this closed environment view the principal as aloof and impersonal, as someone who simply follows the rules and does not care about being creative or inventive in the many obstacles and annoyances that teachers encounter.

However, on the other hand, an open climate school is a place where teachers obtain satisfaction from their work and are motivated to overcome most difficulties and frustrations. Teachers in an open climate school view the principal as energetic, empathetic, and compassionate to teachers. The principal is viewed as a competent leader who is in control, yet does not feel the need to supervise the teachers closely. Teachers in an open climate school are problem solvers. They are not overburdened with busywork and “administrivia.” The teachers and administrator work hard to keep the organization moving forward.

Most of the research associated with school climate focuses on the relationship between the teachers and the principal. A Star Principal understands the importance of the relationship between the teachers and administration so he seeks to cultivate that relationship in an empowering, positive way. A Star Principal also understands that the school climate includes the way the adults interact with the students. The same open school climate ideas must also pertain to adult-student interactions.
William Glasser (1992) points out that in order for a quality school to exist students must buy in to the climate. He stresses the need for students to be actively engaged in making and maintaining the rules that all members of the school community will live by. He believes that students, not adults, must monitor their own behavior and that when we fashion the school after an authentic learning environment then students will control their own conduct and choose behaviors that are conducive to learning. This will lead to a school climate where everyone—teachers, students, and administration—behave in authentic ways to improve the craft of schooling. Achievement levels will soar within this type of open climate school.

**Evaluation.** The Star Principal views evaluation in terms of student achievement success (Haberman & Dill, 1999). Star Principals know that their job goes beyond identifying and ridding the staff of incompetent, obviously harmful teachers. Star Principals must also be able to identify mediocre teachers because mediocre teachers are not skilled enough to help most children learn. Platt, Tripp, Ogden, and Fraser (2000) claim that mediocre teaching practices must be identified and that skillful leadership can set the stage for improvement. A mediocre teacher is often times pleasant, seemingly organized, and the class appears to be on task. However, there are no opportunities for high-level thinking and standards and expectations for students are set at a minimum. The mediocre teacher expects little for the students and gets little from the students. In terms of instruction, the mediocre teacher is performing at a mediocre level in the classroom and her students are following suit and performing at a mediocre level in the classroom. Often times the mediocre teacher is overlooked because parents and students do not
complain about her. Additionally, she may go the extra mile for the school and coach a variety of sports. Principals may look the other way and gloss over mediocre teachers’ evaluations while saying to themselves that this teacher is good at heart and overall she brings value to the organization. However, all students deserve a quality education and this will not occur if students have mediocre teachers.

Effective principals know that everything rests on a quality teaching staff (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Marzano, 2003). Therefore, a Star Principal cannot overlook mediocre teachers. He must confront mediocre teaching practices, select data sources to measure improvement, design an improvement plan for the struggling teacher, and carefully monitor and measure growth based on student academic data (Platt, Tripp, Ogden, & Fraser, 2000). A Star Principal evaluates herself in terms of how well the building is serving the children as measured by achievement gains. She then evaluates the teachers according to the same criteria. If mediocre teachers do not show significant improvement as evidenced by student achievement data, then effective principals know they must use the evaluation process to eliminate this harmful element from the staff (Bridges, 1992).

**Decision making.** The Star Principal views decision making through both people-oriented and task-oriented lenses. According to Haberman and Dill (1999), Star Principals differentiate decisions as either “S” (supporting the system) or “I” (supporting the individual). Decisions that support the individual often circumvent the rules of the system. The Star Principal makes few “S” decisions. Instead, they often make “I” decisions if they believe students will benefit. This idea of “I” decisions which support
the individual goes along with Douglas McGregor's Theory Y (1960). Assumptions concerning the nature of people at work based on Theory Y include: employees who find work satisfying view work as natural and as acceptable as play; people who are committed to the objectives of the organization will exercise initiative, self-direction, and self-control on the job, the average person will not only accept responsibility on the job but also seek it, and the average employee values creativity which means the ability to make good decisions and seeks opportunities to be creative at work. Administrators who believe in Theory Y seek ways to involve staff in decision making because they believe that most teachers are capable of exercising more initiative, responsibility, and creativity when work circumstances allow and encourage such behaviors.

Bush (2003) explains that the collegial model of leadership works well in schools. According to this model, organizations determine policy and make decisions through a process of discussion leading to consensus. Collegial models share decision-making among some or all of the members of the organization. This type of decision-making model is grounded in transformational leadership. When members of the group create and buy into the goals of an organization then they exert extra effort and greater productivity is the result. Thus, the term transformational applies because the whole organization transforms, or changes as a result of the buy-in, work, and results (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Burns, 1978).

Effective principals know they must seek the input of others when making difficult decisions, but they also realize that the ultimate decision is their responsibility.
They vacillate between group decision-making and individual decision-making according to the nature of the decision (Yukl, 1989).

**Fallibility.** A Star Principal admits fallibility (Haberman & Dill, 1999). In order for a school to be healthy, the leaders must role model for the students the idea that all people are fallible—everyone makes mistakes. Admitting error is a sign of strength. Such principals model for teachers and students that they make mistakes and do not have all the answers. This allows for an open environment where all members of the learning community can question one another without fear of threat. This lets the whole school community know that “we are all in this together.”

This type of open environment is essential in an effective school. Glasser (1992) explains that in order for students to really buy into their schooling they must be active members. Coercion does not work. Students must be able to own their behavior, choices, and consequences (Glasser, 1988). This is the same for teachers and principals. There are never enough rules and overseers to keep everyone in line. This idea of fallibility is an underpinning component of choice theory. Everyone in the school family—students, teachers, and the principal—are human beings and therefore capable of making mistakes. Glasser’s choice theory accepts this fact and encourages the entire school family to make the rules that they plan to live by, as well as make the consequences that they plan to live by, if the members of the school family choose not to follow the established norms.

Glasser (2000) points out that effective principals have three things in common. First, they work to rid their schools of external controls and replace the external controls with choice theory. Second, they work to stamp out low grades and failure in school. This
leads to point number three; they seek to bring joy to their school. All three points are grounded in fallibility.

In a similar vein, Choice Theory is all about people being real with kids. Allowing students to make choices, develop rules and consequences, and take ownership for their choices is the essence of illuminating the human qualities of education. Organizing a school community to stamp out failure is about being real with students and teachers. Everyone is involved in creating a failure environment based on human deficiencies, and it will take everyone working hard to change the failure environment to a success environment. Joy is the result of a school filled with fallible members recognizing their fallibility and working together in a real way to combat the many obstacles related to schooling.

Change agent. The Star Principal has a clear plan for administering change in the school (Haberman & Dill, 1999). Many times a variety of social and educational entities want to bring their programs to the school. The Star Principal protects the school from too many or divergent programs, and understands that in order for true change to occur which results in gains in student achievement, the staff must all be on the same page and going in the same direction.

The best way for Star Principals to administer lasting change is by organizing professional learning communities within the school. According to DuFour and Eaker (1998) professional learning communities share six common characteristics. First, professional learning communities share a common mission, vision, and values. This means that all members of the school community share a collective commitment to
guiding principles that clearly explain what the people in the school believe and what they seek to create.

Second, a professional learning community participates in collective inquiry. This means they value the act of questioning and searching for answers over finding answers. Professional learning communities know that student learning and achievement is filled with so many obstacles and hurdles. A professional learning community continually questions the status quo, seeks new methods and strategies, tests the new methods and strategies, and reflects on the results which usually leads to more questions and the cycle continues. Professional learning communities are what Senge (1990) refers to as the Fifth Discipline, a true learning organization.

The third characteristic of a professional learning organization is collaborative teams. “People who engage in collaborative team learning are able to learn from one another, thus creating momentum to fuel continued improvement” (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 27). This collaborative learning process is essential to the practice of ongoing, continual learning which is imperative for social improvement (Costa & Garmston, 2002; Fullan, 1993).

The fourth characteristic of a professional learning community is action orientation and experimentation. They believe in participating in action research to develop and test hypotheses. They are not bothered by learning that an intervention was not successful. They consider failed experiments to be an important part of the learning process. Professional learning organizations fueled by action research activities always

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prefer activity, even chaotic activity over inaction. They know that in order to grow and learn you must be doing something.

Fifth, the professional learning organization seeks continuous improvement. A professional learning organization knows that there is always room for improvement. Teaching and learning are never stagnant. Professional learning organizations are constantly seeking new and better ways to educate all segments of the school population. They will never actually arrive. Continuous improvement is a journey.

Finally, professional learning communities are results-oriented. Results not intentions are the focus of professional learning communities. The whole purpose of a professional learning community is to actually make a positive, measurable difference in how students learn and demonstrate achievement. Schmoker (2006) points out in his book *Results Now* that professional learning communities are the surest, fastest path to instructional improvement. He stresses that the assessment piece (which is so often left out) becomes the foundational piece for further adjustment or improvement. Professional learning communities are grounded in simple, identified data and improvement is measured based on the identified data assessment pieces. The professional learning community is results driven. An effective principal, such as a performing Star Principal, knows that real change will happen in a school through the framework of professional learning communities.

*Politician.* The Star Principal understands her vital role in the community (Haberman & Dill, 1999). She focuses on parents as equal stakeholders in the school. The Star Principal knows that she must treat her parents in a respectful manner regardless of
their level of education. Star Principals also realize that often times they do not match the ethnicity, race, and/or class of the parents connected with the school family. This potential obstacle can be overcome by being part of the community. Attending church and other community events bonds together principal and parent and builds a sense of trust. A Star Principal must find a balance among all the voices of the community.

According to Rosso (1990) the primary way to obtain community support is through involvement. Rosso suggests four ways for the principal to involve parents: formal parent organizations, committee memberships, school volunteers, and parent education.

First, the oldest and largest parent organization is the PTA (Parent-Teacher Association). A wise principal will truly engage this organization and utilize their services. An active PTA can run parent visitation nights at the school as well as host community open-house activities to get the community involved in school functions. An active PTA will bridge the community and school and unite efforts to care for the students' physical, mental, social, and spiritual educational needs.

Second, the school will obtain community support through parent-community committees. The committees may assist with curriculum development, extracurricular activities, fund-raising, or the organization of seasonal events.

Third, the school can gain community support through school volunteers. School volunteers may come from all walks of life, which represent all facets of the school community. After the volunteers have been screened and trained, they may assist by fulfilling the following jobs: classroom monitor, field trip supervisor, library aid, story
reader, teacher aid (clerical or instructional), and tutor. School volunteers from the school community serve as an excellent bridge from the neighborhood to the school.

Fourth, the school can obtain community support through parent education. This means the school includes parents in the job of educating their children. Parent education programs typically include special workshops on topics such as how to tutor your student, how to deal with discipline at home, and how to deal with potentially negative outside influences such as peers, the media, and the drug culture. Overall, an effective principal understands her role as politician. As chief politician of the school, the principal seeks to include key community leaders into important decisions involving the school in order to combine the synergy of the school and the community working hand-in-hand for the betterment of student learning.

*Star Principal trait summary.* In summary, the traits of a Star Principal as reported by Dr. Martin Haberman which include power, protecting student learning, teamwork, approach to at-risk students, persistent instructional leadership, safe school climate, evaluation based upon student learning, decision making, fallibility, change agent, and politician. These traits have been supported through the research of other educational and leadership experts as being important traits of effective principals. Since one of the major purposes of this study is to gain a better understanding of what Star Teachers need from their leadership, it is important to look at those needs in light of what the research says concerning effective leadership, especially effective school leadership. Mobility of the teaching staff in minority schools is extremely high, approximately 50% leave within the first year (Haberman, 1993). Thus, this research study is of particular
importance because it examines the personal and professional lives of Star Teachers with the anticipation that the analysis may lend to a fuller description of how Star Teachers develop and sustain, especially as related to the dynamics of the teacher/administrator relationship. This deeper analysis may also provide administrators with additional knowledge as to how to support and retain their Star Teachers.

Parallels of Star Teachers and Principals

As defended by Haberman (1995b; Haberman & Dill, 1999), and supported by other research on effective teachers and principals, Star Teachers and Star Principals serving children in poverty share many of the same characteristics. Both are persistent, instructional leaders who never give up on students and who practice and promote best instructional practices. This study looks at the persistence of the identified predicted and performing Star Teachers chosen for this study. The experiences of the Star Teachers are analyzed in terms of how persistent they are in life, the classroom, and in dealing with administration. According to Haberman’s research, the Star Teacher demonstrates persistence in the classroom when dealing with the learning needs of children in poverty. However, this study looks beyond the persistence demonstrated in the classroom with the student. This study looks at the persistence of the Star Teacher in the broader context of the person by examining the teacher’s background, major influences, and current relationship with administration. Additionally, the current persistence of the teachers is analyzed through a description of the teacher’s classroom. As the Star Teacher remains in the field of education what happens concerning persistence in the teacher’s life, classroom, and work relationships?
Additionally, both Star Teachers and Principals know that they must protect student learning at all costs, meaning time on task and engaging students in quality learning activities that promote high levels of student achievement. In this study the identified and performing Star Teachers are analyzed in how they protect student learning in the classroom through descriptions of how they describe their classroom.

Star Teachers and Star Principals have a similar approach to at-risk students. They understand the negative impact of the pedagogy of poverty and at the same time they understand the framework of poverty and how students of poverty are at a major disadvantage when trying to successfully operate within schools that function based on middle class values and ideas. This study consequently looks deeply at the Star Teachers’ description of their classroom to help uncover their ideology of students in poverty. A description of significant life experiences of Star Teachers may uncover their perception and reaction to the impact of poverty upon the learning environment. Carefully examining the way a Star Teacher participates in personal and professional renewal sheds light on how they perceive situations involving the impact of poverty.

Both Star Teachers and Star Principals understand the power of collaboration. Star Teachers know that only through collaboration with colleagues do they hope to avoid teacher burnout. Star Principals know that the power of collaboration through professional learning communities is the only way to sustain real, positive changes in school that will lead to real results. This study attempts to uncover how Star Teachers experience collaboration in their personal and professional lives. This study also examines the role of “others” in Star Teachers’ lives by delving into the significant
events, people, and factors that have shaped them as educators. This study also looks at the role of collaboration in the professional life of the Star Teachers by examining the work conditions of the Star Teacher.

Furthermore, the Star Teacher and the Star Principal know and understand their human, fallible qualities. They use those human traits to strengthen the place they call school. Fallible qualities are uncovered through this research study concerning Star Teachers by asking the teachers to describe their classrooms.

Overall, this study of predicting and performing Star Teachers of children in poverty looks deeply at the characteristics shared by both Star Principals and Star Teachers which include persistent instructional leadership, approach to at-risk students both personally and professionally, collaboration, and fallibility. The parallel characteristics are used to understand and analyze the experiences of predicting and performing Star Teachers of children in poverty in terms of how they developed as teachers, how they experience the work of a teacher, and how they experience the impact of their school leaders.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Chapter III provides a detailed view of the methodology chosen for this research study. The first part offers an overview of the methodology of this phenomenological study. Next, this chapter carefully explains the semistructured interview method of data collection chosen for this qualitative study. The role and placement of the researcher is elaborated upon in this chapter to clarify potential researcher biases as well as to illustrate potential benefits associated with backyard research. This chapter also examines participant selection with a description of the context in which the participants work. Next, the data collection part of Chapter III fully explains purposeful selection sampling as well as the interview process and interview instrument. The data analysis section describes the steps for transcribing the interview notes, initial coding of the comments, theme emersion creation, and member checking and data triangulation to verify the data. This chapter concludes with a summary of the methodology that was utilized to conduct the research associated with this qualitative study.

Methodology

This phenomenological qualitative research study attempts to further describe and understand performing Star Teachers of children in poverty. This study is grounded in three research questions:

1. How do Star Teachers describe the significant factors, events, and people that have shaped them as educators and people?
2. How do Star Teachers describe who they are now as teachers?

3. What do Star Teachers need to sustain them as Star Teachers?

The appropriate research design for this study is a qualitative research design. Owens (1991) clearly explains why qualitative research is so important in schools:

Indeed, studies using these research methods, called qualitative or ethnographic methods, became the intellectual backbone of the educational reform movement of the 1980s. Gone were the spare statistical studies, so often elegant in style but yielding no significant difference, replaced by lively, richly documented accounts of human beings at work that yielded insight and understanding of what was happening to people and how they were responding to their experiences. (p. 21)

Qualitative research allows for the researcher to go into schools and truly examine what is happening instead of just trusting students and teachers to fill out questionnaires and surveys about what is going on in schools.

This study embodies the characteristics of a qualitative study according to Creswell (2003), which includes the research taking place in the natural setting. In this case, interviews were conducted at the respective schools where the teachers work. Also, qualitative research uses multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic. In this case, the research included interviews with 15 identified Star Teachers. Qualitative research is emergent, meaning that as the research study progresses; new questions will arise and continue to form the study. Qualitative research is interpretative. This means that the researcher analyzed the data along the way and developed themes or categories to help explain the data. The qualitative researcher had to be aware of her biases while...
conducting the research and had to carefully analyze how such biases shaped the study.
In order to combat biases, the researcher paid careful attention to member checking. She
made sure that each participant carefully read over her interview notes after each
interview to ensure that the researcher accurately reflected the thoughts of the Star
Teacher.

This study involves phenomenological research because it seeks to explore how
performing Star Teachers create and understand their daily lives. Phenomenology seeks
to understand lived experiences of the individual (Schwandt, 2001). According to Bogdan
and Biklen (2007), phenomenologists emphasize the subjective parts of people’s
behavior. Phenomenologists believe there are multiple ways of interpreting the lived
realities of others. Through interaction we socially create reality. The goal of the
phenomenologist is to seek to understand the perspective of the individual. This distorts
the research subjects’ experiences the least, and makes for the most meaningful
description by the researcher. Although this type of research is interwoven in subjectivity
by both the researcher and research subjects, the logic of legitimacy rests with better
understanding the human condition, which can only be explored using qualitative
research methods.

Interview Method

The data collection method of choice for this research study was semistructured
interviewing. Semistructured interviewing combines the flexibility of the open-ended
interview with the directionality and agenda of the semistructured interview to produce
focused qualitative data (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999). Although the
questions on a semistructured interview guide are preformulated, the answers to those questions are open-ended. This method is fashioned after a conversation, and this interview process is shaped as a natural dialogue (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The interview method is also chosen based on the skills of the interviewer. To this end, the research interviewer has exceptional listening skills, which were essential to the process (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Also, the research interviewer has had numerous experiences asking probing questions. Her work as principal has afforded her many experiences in classroom content coaching which is based on asking questions and allowing the participant to explore issues fully (Danielson, 1996). This is an extremely important skill when conducting a semistructured interview during qualitative research because although the questions are preformed, the answers are open-ended and can be enhanced by the effective use of probes (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999).

Role and Placement of the Researcher

This research project was conducted in the district where the researcher is a principal. One of the most difficult aspects of conducting qualitative research is gaining accessibility to the site. Gatekeepers are extremely difficult to navigate around (Krathwohl, 1993). However, since the researcher is also a member of the district, she has a strong connection with gatekeepers, making site accessibility easy. However, other concerns had to be addressed. For example, there was a risk of uncovering damaging knowledge. However, with this particular research situation, the study is based on positive characteristics of the teacher. Thus, any new knowledge would not likely be damaging or suppressed. Of course, there are many positive aspects associated with
conducting research in your own setting. One was that the researcher had easy access to these Star Teachers, who are elites in their field. According to Marshall and Rossman (2006) it is often difficult to gain access to such elites. However, because the researcher was conducting backyard research, she had easy access to these elites. When conducting backyard research, one must employ multiple strategies of validity in order to create reader confidence in the findings. Thus, the researcher used the following strategies: member checking, using rich, thick description, and clarifying any researcher bias (Creswell, 2003).

**Participant Selection**

The participants within this study included 15 teachers within the Battle Creek Public School District: 5 teachers at the elementary level, 5 at the middle school level, and 5 teachers at the high school level. The teachers identified for this study were teachers who scored between 40 and 45 on the Haberman Star Teachers of Children in Poverty interview process. This interview process focuses on identifying certain characteristics: persistence; response to authority; application of generalization; approach to at-risk students; personal versus professional orientation; burnout; and fallibility. Teachers who score in the high category (40 to 45) are considered prospective teachers who will not only last in the urban setting, but also flourish and show tremendous success with at-risk students. The Star Teachers selected for this study not only scored between 40 and 45 during the interview process, but are also currently performing as Star Teachers according to their direct supervisors. The teachers identified for this study were purposefully selected in order to help the researcher better understand and describe Star
Teachers of children in poverty (Creswell, 2003). The teachers signed consent forms prior to the interview process in compliance with the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board guidelines (see Appendix D).

Data Collection

Individual interviews with each performing Star Teacher of children in poverty were the primary method of data collection. Interviews were conducted at the subject’s convenience in terms of date and time. The location of the interviews was at the respective school site of the subject in order to make sure that the subject felt comfortable in his or her natural setting. Interviews were audio taped and then later transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. Interviews lasted no less than 90 minutes and up to 150 minutes. The goal of the interview was to get a sense of the subjects’ lived experiences as Star Teachers of children in poverty.

Instrumentation

In order to adequately cover the research questions, a semistructured interview approach was used (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999). The interview began with the following questions (see Appendix A):

1. What are your assumptions and beliefs about teaching and learning?
2. Describe for me people and events in your life you believe have played a role in shaping you as a teacher and person.
3. Tell me about who you are and how that shapes you as a teacher.
4. Tell me what you do in order to personally and/or professionally renew yourself.
5. Describe for me three defining moments in your life.

6. Describe a typical day and week in your classroom.

7. Describe for me what you think sustains you as an educator and/or person?

8. What conditions in your school and/or outside of school help you be the teacher you are?

9. What role if any does your administrator play in helping you be the teacher you are?

However, the interview questions were quite flexible in order to allow emergent information, which is so important when conducting a qualitative study. “A qualitative design needs to remain sufficiently open and flexible to permit exploration of whatever the phenomenon under study offers for inquiry. Qualitative designs continue to be emergent even after data collection begins” (Patton, 2002, p. 255). The personal and professional lives of Star Teachers of children in poverty were explored through semistructured interviews to encourage an in-depth picture of the teacher both as a person and as a professional. The researcher’s training as a cognitive, instructional coach gives her the expertise to be able to conduct these in-depth interviews.

Data Analysis and Verification

In order to adequately analyze the data, this study followed the six steps outlined by Creswell (2003). First, the data was organized and prepared for analysis by transcribing the interviews and typing up the field notes by a professional transcriptionist. Second, the researcher read through all the data in order to get a general sense of the data and reflect on its overall meaning. At this stage the researcher started recording general
thoughts about the data. The third step involved the coding process. “Coding is the process of organizing the material into chunks before bringing meaning to those chunks” (Creswell, 2003, p. 192). Step four used the coding process to generate categories or themes for analysis. Open coding was used in order to review the entire text for descriptive categories (Rudestam & Newton, 2001). Step five included how to represent the description and themes. In this study, quotations are used to richly describe the perspectives of Star Teachers of children of poverty who work in the Battle Creek Public School District ranging from elementary teachers to high school teachers as found within Chapter IV of this study. The final step in data analysis included making meaning of the data. This is where the researcher explained the lessons learned after completing the study as found within Chapter V of this study. Within the lessons learned, new questions arose that calls for further study.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out the importance of “trustworthiness” as related to the researcher when conducting a qualitative study. Trustworthiness means that the researcher is providing evidence that the work is credible and worth paying attention to. Creswell (1998) suggests that qualitative researchers utilize at least two verification procedures. To provide trustworthiness in this study the researcher used member checking and rich thick descriptions. Member checking is when the researcher takes the final report back to the participants to determine whether the participants feel that the information is accurate (Creswell, 2003). The researcher returned the transcribed interview notes to each participant and had the participant read over the notes to check for accuracy of message. The researcher also used rich thick descriptions in the narrative.
to allow the Star Teachers in this study to tell their own stories by capturing the heart of
the research in descriptive quotes.

*Delimitations and Limitations of Study*

According to Creswell, "delimitations address how the study was narrowed in
scope, whereas limitations identify potential weaknesses of the study" (Creswell, 1998, p.
150). Therefore, it is important that the researcher understand the restrictions and
indicates that they have been considered throughout the study (Locke, Spirduso, &
Silverman, 2000).

As Marshall and Rossman (2006) point out, "All research projects have
limitations; none is perfectly designed" (p. 42). This research is no exception. The label
of Star Teacher is acknowledged as a limitation in this study. Given that for this study the
researcher did not have access to externally valid methods of assessing actual
performance of selected teachers, the researcher had to accept the evaluation process of
respective administrators to validate the performance of the Star Teachers selected to
participate in this study.

This research was also limited to 15 non-randomly selected elementary, middle,
and high school teachers in Battle Creek, Michigan. The researcher used a purposive
sample. The study was conducted with a selected sample of Michigan public school Star
Teachers and thus, may be transferable to other teachers with similar qualification or
characteristics. For purposes of this study, transferability means external validity, which
refers to the extent to which findings can be generalized across different settings (Lincoln
& Guba, 1985). Using the term transferability implies that the ability to generalize across
different settings will depend on the degree of similarity between situations. The researcher cannot determine the transferability of findings. Rather, the researcher must provide sufficient information for the reader to determine the applicability of findings to new situations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, the reader will determine the transferability of findings.

Chapter Summary

In summary, qualitative research methodology and data analysis allows researchers to understand behavior from the subject’s own frame of reference (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In this study, the 15 identified Star Teachers tell their own stories in order for the researcher to understand who they are both personally and professionally, as well as what they need to continue to thrive professionally. This information was gathered through semistructured interviews. This process of gathering information was natural because the researcher is part of the educational setting and the interviews were conducted in the respective schools of the Star Teachers identified within the Battle Creek Public School system. The data analysis was aligned with good qualitative inquiry. It was inductive and allowed for emergent themes. Member checking along with rich thick narrative data description served as the procedures for data verification. The trustworthiness of this study enhances the reliability of the data that emerged to better understand Star Teachers of children in poverty both personally and professionally.
CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS

Introduction

Chapter I introduced the purpose of this study which is to further explore and expose Star Teachers of children in poverty, while examining the role of the principal in the life of the Star Teacher. Chapter II was devoted to a thorough literature review which vetted Dr. Martin Haberman's definition of a Star Teacher based on certain key functions within the broader research base of effective teachers: persistence, protecting students' learning environment, applications of generalizations, approach to at-risk students, personal versus professional orientation, burnout, and fallibility. Chapter II also vetted Dr. Haberman’s definition of a Star Principal based on certain traits within the broader research base of effective leadership: distributing power; protecting students' learning; implementing and supporting teamwork; responding effectively to at-risk students; persisting as an instructional leader; shaping a positive school climate; providing feedback and teacher evaluation; employing effective decision-making models; demonstrating fallibility; operating as a change agent; and attending to politics. Chapter III explained the research methodology. This research study is a qualitative phenomenological study, which used semistructured interviewing with a purposeful sample. This chapter presents the study findings. Several themes emerged while conducting the interviews with the teacher. Finally, the researcher will summarize her conclusions in Chapter V.
In discussing the findings for this study, the researcher will begin discussing the findings from the first person point of view and refer to herself as, I. This will allow a more direct style of sharing and examining the themes that emerged in the analysis of participants’ responses to the study interview. I (again, the researcher) chose to discuss these findings without presenting a detailed individual profile of each participant. This choice reflects the phenomenological nature of this study and allows the discussion to stay focused on the common themes expressed by participants as they processed their experiences through the interview questions. This study is not seeking to capture the uniqueness of each individual participant; rather, the focus of analysis is on the common themes that are expressed by the group of participants in response to the interview topics. At certain points in the discussion of the emerging themes, I inserted specific information about individual participants because that information related, in some way, to the theme.

To illustrate each theme identified in the analysis of the interview data, I selected mostly longer, richer quotes that capture the essence of the theme in ways that reflect the nuances offered by the participants’ responses. This strategy is augmented by my additional commentary on how this quote connects to or reflects the range of responses from the entire pool of participants.

Before discussing the themes that emerged from the interviews of the study Star Teacher participants, it must be noted that there were no clear patterns or themes that emerged pertaining to Research Question 1: “How do Star Teachers describe the significant factors, events, and people that or who have shaped them as educators and people?” The participants described a varied and wide range of life and professional
experiences they associated with who they are as people and educators. Some relayed events and circumstances that created significant challenges, such as divorce, death of a sibling at a young age, mother committed to a mental institution, and so on. Others described early life experiences that were almost idyllic: two parents, happy home, encouraging and rich home environment, and little or no significant or severely traumatizing events. In essence, some of the participants described life factors that are classic examples of “at-risk” circumstances, while others described lives of positive and encouraging conditions.

In examining the people who influenced these participants’ development as educators, the same wide variance was found. Some participants were deeply impacted by a teacher while a family member such as a parent, sibling, spouse, or child impacted other participants. Other participants explained how a friend or neighbor influenced their development personally and or educationally.

For Research Question 2, “How do Star Teachers describe who they are now as teachers?” the analysis of the data produced a solid set of common themes which are the basis for most of the findings discussion for this chapter and will be discussed, theme for theme, in the following sections. The analysis of the data to explore Research Question 3, “What do Star Teachers need to sustain them as Star Teachers” produced only one strong common theme across the participant pool. That theme will be examined in the following sections along with the themes emerging around the second research question because the theme can best be understood within the context of the six themes emerging around that second research question.
**Study Findings**

Seven themes emerged as recurring themes over the course of this study (see Appendix F), six coalescing around Research Question 2 and the seventh addressing Research Question 3. Overall, I found that performing Star Teachers are teachers who:

1. Demonstrate through their actions that they believe all students can learn;
2. Value colleague collaboration;
3. Seek leadership roles within their school;
4. Focus on building and maintaining positive teacher/student rapport;
5. Depend on clear classroom routines and procedures;
6. Consistently use teacher modeling as an instructional strategy; and
7. Need a principal who is a positive role model and collaborator.

The participants in this study were all teachers hired to work in schools serving high poverty student populations. These teachers were screened for their positions with the Haberman Star Teachers of Children in Poverty Interview Protocol and hired with the assumption that they are, and would function as, Star Teachers according to Haberman’s definition (1995b). The teachers selected for this study were also confirmed by their principals to actually be functioning as Star Teachers since their hire, again, according to Haberman’s definition. The interview questions used in this study were framed to elicit descriptions from identified Star Teachers regarding how they became Star Teachers. The interviewer also asked the identified Star Teachers to describe who they are now as teachers and what they need to sustain their status as Star Teachers. The following sections of this chapter highlight the themes which emerged from the
interviews and capture the essence of the themes with illustrative quotations from the Star Teachers.

**Theme One: Star Teachers Believe All Students Can Learn**

In this study all Star Teachers clearly demonstrate through their actions that they believe that all students can learn. They also clearly articulate the role of the educator in making sure student learning occurs. Star Teachers were clear to say that learning means moving the student forward.

The five elementary teachers in this study described how they use student data to drive instruction. They believe in the teaching and learning cycle that first assesses where the students are, and then use that assessment data to form instructional plans. They assess, teach the lesson, assess again and continue the cycle. Tracy clearly explained how she begins her instruction with assessment:

> Of course I believe that all kids can learn. I believe we need to use the teaching and learning cycle. No sense in teaching kids things they already know or teaching kids from a point that they can’t comprehend to begin with. I think it’s really important to know what they know and then build from there. I think it’s good for the kids because their confidence level is there, they don’t give up before they even try.

Nina also believes that all students can learn, but you must start by assessing the current learning status of the child:

> I believe that as a teacher you have to assess children and know where they are and take them from that point and move forward, but I do believe that knowing
where they start allows you to move them. It can’t be as a whole group or assuming that all children are learning at the same rate or pace or anything like that.

Overall, the elementary teachers in this study were focused on knowing the learning status of their students and moving them forward.

The middle school Star Teachers interviewed also believe that all students can learn. An interesting point emphasized by the middle school teachers centers around the teacher as part of the learning community. For example, Candy notes:

What I’ve come to find out or realize is that teachers aren’t the only ones doing the teaching and the students aren’t the only ones doing the learning. If that is happening in the class then I really sincerely question what exactly you define as learning and teaching. Because I see the two working together in that you have to learn in order to teach, and you teach to learn some more. My students have taught me a lot this year and have really pushed me to get in their shoes everyday and to get in their heads everyday. Is this really realistic what I’m asking them to do? Just to pay attention to their conversations and the unheard conversations, the body language and everything like that because it all plays into the classroom and into the learning experience. My learning is listening to them and then trying to figure out how my instruction should look based on that.

Candy’s educational foundation is closely aligned with Lev S. Vygotsky’s cultural-historical theory of psychological development (Gredler, 2001). In another school, Betsy reflects the same type of idea of teacher as fellow learner in the classroom:
I think everybody, including teachers, have something to learn, and hopefully, if we are good at what we do, that we want to continue to learn as we continue to teach. We look at our students as people who can teach us and that it doesn’t always have to be in a formalized classroom situation for us either with professors and things like that. Our students are very skilled at teaching us things about life and about what we need to do in the classroom.

The high school teacher participants also believe that all students can learn. They see it as their job to help their students believe they can learn. Jill describes the learning process as helping students form a dream or vision. She says:

I like to look at kids as all capable of greatness. I see teaching as helping to almost manipulate that greatness out. A lot of times kids come to us with baggage and so it’s just trying to help motivate them. Honestly, help them see that they can have a dream because I think some of them come to us and they don’t really have dreams. So trying to help them see a vision for themselves, maybe even beyond anything they’ve ever seen as far as relatives or friends. So, really trying to help guide them toward a life that they can be proud of and can prosper. All children…

Another teacher, Sherry, exposes the greatness in students by pushing them outside their comfort zones:

So my philosophy right now is really about how can I keep pushing them out of their comfort zone a little bit, maybe always thinking my class is a little too hard and then having them be surprised in the end when they can do more than they thought they could.
Sherry’s comment is completely in line with the work of Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development (Gredler, 2001). Yet another Star Teacher, Mary, focuses on how the teacher must go outside of his or her comfort zone to reach and teach all students:

So if you are going to hit all of the learning styles of your students you really have to go outside of your own comfort zone sometimes and teach ways that aren’t comfortable to you so that they can learn in their best way, too. It challenges other students to learn in different ways, too, which makes them a more well-rounded student.

The high school teachers all stated beliefs that all students will learn if you help the student develop a dream of a better life, raise the expectations to raise student confidence, and as the teacher, go beyond your own learning styles and reach all students.

**Theme Two: Star Teachers Value Collegial Collaboration**

The participant teachers in this study from all three levels (elementary, middle, and high school) value time to collaborate with their colleagues. These Star Teachers seek ways to participate in collaborative environments. Elementary Star Teacher, Nina, expresses her need for collaboration this way:

Tracy and I are ones to bounce things off of each other and we challenge each other all the time. People think that we are a married couple that fights all the time. We don’t ever fight but it sounds like it sometimes and I think some people get uncomfortable with our dialogue and our discussions. Dialogue among teachers has been wonderful in helping us to grow.

Tracy put it this way:
She is my sounding board. She is a person I feel comfortable with going into her and saying okay I blew this lesson today. I did this, this, and this and she just starts asking questions. A lot of times they’re questions that I already knew the answer to but she is making me reflect on what I’m doing.

Lucy explained her collaborative school culture in the following words:

Everybody here is really supportive of each other and really helpful and really uplifting to one another. I enjoy sharing my ideas with other teachers and learning from them. I know if I ever needed anything I could ask pretty much anybody on the staff and they would help me. We have a very giving and supportive staff. It’s really nice.

Secondary Star Teachers also cite colleague collaboration as an important way to sustain educators. Candy describes it this way:

Definitely my relationships with my colleagues and being able to have professional discussions and being able to plan together or just bounce ideas off each other. That’s really important. Just not to be working in isolation, which is pretty typical for education.

Mary goes on to explain how colleagues sharpen each other’s teaching skills:

Grace is amazing. She and I work together, and I think working together, bouncing ideas off each other, makes us better than working by ourselves. That’s been priceless to me this year. Grace and I working together makes me the teacher I am because we are responsible to each other. I’m not going to create something crappy for her that I know she’s going to teach today. She is not going
to do the same for me so it really makes you stay on your A-game a little bit more because you’re more accountable to somebody. Last year in our small learning communities, even though we were all teaching different things, some of us shared lessons. When we started doing these things it was great because we all kind of learned different things and different ways to teach. I think when we had those open discussions or opportunities to share with each other it was great. I think our staff gets along really well for the most part. Having friends that are great teachers makes you want to be a great teacher because of peer pressure. I love peer pressure, I do. It will inspire you to do better than what you would have done if you knew nobody was looking.

Star Teachers value collaboration outside of their respective teaching departments as well as within their respective teaching departments. High school Star Teacher, Sherry, explains how her department is collaborative: “The most beneficial thing would be my department. They are really great at sharing lesson plans and writing common assessments.” Another high school teacher, Mason, elaborates on how fellow teachers are willing to help each other:

If you need help with a class, Jenny is great as far as helping with a project. I am not real great at designing rubrics for different types of things. I have my standard thing that I use but she is the rubric queen. She has everything I need. Just little things like that...Colleague support. That is great, especially with certain people up there. Everyone is so tight as far as what we are doing with a particular class and this is the assignment we did and we are all doing the same types of
assignments, we are using the same materials so that if a student was in one level of history class with a different teacher and they have me the next year for the next level, I know that they did the same thing I did and it is pretty much how I would have done it. So I know what they are supposed to know, which makes it better. Networking makes sure that we are on the same page.

Star Teachers like the accountability that naturally occurs through networking. For example, Jill emphasizes how colleagues help challenge her in a supportive way:

I think I’ve been blessed to have been surrounded by people who just help sustain me in the workplace. We just continually push each other. It’s never been, “Well, you need to do this, and I think what you’re doing is wrong, and you should change.” It’s never been like that, it’s always been, “Well this is an issue I’m having, too. How do you think we should solve it? Why don’t you go try that or whatever?” Looking at things differently and really trying to make the focus about students and about their learning is really exciting to me.

Star Teachers loudly describe their need for colleague collaboration. And they clearly explain how the collaboration helps them perform as better teachers.

Theme Three: Star Teachers Seek Leadership Roles

The Star Teachers interviewed in this study thrive on learning and leadership. Four of the five elementary teachers interviewed serve as building literacy coaches as well as classroom teachers. They are constantly helping fellow teachers improve the craft of teaching. Penny notes:
Professionally I do a lot of reading, and because I’m a literacy coach as well as a kindergarten teacher, I think I have to stay on top of things because when I’m going into a fourth grade classroom working with a teacher I better know what I’m talking about. When I go into a fifth grade room I better know what I’m talking about. So I do a lot of professional reading, a lot of books and things like that just to kind of keep up to date.

Penny goes on to explain her need for leadership in the following way:

At different points during my career when I start to feel like I’m getting too stagnant, when things are getting too easy, then I take on different challenges. Like in the beginning I was doing the CTRT when it first started and I got on board with that and became a trainer for that. When they were asking for literacy coaches I started that because it was new learning and that was going to stretch me. With this data stuff that’s coming up now, taking data and using it, I’m on that committee to do that. I wrote a class for Miller College on teaching diversity. So I wrote one of their classes. I kind of do things sometimes outside the building but sometimes inside the building as well. Just so I don’t get stagnant. I don’t want things to get too comfortable or too easy.

Star Teachers need to be challenged to stay fresh. This idea is closely connected with Senge’s concept of the fifth discipline (1990). An effective school needs to be comprised of teacher leaders who are learners. This makes for a powerful learning organization.
Middle school teachers in this study also find ways to lead within their respective buildings. A middle school teacher explains how he recognized a lack of resources to support literacy as a problem and used his leadership skills to solve the problem:

I wanted books for the library, so I asked Gary if I could write book companies. I didn’t know if that worked but I got $3000 worth of books donated. HOSTS was my program over at Washington. I asked Larry if I could go to KCC because I wasn’t getting enough volunteers, nobody would volunteer. I didn’t know if that would work or how it would work but I was told to go. So I went to KCC and found out that you can hire federal work-study students. You can hire them and it becomes their job to volunteer because we’re a nonprofit organization. You can pull them out of whatever fields you need to pull them out of. So I pulled four kids 20 hours a week into the building to do volunteer for HOSTS but then I had way more time than I needed so they were doing all kinds of stuff. That was 120 volunteer hours a week we were dropping into the building.

Another teacher, Chris, explains how she provides leadership in curriculum in the following way:

I think it is by pushing myself to do new things. And now next year we will have to have a different curriculum for the eighth graders because they have already had the seventh grade curriculum. I will be developing that. I think it is just always diving into something new that keeps me going as an educator.
Finding new ways to lead helps Star Teachers persevere. Leaders must activate this thirst for leadership by enabling others to act (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). This can be accomplished by assigning teachers critical tasks such as developing new curriculum.

Yet another middle school Star Teacher took on the leadership role of organizing the entire building to participate in a poetry slam contest. Candy describes this experience as one of the defining moments in her life:

The last one was the Poetry Slam. That was the most recent. It was one of those proud teacher moments. The thing that I was most proud of was that these students took such risk, not just in performing but also in their writing. We had a discussion, I actually kind of had to give them permission to write about this stuff, things that they felt that they were being silenced on because they’re too young to understand or we’re not supposed to talk about that because that’s not a happy topic. They really took some risks with their writing, each one, it wasn’t some flowery, nice, feel good poem. Some of them were deep and dark and one student wrote about her dad leaving her and her mom, in her defining moment of that happening. That was going to be the first time that they ever heard that poem. She was nervous and rightly so because she really expressed what she felt. That was just huge. They did so well. They were so poised and confident and so that made me proud. I don’t know exactly what I did to make that happen because obviously they had to make some pretty big choices to do that. When a student’s writing can affect me so much like that, that’s huge. It’s huge and I won’t forget it.
Star Teachers lead students, and students lead Star Teachers. Schools that truly operate as professional learning communities understand that all members, students and staff, participate in collective inquiry (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). In this type of environment students learn from teachers and teachers learn from students. Everyone learns together.

The high school teachers also find ways to seek leadership roles within their building. Jill notes:

I just appreciate challenges and I understand that things happen for a reason and that you meet different people for a reason. That has happened to me professionally, too. After my first or second year I remember Robin coming to me and asking me if I would like to teach AP. I kind of looked around thinking what made her think of me? She just said well you are always questioning things and you are just asking really good questions so I knew that you would be someone who would do well. Just always trying to have that demeanor and being open to challenges.

Sherry, the high school English department chairperson, explains her leadership style this way:

Like last year, not a lot of people in our department teach AP, but as the department chair, I know that professional development is important so there was a grant in Michigan for the AP training. It was like, ‘Why not?’ So most of our department went up last summer to Lelanau for a week of AP training. So trying to push the bar for everybody else so that his or her standards are raised.
Star Teachers are not only classroom leaders, but also leaders in their schools. According to Brown, Boyle, and Boyle (1999), “You need the collective support of your staff to implement any worthwhile change, so involvement in the decision-making process is vital” (p. 322). This collegial model clearly articulates the importance of having teacher leaders in schools in order to achieve real reform.

Theme Four: Star Teachers Emphasize Positive Teacher/Student Rapport

Star Teachers understand the importance of positive teacher/student rapport as related to the instructional environment of the classroom. High school Star Teacher, Sherry, explained this theme in the following quote: “I think once we have a really good relationship, they know that they don’t want to let me down, and I don’t want to let them down.” Another teacher, Jill, explains how rapport building is worth the time investment:

At the beginning of the year I always spend quite a bit of time working on our classroom environment, and by that I let them have some input into what ground rules we all felt like we could live with. Honestly, I took probably a week to two weeks, not necessarily just focusing on that, but just working that in everyday. I know some people don’t like to do that because they feel like it takes time away from the curriculum but in my opinion every second I spend on that I get back tenfold later on in the year. So that was another procedure that I had. I would ask for their feedback very often and I think they weren’t used to that. I took their advice and I would ask them as we are going, too, if things weren’t working for them then I wanted to know. Just trying to work in time for them to give feedback.
Mary explains how being real builds rapport, “I tell them stories all the time about myself and they see me as a person, which I think helps my management style.” Nelly emphasizes how positive student/teacher rapport provides the comfortable environment necessary for learning:

I think a huge part of teaching students is knowing them and letting them feel comfortable around you. I don’t want to have that intimidation thing when they walk into the classroom because it shouldn’t be like that, that’s not a good environment for learning.

Middle school Star Teachers also highly value positive teacher/student rapport to enhance the classroom environment. Ken put it this way, “I learned from teaching at Wilson and Southwestern that the students we work with insist on a connection with them, otherwise, they just won’t do anything.” Lonnie mimics the need for connection:

I have to connect with them because if I don’t know who the kid is, then I’m never going to know how to teach the kid. So, I need to have those conversations. I need to get to know them.

Yet another middle school Star Teacher, Betsy, elaborates on how the relationship is connected to the capacity to ignite learning,

I think for me a big part of it is developing relationships with kids because if you don’t know what they are about as a person, then some kids will be hard to motivate or to find that trigger to hook them, find out what they are curious about or what their natural talents and gifts are. If we don’t spend any time building that
relationship, we may miss an opportunity to connect with the kid in an academic way.

Teachers who know and connect with their students are able to find ways to connect their students to powerful learning opportunities. Carol Ann Tomlinson (1999) has conducted extensive research concerning differentiated learning. When a teacher truly connects with student, he or she is able to recognize the student’s learning style and tailor lessons to meet the differentiated needs of the learner.

Elementary Star Teacher, Nina, explains the power of positive teacher/student rapport in the following way:

Well, I think I’m caring, I care about each and every kid in my classroom. They know that and they know when I see them as fifth graders that they are still foremost in my heart. I think I’m really dedicated to their learning. Maybe that’s why there is that connection there because they know that I want them to learn. I don’t put values on whether they came from a bad home or a good home and whether they have nice clothes or not-so-nice clothes. That’s not an issue with me. I have one little girl who constantly has head lice. But that makes no difference. If I get them, I get them. I’m not going to change how I feel towards her. So I think because they know that I care about them, they want to learn. So I’m really dedicated to what I do and I really care about my students, and I care about other teachers in the building and what they are doing. That’s pretty much who I am.
An elementary Star Teacher, Tracy, explains how a positive teacher/student rapport encourages students to push themselves academically:

I think it's important to get to know them. I think that if you're going to spend a year with a kid that they have to buy into what you're doing. I think you have to buy into what they are doing. I think it's a lot about knowing your kids and letting them know that you truly do care. I don't think you can fake that. They know when you are just there doing your job and putting in your time and when you truly care about them. I think it's important to them for me to ask questions like "Has your mom had that baby yet?" or "What did you do this weekend?" I'm lucky enough with teaching literacy that I'm able to know a lot of that through the draft books I read. My philosophy is the more you give them the more they'll give you.

Star Teachers describe positive teacher/student rapport as enhancing the academic conditions for learning in the classroom. According to Canter and Canter's research (1977) this positive teacher/student rapport is greatly enhance by teacher persistence. Students will behave appropriately and participate in the learning environment when teachers consistently reinforce behavior and academic expectations. This consistency leads to and reinforces positive teacher/student rapport.

**Theme Five: Star Teachers Prefer Clear Classroom Routines and Procedures**

Star Teachers set forth clear classroom routines and procedures to enhance the academic learning environment for students. Elementary Star Teacher, Penny, describes classroom routines and procedures in the following ways:
One at a time. What does it look like? What does it sound like? If you are lining up then this is how you do it. Even at the beginning of the year, when you’re at the listening area this is what it should look like and this it what it should sound like. When you’re at the art center this is what it should look like, and this is what it should sound like. We only open a few things at a time and for every new thing that I put out there we talk about it, and this is what I should see when you’re working at this center, and this is what I should hear when you’re working at this center.

Janet explains how clear routines and procedures for students free her up to work with individual students and small groups,

You have to teach procedures to kids and routine. And they have to know what to do and they have to know what it looks like, what it sounds like, what it should be like at the beginning, what it should be like at the end. You have to teach them every little step. You introduce a new structure, and you try it out, and then you debrief. Well, it’s the same way with routine. You introduce it, you teach them every little step, you try it out, and then after we try out our new spelling routine, then we will meet and talk about it. ‘Do you have any questions?’ And the kids will tell you. So I think that has really helped me setting classroom routine because then the kids can be independent and it makes for a well-managed classroom, and I can work with small groups. It frees me up to really focus on individuals or small groups of kids that have the same needs.
Middle school Star Teachers also value clear routines and procedures to enhance the learning environment. Betsy explains how good procedures blend with good instructional strategies in the following way:

Kids have an expectation of coming in and sitting down. There is an agenda on the board for them that they are expected to copy it down into their planners. They know that if they don’t have a planner that they need to grab paper on the way to their seats and just copy it down and the plan is to keep it throughout the day so that they can keep track of their assignments. If they need to leave their seats for any reason, they are asked to raise their hand just so certain kids stay away from other kids and they are not getting into each other’s business. I like to read aloud every day not only as a procedure, but also just as something they come to expect. It is an instructional strategy, too, so that’s one of those things that kind of blends. For me, I find that it is a very effective procedure as far as getting them excited and ready to participate because it’s a less threatening way for some kids who might struggle with reading on their own to be able to participate in conversations about books and things like that. From a procedural point of view, that works really well for me.

Candy explains how utilizing the routine of an agenda keeps the students focused:

I always have their agenda on the overhead so the kids kind of know what’s going to happen, materials that they need. Something that I really utilized this year is a calendar for the kids, a monthly thing. It always changes but at least it gives them some sort of an idea of where we’re headed. So that’s good, it kind of helps keep
us focused. I always address my kids as ladies and gentlemen when I need to bring them together. The last, like, three minutes, we know that we need to collect our things and put them away.

High school Star Teachers rely on clear procedures and routines to ensure a successful learning environment. One high school teacher emphasizes how certain procedures can facilitate student organization, which increases productivity. Mary explains it this way:

The big thing I found when I was first starting out is that students lost every single paper I gave them or they would forget to bring it back. That just annoyed me to death. Well, I started having them keep 3-ring notebooks where they have to keep everything in. We actually have a table of contents and for every unit they have to keep track of everything that goes in there. Usually at the end of the unit there might be 15 or 16 things in there by the time we are done but they have them all there. So anything that we have used that I want them to have later or to study from is all there. They are required to turn them in at the end of each unit. They get 20% for having a complete and finished notebook. Usually at the beginning of the year it’s kind of tough because students either don’t think I’m serious about collecting it or they’re just not organized yet, but they get it. We are at the end of the year now. I don’t have a single student who doesn’t have a notebook and that doesn’t turn things in. Especially when you have them at the freshman level, to be organized, I think that is the number one thing that kills my freshman. It’s either
that they didn’t show up, or that they’re not organized. If you can just get them organized you can save yourself a lot of trouble.

Mason points out that even at the high school level you still must teach and reteach students routines and procedures:

Kids want procedures and they need to know what to do. You must show them.

You can’t just tell them and expect that it will happen. Literally, I stand them all up and they go out in the hall. Everyone is standing in the hall and we all come in and I explain that this is how I expect you to come in. We go over it several times. I usually do that the first three or four days of class. Is it a pain in the butt? A little bit, but in some ways it is fun, too. I have found that the kids get in bad habits, and I do, too. So literally we stand up and practice again. It doesn’t take very much time and it helps them tremendously and it makes the class run so much smoother. It doesn’t matter how much time you use to do that, you are saving yourself so much time later.

Sherry blends her routines with assessment strategies:

Assessment doesn’t always have to be this long quiz, but like the exit cards. I think we forget about that so I’ve been trying to use 3 x 5 cards more just to get a feel of that day and what was learned and what did they get. That’s becoming more of a procedure for me.

Star Teachers utilize clear classroom routines and procedures to enhance the learning environment for students by clarifying the lesson focus, clarifying behavior and work habit expectations, and blending powerful instructional strategies and assessment
practices into the routines and procedures. Star Teachers and their students work together to create this type of environment. Glasser (1992) clearly articulates how successful schools are made up of teachers and students who equally buy into the routines, procedures, and consequences of how the school operates behaviorally and academically.

**Theme Six: Star Teachers Consistently Use Teacher Modeling**

Star Teachers describe modeling as a chiefly important instructional strategy used often in their classroom learning environment. Elementary Star Teacher, Tracy, says:

I think kids needs to see it. A lot of times I use sketchpads while I’m working with the kids and then something comes up—because you never know what they’re going to ask. So we always just go through and use the sketchbook so we can write down exactly what they’re asking, how do we do that, show me examples. I think them being able to model something, and then them going back and having that guided practice I think is important, too.

Nina agrees:

Modeling is probably one of my favorite strategies. And then from the modeling comes the guided practice. If I know I have a student that uses leads really well then I pull the student up and we will add one or two students to the group of kids that don’t have a good use of leads. Then I’ll ask can you help this person get a good lead? Can you help this person? So it’s that whole process from modeling to the finished product.

Lucy also describes teacher modeling as vital:
Modeling is the most important thing. First of all I feel like I model the routine, the procedures and the behavior and how we speak to each other and talk to each other and so we are constantly modeling that, but I also model everything before I do it. I model how to write in your science journal. I do what we call ‘write to’ everyday. So you do some type of writing in your draft book, and I get up and model that but you’re not necessarily modeling the actual scripting, but you’re modeling everything from reading a book to the whole group and then I actually act like I’m thinking out loud. Then I talk that through and then I do the ‘write to’ on my easel. I model everything.

Janet also agrees that modeling is a crucial strategy to use with children:

It’s crucial. It’s that ‘to, with, and by’ you have to show the kids and you have to do it together—guided practice. You are sliding down that slope with them. You just have to really make sure the kids get it before you send them off to do it on their own. If you send them off on their own before they’re ready then you get discipline problems, you get kids not paying attention, kids not trying so you really have to work with the kids first before you send them off on their own.

Penny explains her use of modeling and the important book her staff relies on as connected with modeling:

Margaret Mooney’s book To, With and By, it is the way we do business here. Let me give you an example for writing. We write to the children that would be model writing. So almost daily the kids see me writing in front of them. Then after you write to the children for a while, we might do a shared pen activity with them, and
then eventually the children are doing the writing alone. That’s where the independence comes in. Same thing in reading. You’re reading to the children, and then sometimes in a book you may be reading more guided reading with the children and eventually where you want to get them is the ‘by’ part, the independence. Then you could give that example for math, for science, for social studies, and for their social behavior. I would probably say that book sticks out the most because it’s just so simple, but it makes so much sense. Not a lot of educational jargon in it that people shove in their books.

Teacher modeling is talked about and described by all the elementary Star Teachers as a powerful instructional strategy, which moves children forward in their learning.

Middle school Star Teachers also value the instructional strategy of teacher modeling. Chris says:

I model everything. The kids need lots of models, not just my models, but when we did the letters to the editor, I actually went and cut out letters from the editor. I try to provide lots of models. That’s my main strategy.

Betsy adds:

I would demonstrate for the kids the things that I was looking for and then I would sit down and write with them and then show different samples and things like that. So they knew if they were on track or not.

Ken explains:

I like modeling because that gives me a chance to play my horn for the kids. I like modeling what to do and what’s fun for me also is modeling what not to do. The
kids like that and we kind of laugh about that. Students model as well in my classroom. I use modeling because of the nature of my subject. So I would say that is my favorite strategy.

Middle school teachers value modeling as a powerful instructional strategy. Students need to first see the teacher perform the learning objective. Then teachers scaffold the learning experience to eventually lead to students being able to perform the learning outcome alone.

High school Star Teachers also rely heavily upon the instructional strategy of modeling. Jill says:

I think teacher modeling is fantastically important. For example, when I asked them to write a persuasion paper I wrote one. For them it just made it more interesting because they got to learn about my point of view. Sometimes it was intimidating for kids because they would think I could never do that. So then just trying to guide them by saying, ‘Well, yes, you can, and here’s how.’ You have to show them what you are expecting from them. Also, I use rubrics all the time. I think that’s key. Kids can hit any target they can see. Just making that visible. Rubrics are key. Also, with rubrics, sometimes I would have the kids tell me, ‘what do you think should be on here. Here are some models and let’s read these together and which one is the best one, what does it do and what does it have in it? How could you put that in a scoring guide for yourself? Rubrics are essential.

Mary explains how models and modeling improve the quality of student work:
Next week are finals and they have to have a visual. So I showed them what a good visual looks like. Whenever you model you get things that are 20 times better. I have just noticed that things just get better and better and better each year.

Sherry stresses how important it is for students to see and hear the teacher’s thinking and writing:

I do think alouds and we write together in class. A big part of my teaching philosophy is that when we are writing in class, we are writing or like I’m writing to. Sometimes, especially my freshman, I’ll be writing mine on the overhead modeling for them. They can look up and see how I’m doing it. I’m always writing and sharing my writing, too. I just think it’s like sharing your life. You really have to. All my kids see me as an emotional teacher. They know sometimes I’ll cry, but they know that’s who I am, and I’m true. I try to show that with my writing, too.

And Nelly agrees that modeling through the think aloud strategy improves student math literacy:

I do the problems with them and we go through some examples and I try to talk through my thought processes as I’m doing it. I find sometimes that I think quicker then what my mouth can run. So being able to show them exactly what you need to go through.

Star Teachers understand that students need to see good models of assignments.

But more than that Star Teachers understand that students need to see and hear the
teacher modeling the learning process through such strategies as the think aloud. Teacher modeling takes the guesswork out of learning and teacher expectations.

**Theme Seven: Star Teachers See Principal as Role Model and Collaborator**

Star Teachers need and expect administrators to be good role models and foster cultures of horizontal and vertical collaboration.

First, Star Teachers describe effective administrators as good role models, both behaviorally and professionally. Elementary Star Teacher, Penny, expresses her ideas this way:

It’s huge because I think your administrator has to be a good model, behaviorally and professionally as a teacher. Paula is a very good example of being consistent and fair and that sometimes you have to make tough decisions, but you do it with the least amount of impact as possible. I think she shields us from a lot of the crap downtown and she takes it on her shoulders so that we can do the job that we do. She shields us from a lot. She also sets the tone as far as expectations. I know she has very high expectations for her teachers and she throws data at us all the time. We have to have conferences—we have to sit down with her at different points in the year to find out: this is where my kids are and this where my class is and what are my plans for these kids, and for those eight who aren’t where they are supposed to be. She makes us very accountable in that way, but she uses data to do it.

Penny points out how her principal is a role model behaviorally through her consistent, fair approaches with staff. She goes on to describe her principal as a positive role model
for teaching and learning because she makes teachers accountable for student learning through student data. She role models using data as she expects her teachers to use data to direct instruction. Another elementary Star Teacher, Janet, expresses how the principal role models the type of atmosphere the teacher mimics in the classroom:

If you have a trusting administrator who is positive then that’s the first thing you’re going to be in your classroom. If you feel like you’re always threatened for whatever reason, or there is no support behind you, then you’re not going to be an open person and you’re going to close your door and try to bury your head in a book and make it all good. In this building we really want teachers to change, and we support that.

Janet connects administrator role modeling to the level of teacher trust to try new things in the classroom in order to have a learning environment, which consists of trial and error.

Middle school teachers also describe the importance of positive administrative role models. Betsy explains how her administrator is a leader:

To me I guess I have noticed that there is a difference between people who are managers and people who are leaders. There are lots of people who can be managers and be very successful at it. They can handle a project, or deal with paperwork, or arrange for repairs or engineering or things like that, and there are a lot of people who are very effective at managing those details and tasks, but in my limited professional experience, there are very few people who are truly leaders, who demonstrate through their own actions what they want the people around
them to do. That they provide opportunities for people to be the best that they can be. That they are supportive when their employees are not maybe as successful as they should be or could be. That people are rewarded or encouraged when they do well at something. Not that it has to be a huge reward because we all come, technically, because we get rewarded with our paychecks, but there is no price tag on just having somebody say ‘I saw what you did today and I really liked it,’ or ‘That turned out really well.’ Those types of things mean so much and can help sustain people through some very difficult situations.

Betsy goes on to explain how her leader does all of the above things and how that really helps sustain her as a Star Teacher.

High school teachers also value positive administrative role models to lead the way. Mason put it this way:

For me when I look at what should an administrator be doing, they should be doing everything they expect the teachers to do in the hallway, in the classroom and those things, and demonstrating those things. So it becomes ‘Well, that is what we do because that is what everybody does and that’s what we have to do.’

As a teacher I view myself at a certain level and an administrator at another level. If an administrator isn’t going to do something like take a hat in the hallway then it becomes very difficult for me as a teacher to do that.

Mason cites behavior role modeling. Sherry elaborates on role modeling beyond behavior expectations and explains how the leader must also role model collaboration:
Influential administrators lead by example and show that if you’re going to be an administrator, then you truly are a leader, and you’re going to work really hard, just as hard as the teachers. You are going to be in those meetings asking teachers what they think. Whenever decisions need to be made it’s a collaborative effort. When there is a reform it’s something that we all come together and do research together and go to conferences together.

According to Star Teachers it is the role of the administrator to role model collaboration. This provides teachers with the example of the importance of collaboration. A true learning organization is made up of collaborators at all levels of the organization.

Star Teachers highly value collaborative environments. They describe the administrator as the person who sets the tone for trust and community with an emphasis on students. A trusting community fosters a collaborative environment with the mission of increasing student success. High school Star Teacher, Nelly, put it this way:

Some of the administrators are just absolutely amazing in the fact that they realize that I come to them for help and they can come to me for help also. So there is very much that interaction. When I first started I felt very intimidated by the administrators because, ‘I’m a new teacher, I don’t want to step out of line.’ This year is the first year that I’ve ever felt that I know you’re my administrator and that you’re my superior and things like that, but let me help out. It’s just been a very interactive situation and how involved that they actually can become with your classrooms. It’s just fantastic. It does vary from administrator to administrator, but I know that all of them are working towards that same goal of
becoming more involved, and it’s just a matter of being able to manage everything that you’ve got to do and just take those steps to further that.

Jill explains how the collaborative environment at the high school has encouraged her to take on additional leadership challenges:

I appreciate working in Battle Creek because I feel like whatever challenge I’m ready for or I don’t even know I’m ready for, the door has been opened. I remember Mike Eubanks, he was the grade principal next door to me, and he would always say, ‘so when are you going to be an administrator?’ I would say to him that I really don’t see myself going down that path. It’s just interesting because there was a job that opened up and it was perfect. So little things like that have just happened my whole time here. I think that’s been helpful for me, just having people see things in me that I might not even see in myself and asking me to step up to do those things. That has been really great. Also, it’s been fun to groom other people as well.

Jill serves as a teacher leader and collaboratively helps other teachers grow. Nelly describes the teachers at the high school in the following way:

There are a really strong group of teachers there that are leaders and that are willing to help out and do anything that you ask of them. So just knowing that I have this huge group that I can go to. And even ones that don’t attend all the meetings and things like that, they are very active and when I come back and share things with the team that I’m on, they are just amazed at some of the things that are available. We have really good rapport with the teachers there.
The Star Teachers at the high school describe the high school as a collaborative environment role modeled and supported by the administration.

Middle school teachers also describe vertical and horizontal collaboration as important facets of their schools. Lonnie explains how he worked for an administrator that understood and highly valued teacher collaboration through conversations. Lonnie said about his administrator:

He wasn’t willing to accept us not talking to each other. If we were going to be successful across the grade levels then we were going to have to talk to each other. He made us talk to each other and he specifically went after having conversations with people who didn’t want to talk.

Lonnie explains how in order to build a collaborative environment, people must begin having conversations. He attributed the change in his previous school to the commitment of the administrator to demand teachers to horizontally talk to each other about student problems and potential answers. Star Teacher, Candy, explains her relationship with her principal in the following way:

Well, like I said, Jane and I have given each other permission to challenge each other so I know that I’m always adding responsibility to myself in doing that. So I always feel challenged. I know that I can go to her office and say, ‘Hey, we need to talk’ and just have some really hard discussions. I don’t know exactly how we got to the point that we’re at but we’ve had some pretty intense discussions, and I think probably a lot of teachers don’t think that they can have with their administrator. When I say that we can challenge each other, I don’t know if that is
always seen as appropriate. We are seen as colleagues and not as administrator up here and teacher down here. There is just some pretty honest communication that happens between us. So I am thankful for that. I always feel like I’m not going to be in the dark on anything. Jane is not doing something that is going to manipulate me. I always know what I’m doing and how that’s related to Jane and my responsibility as a teacher. I mean nobody is in the dark. She’s not in the dark, I’m not keeping things from her and she’s not keeping things from me.

Candy emphasizes the importance of vertical collaboration between teachers and the principal. She sums up their relationship with the highly descriptive word, colleagues.

Elementary Star Teachers also value a collaborative work environment. Janet explains how she works with her principal to solve student problems:

If we have problems with a student, like behavioral wise or academically, we know we can come to her and she will help us solve the problem. She won’t just throw it back in our lap. If there is an issue then she helps out. This child is our kid because he started in kindergarten and goes through fifth grade. We are all responsible for this child so we need to make any adjustments or help the child whichever way we can. She is very open to that. She does data point conferences. We bring in our reading scores and math scores and science scores. As a classroom teacher you know which kids are struggling, and those are the kids that you really want to get the extra help. I know that when I tell Paula these two kids haven’t made any progress in the last two months, because we track their progress on running records, I’m concerned. And though I looked at the first grade record
they are still at the same level they were at the end of first grade. So then we can either get them into special reading or maybe testing is indicated, especially if you look back to first grade and kindergarten you see difficulties. I feel confident that when I have a student that's not making progress that something is going to happen. We just won't let them be in second grade and not make any gains. We have to figure out what's going on with this kid.

Janet is clear to point out that her principal not only helps solve behavioral student problems, but also academic student problems. Nina explains how her principal fosters staff collaboration through the 48-hour rule:

When Carol first came in she said, 'I want you to have the 48-hour rule.' If something is bothering you as a teacher then you need to go to them and you need to get it off your chest because you don’t want to hold anything in. I think that became a really good condition. The 48 hours is good too because sometimes you need to calm down before you go to that person.

This rule encouraged staff members to work through their differences. Nina also explains how the staff unified when they were deemed a failing school. She describes how this status impacted the staff:

There were many, many tears about it and we are going to do something, we are going to get better, we are going to fight this out, but I think it made us grow. I think it was actually the best thing that happened to us because it was like nobody is going to tell us we are a failing school again. We are going to be the best school
that we can be and we are going to show everybody that we are the best school
that we can be.

Nina explained how this status of failing school unified and inspired the staff to work
together collaboratively to improve student achievement. Nina explains how she and
another teacher leader meet with their principal consistently to collaborate concerning
school improvement. They term it the critical triangle. She further explains it like this:

With our critical triangle, because Tracy and Carol and I meet once a week
hopefully, that in itself she values what we say and she takes that back to the staff
and our staff meetings are not staff meetings but professional development—
always. We talk about where our teachers are and what they need and so we go
back to the staff or using the teaching-learning cycle, i.e. my new teachers need
this, Tracy’s teachers need this so we divide up and we start working that support
their needs and their learning. So because of that discussion every week that helps
support me in what I’m doing. I love my coaching part of that. I love my kids but
I also love the coaching part of it because I like to see the teachers grow and do
better with their students because I impact a lot of kids then.

Nina clearly expresses how both vertical and horizontal collaboration is occurring within
her school to foster academic success for students. This idea of vertical and horizontal
collaboration is clearly articulated in the work of Fullan (2005). In every organization,
including schools, people need to communicate with vertical and horizontal colleagues to
increase critical understandings of an organization. Teachers vertically learn from
principals and their students. Horizontally, teachers learn from other teachers. In order
for schools to experience greater success, the emphasis must be on collaboration among all levels of the school.

Chapter Summary

In summary, identified Star Teachers who participated in this study believe that all students can learn, and that it is the responsibility of the teacher to assess where students are and implement the appropriate instructional strategies and supports in place to ensure all students move forward. Additionally, these Star Teachers value collegial collaboration. They believe that difficult learning challenges must be tackled collaboratively. Teachers working with other teachers create the collective synergy to tackle difficult educational challenges. The Star Teachers seek leadership positions within their school. They grow by mentoring both students and staff in the learning process. They also understand the important connection between learning and teacher/student rapport. Children are more likely to engage in the learning process when they have a positive relationship with the instructor. The identified Star Teachers describe their learning environment in terms of clear classroom routines and procedures so that students know, understand, and meet the learning objectives. These Star Teachers emphasize their use of the powerful instructional strategy of teacher modeling to clarify learning outcomes and model thinking activities. Additionally, these Star Teachers highly value administrators who are both good role models and collaborators. The Star Teachers view excellent administrators as fellow colleagues in the journey toward school improvements.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

In Chapter I, I introduced my research study and explained my vested interest in this project. I serve as principal of a 6–8 middle school. Eighty-five percent of my students receive free and reduced lunch compared to 75% district-wide. In response to my demographics, I attended a training seminar hosted by Dr. Haberman where he taught and explained his interview protocol which purports to predict, with 95% accuracy, that a prospective teacher who scores high on the protocol will be able to successfully teach students of poverty. The predictive strength of Dr. Haberman’s interview protocol has been validated through Haberman (1995b), Allington and Johnston (2000), Singer (1996), Ryan (1999), and Williams (1999). The participants in this study were all hired in a competitive interview process from a pool of candidates who scored in the Star Teacher range on Haberman’s screening instrument. Moreover, the participants in this study are all viewed by their principals as performing in their current position in a manner consistent with the Star Teacher profile.

Understanding that teachers are the most important factor in student achievement (Marzano, 2003), I wanted to study more deeply this group of Star Teachers (identified by the interview protocol and by current administration). My research was framed around the following three questions:

1. How do Star Teachers describe the significant factors, events, and people that have shaped them as educators and people?
2. How do Star Teachers describe who they are now as teachers?

3. What do Star Teachers need to sustain them as Star Teachers?

In Chapter II I delved into a literature review around the seven functions of Star Teachers as framed by Dr. Martin Haberman. Those functions are persistence, protecting students' learning environment, applications of generalizations, approach to at-risk students, personal versus professional orientation, burnout; and fallibility. I then elaborated on all seven functions (Haberman, 1995b) and cross-referenced them to other research on effective teachers. Also, in Chapter II I analyzed literature around the 11 traits of a Star Principal as framed by Dr. Haberman. Those traits are power, protecting students' learning, the ability to implement teamwork, approach to at-risk students, persistent instructional leader, school climate, teacher evaluation; decision-making model, fallibility, change agent, and politician. I then elaborated on all 11 traits (Haberman, 1995b) and cross-referenced them to other research on effective leadership.

In Chapter III I explained my research methodology. It is a phenomenological qualitative research study designed to further describe and understand performing Star Teachers of children in poverty as related to the research questions of the study. The data collection method of choice for this research proposal is semistructured interviewing. The research proposal subjects are 15 teachers within the Battle Creek Public School District: 5 teachers at the elementary level, 5 at the middle school level, and 5 teachers at the high school level. The teachers who participated in this study were identified by Haberman's interview protocol as well as identified by current administration as performing Star Teachers of children in poverty.
In Chapter IV I explained the themes, which emerged from the interviews. Seven themes emerged as recurring themes over the course of this study. I found that Star Teachers are teachers who:

1. Demonstrate through their actions that they believe all students can learn
2. Value colleague collaboration
3. Seek leadership roles within their school
4. Focus on building and maintaining positive teacher/student rapport
5. Depend on clear classroom routines and procedures
6. Consistently use teacher modeling as an instructional strategy
7. Need a principal who is a positive role model and collaborator

The interview questions were framed to elicit a discussion concerning how Star Teachers describe how they became Star Teachers as well as how Star Teachers describe who they are now as teachers, and what Star Teachers need to sustain them as Star Teachers. As I stated in Chapter IV, the first six themes are connected to my second research question, and the last theme is connected to my third research question. It must be noted that there were no clear patterns or themes that emerged pertaining to my first research question. The participants described a varied and wide range of life and professional experiences they associated with who they are as people and educators.

Now in Chapter V, I will discuss conclusions I have reached from my study as well as recommendations for further research.
Themes and Literature Review

In this section, I examine the relationship between the themes derived from this project and the literature review based on Haberman’s definition of a Star Teacher and Star Principal (see Appendix G). First, Theme Number One speaks to the belief that all students can learn. Haberman (1995b) also clearly supports the notion that Star Teachers believe all students can learn. This is emphasized in three of his seven traits associated with a Star Teacher. The trait of persistence is all about how the Star Teacher never gives up on a student. The Star Teacher continues to look for alternate ways to reach a child until the child learns the objective. The trait of protecting the learning environment of students also connects with the belief that all students can learn. The Star Teacher believes that the student will learn if the teacher protects the learning environment by not allowing bureaucracy to get in the way of authentic learning experiences (Haberman, 1995b).

Another Star Teacher trait is how the teacher views at-risk students. The Star Teacher believes the at-risk student can learn and that the major reason students become at-risk is from poor schools and poor quality teachers. Based on this premise, the Star Teacher believes that all students can learn as long as the teacher approaches students as though they can learn and provides the appropriate classroom environment and instructional strategies to translate that belief into results. The persistent Star Teacher connects with Bandura’s (1989) research concerning self-efficacy. A Star Teacher has strong self-efficacy concerning his or her role as teacher. He knows that his students will learn because he believes in his abilities to teach his students.
Haberman and Dill (1999) also clearly support the notion that Star Principals believe all students can learn. This is emphasized in 2 of the 11 traits associated with a Star Principal. A Star Principal is a persistent instructional leader who is committed to protecting students' learning environment above everything else. The Star Principal believes students in poverty can learn and that it is the job of the school to make sure that happens. He understands the pedagogy of poverty and does not allow rote teaching strategies, but instead recognizes, encourages, and demands good instruction for all students.

Theme Two, arising from interviewed Star Teachers’ responses, articulates how Star Teachers value collaboration with colleagues. This was a strong theme with the interviewed teachers supported by many examples of how these teachers consult with, assist, challenge, and support one another. The participants in this study describe how their interactions with colleagues motivate, stimulate, and encourage them to do their best work. This is connected with Haberman’s (1995b) trait of teacher burnout. He claims that one significant way teachers avoid burnout is through collaborative relationships with colleagues. This also connects with Haberman and Dill’s (1999) research on Star Principals, in that such principals encourage teamwork.

Collaboration is the most important characteristic of a professional learning organization. According to DuFour and Eaker (1998) professional learning communities share a common mission, vision, and values. This means that all members of the school community share a collective commitment to guiding principles that clearly explain what the people in the school believe and what they seek to create. Furthermore, a professional
learning community participates in collective inquiry. This means they value the act of questioning and searching for answers over finding answers. Professional learning communities know that student learning and achievement is filled with so many obstacles and hurdles and they exist specifically for the purpose of collaborating to find ways around those impediments to learning for the children they serve.

A professional learning community continually questions the status quo, seeks new methods and strategies, tests the new methods and strategies, and reflects on the results which usually leads to more questions and the cycle continues. Professional learning communities are what Senge (1990) refers to as the Fifth Discipline, a true learning organization. Professional learning organizations are collaborative teams. “People who engage in collaborative team learning are able to learn from one another, thus creating momentum to fuel continued improvement” (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 27).

A professional learning organization knows that there is always room for improvement. Teaching and learning are never stagnant. Professional learning organizations are constantly seeking new and better ways to educate all segments of the school population.

The participants in this study are all people who seek out opportunities to work with colleagues in ways that fit the descriptions of professional learning communities put forth in the literature. They solicit and value each other’s input and feedback on their instructional planning and teaching. They like to take on challenges in student learning together and rejoice at solving them. Their statements and passion about the need to support each other in being effective teachers is clearly in line with the way the literature characterizes the interactions between teachers in a professional learning community.
Theme Three speaks about how Star Teachers seek leadership roles within their schools. Haberman’s (1995b) research concerning Star Teachers does not really address the Star Teacher as a building leader. Instead, Haberman contends that Star Teachers simply feed the bureaucracy as little as possible and focus on teaching students in their classroom. According to Haberman and Dill (1999), they do not really try to alter the system by serving as building level leaders; however, the profile of Star Principals suggests that they focus on implementing teamwork. This suggests that the Star Principal does empower teachers to be building leaders because teamwork requires leadership. The leadership that cultivates teamwork is collaborative, empowering, and focused on cultivating and supporting emerging (Fullan, 2005).

The Star Principal must couple expertise with her personal persuasive powers in order to enlist the help of the teachers, build teamwork, and cultivate teacher leadership. This idea can be framed in terms of the collegial model (Bush, 2003). The collegial model involves teachers in important decision-making activities as related to the school. According to Brown, Boyle, and Boyle (1999), “You need the collective support of your staff to implement any worthwhile change, so involvement in the decision-making process is vital” (p. 322). The collegial model rests on three school leader qualities. First, the leader is responsive to his colleagues. He relies on the expertise and personal skills of his teachers. He uses this professional knowledge base to benefit the students by everyone working together bringing his or her best skills to the table. Second, he is part of the team. He does not esteem himself as above his colleagues. He takes part in all facets of the school day including teaching, bus duty, and hall supervision. Third, the
leader is more like a facilitator. He looks to the collective body of professional knowledge represented by the entire staff to make decisions regarding the school.

All teachers who participated in this research study spoke in reference to their respective administrators with extremely positive remarks, especially in the area of creating opportunities for teachers to collaborate and share responsibility for decision-making and leadership. This may explain why the Star Teachers interviewed in this study reacted differently compared to the Star Teachers as identified by Dr. Haberman. He elaborates on the practices of Star Teachers in highly dysfunctional districts and buildings where bureaucratic procedures are unfiltered. The Star Teachers in this study feel as though their respective administrators shield them from bureaucratic district policies. For example, Star Teacher Penny, stated concerning her principal, “She shields us from a lot of the business that is going on downtown.” This may explain why Star Teachers in this study seek leadership roles within their respective buildings. They seem to separate building level leadership from district level leadership.

Theme Four speaks about how Star Teachers emphasize building and maintaining positive teacher/student rapport. Haberman (1995b; Haberman & Dill, 1999) connects this idea with the trait of fallibility among Star Teachers and Star Principals. Both Star Teachers and Star Principals know and accept that they are human beings and that students and teachers are human beings. Fallibility says that we all make mistakes and that we must be real with one another and build authentic relationships, which encourage teaching and learning.
Kottler, Zehm, and Kottler (2005) reemphasize the importance of the teacher as a human being. Their research identifies six attributes of a great teacher which all hinge on the personal traits of the teacher. First, they describe the charisma of the teacher. Charisma is manifested when the teacher allows his/her personality to shine through his/her subject matter. The second trait is compassion. Compassion is when a student feels respected, deeply cared for, and even sometimes loved by their teacher. The third trait is egalitarianism. Students appreciate an environment with rules and order. They want teachers who carry out rules in a fair manner. The fourth trait involves the teachers’ ability to work with diverse students. This means the teacher can differentiate instruction, assessment, and grading based on the specific, individual needs of the student. The fifth trait deals with gender issues. The teacher treats boys and girls consistently. Girls have the opportunity to contribute in class discussions and receive feedback the same as boys. The last trait is a strong sense of humor. The teacher is able to convey that learning is fun. All of the above traits help further define the teacher as a human being.

The person cannot be separated from the teacher. Arthur Jersild (1955) was among the first of modern day educators to emphasize the strong connection between teachers’ personal lives and their professional effectiveness. He firmly stood on the premise that understanding yourself is prerequisite to developing healthy attitudes of self-acceptance. He believed in order to help others you had to be keenly aware of your own human strengths and weaknesses so that you present yourself in ways that are optimally effective for your students. The Star Teacher knows he is a human being with flaws, so instead of trying to cover up the flaws, he uses that knowledge to uncover learning
opportunities for his students which in turn makes the classroom truly a life lab of authentic learning experiences.

Theme Five addresses how Star Teachers depend on clear classroom routines and procedures. Haberman (1995b) also reflects this idea. He says that Star Teachers have extraordinary managerial skills. He says this is critical because Star Teachers use project-based instructional methods, which involve several things going on in the classroom at the same time, and to avoid chaos, routines and procedures must be in place.

Caldwell, Huitt and Graber (1982) found during their research that teachers who have students who perform above average provide as much as six times more academic time on task than teachers who have students who perform below average. Because time on task is so important, Leinhardt, Zigmond and Corley’s (1981) study is critical. They found that the average student was off task 15% of the time, but that some students were off task more than 30% of the time. Star Teachers understand how devastating off-task behavior is as related to student achievement. Star Teachers search for off-task students, figure out who they are and how the time is being lost and seek to rectify the situation by using clear routines and procedures in the classroom.

Theme Six explains how Star Teachers consistently use teacher modeling as an instructional strategy. Haberman (1995b) does not specifically address teacher modeling. He elaborates more on the use of inquiry-based instructional strategies. He says that Star Teachers do not rely heavily on direct instruction. Some may consider teacher modeling direct instruction, while others would consider teacher modeling a step in the inquiry-
based instructional approach. Teacher modeling needs to be better defined through the
eyes and actions of actual performing Star Teachers.

Teacher modeling is supported by Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde (1998), whereby
their research points out the need for “more diverse roles for teachers, including
coaching, demonstrating, and modeling” (p. 5). Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis
(2000) also mirror this idea of the importance of teacher modeling in effective lesson
design. “For too long, we have been telling kids what to do… rather than showing them
how” (p. 31).

Theme Seven explains how a Star Teacher needs a principal who is a positive role
model and a collaborator. In a similar fashion, Haberman and Dill (1999) address the
need for the principal to be a positive role model through the trait of fallibility. The
principal is a human who must admit mistakes and role model what he expects in his
teaching staff. For example, he evaluates the teachers by student achievement and he also
evaluates his leadership success by student achievement.

The participants in this study illustrate that a Star Teacher wants a principal who
is a collaborator. According to Haberman and Dill (1999), a chief function of a Star
Principal is fostering an environment of teamwork. This is done by unifying the staff with
vision and goals as well as empowering the staff to take on leadership roles in the
building to achieve the mission of the school. The principal must help the staff reach
consensus of purpose and then create a few, simple achievable goals that support the
purpose and focus the attention and energies of everyone involved (Joyce, Wolf, &
Calhoun, 1993).
A Star Principal must find a way to get the staff to work together as a team. A cooperative, collaborative environment must be established for teachers to collectively work to achieve goals related to the school’s purpose. According to Kouzes and Posner (2002), this would fall under the practice of enabling others to act. Kouzes and Posner claim the best way to get the members of your organization activated to perform is by enabling them to act. You strengthen each member on the team by giving power away, providing choice, developing competence, assigning critical tasks, and offering visible support. This notion of giving power away is critical to activating a team. If there is only one leader (the principal) in a school, the school’s capacity to learn and grow is limited. The participants in this study cited numerous examples of how their principals share power, encourage collaboration, and foster teacher leadership. Their comments support the proposition that if the entire school is a learning organization filled with teacher leaders, then the school will learn faster and enter the fifth discipline as coined by Senge (1990) making the whole of an organization more effective than the sum of its parts.

The Star Principal must illicit commitment to the task, and must find ways to motivate the staff to work hard and persist until the goals have been reached. According to Kouzes and Posner this can be achieved by modeling the way and encouraging the heart. The principal can set the example by behaving in ways that are consistent with the shared values of the school. For example, if a value of the school includes consistently monitoring specific student achievement data, then the leader models the way by setting aside staff development time to monitor that data. The teachers in this study want these opportunities and describe ways they put them to good use.
The other important practice in which the leader must partake is encouraging the heart. This is accomplished by recognizing individual contributions to the success of each project. Additionally, this is accomplished by setting time aside to celebrate team accomplishments regularly. For example, if part of the school improvement plan calls for a 3% increase in math scores as evidenced by a standardized assessment, then when the 3% increase happens, much attention needs to be devoted to publicly recognizing the achievement and publicly celebrating the achievement. Parker Palmer (1998) is quite clear in his research concerning the importance of encouraging the teacher's heart. Teachers are human beings who teach who they are. They must be fed by their leaders in order to continue the important work that they do. Administrators build their team productiveness by building their team spirit and heart. Comments by the teachers in this study emphasized the need to celebrate their work and recognize results when they achieve them.

Research Impact on Researcher

As a result of this study, I have been transformed. It is one thing to read about other people’s research and quite another thing to participate in research. I was totally inspired by talking to Star Teachers in my district. It was the best professional development I have ever participated in. I learned that teachers must be able to collaborate. I learned that teachers know so much. And I learned that teacher modeling is a must.

Next year my building will operate in collaborative teams and conduct action research for meaningful professional development. I, along with a fellow teacher, will
collaboratively do an action research plan looking at the impact of teacher modeling on student success. I want my teachers to experience the same powerful professional development I did conducting this research by conducting their own research. My staff is so excited about directing their own learning using student data and having the structure to do it in a collaborative way.

Another by-product of my research is that I am going to be mentored or coached by a fellow principal who allowed me to do research in her building. I was so impressed with how they do business after talking to the teachers that I sought out this relationship, and I know I am going to grow from conversations with this amazing principal.

**Further Study**

The instructional strategy of teacher modeling needs to be carefully examined and explored in future studies. One way to do this is to have Star Teachers deeply describe how they use teacher modeling in the classroom. Observations of the teacher using teacher modeling would add depth to the discussion. Also, interviewing the students of Star Teachers would add light to the subject as to how teacher modeling impacts how they learn.

Another topic that could be examined at a deeper level is collaboration. Star Teachers clearly articulated their need for collaboration with other teachers and their principal. I wonder how teaching and learning would be impacted if the collaboration included intentional collaboration with students. Fullan’s (2005) work concerning vertical and horizontal relationships as related to sustainable leadership practices needs to be explored through the eyes of the Star Teacher. Vertical and horizontal collaboration
needs to be explored through the eyes of the students as well. This could be accomplished by conducting a focus group of students and teachers, followed up by classroom visits to observe and document the role of vertical and horizontal collaboration taking place in the school.

Additionally, the impact of action research needs to be explored. I personally gained so much from conducting my own research. I have read about teacher modeling and the importance of collaboration, but they did not come alive to me until I conducted my own research by interviewing Star Teachers. By conducting my own research, my practice has been impacted. I am now studying teacher modeling closely. I have a group of teachers who want to explore with me and implement teacher modeling more intentionally and measure its impact as related to student achievement data results. I have always believed in the coaching model for teachers, but this study made the coaching model for me come alive. I now have a coach and have already learned so much from this professional relationship. I am supportive of the action research model of professional development for my teachers because I know how much it has impacted me. Our entire building is participating in action research as supported by the building professional development plan and our relationship with Western Michigan University and the federal GEAR UP grant.

Practical Implications for School Leaders

I have learned that Star Teachers come from all backgrounds. The significant people, events, and factors that have shaped them as people and educators vary greatly. Some were impacted by a family member, teacher, or friend. Others were deeply affected
by a family tragedy such as the death of a family member or divorce. No common theme emerged as to how Star Teachers came to be; however, Star Teachers do describe themselves as teachers in a similar fashion. They are collaborators with each other and their principal. They build positive relationships with students. They value classroom routines and procedures. They practice the instructional strategy of teacher modeling. They enjoy and seek leadership positions in their school, and they deeply believe that all students can learn and know it is the role of the teacher to make sure that happens.

Additionally, Star Teachers in this study indicated a need for supportive principals who are positive role models and collaborators.

The need for collaboration at all levels in the school community seems to be the overriding message of this study. Principals who openly and intentionally collaborate with their staffs birth an environment where teacher leadership is encouraged and cultivated. Increased teacher leadership, as a result of principals practicing collaboration, may be the most powerful avenue to sustainable positive student achievement results.

Principals practice collaboration by embracing the coaching model, embedded in action research, at all levels of the school community, both horizontally and vertically. This collaborative teaching and learning environment, which depends on teacher leadership, has the capacity to revolutionize schools because many professionals are sharing the responsibility and workload of student learning. If there is only one leader, the principal, in a school, then the school’s capacity to learn and grow is limited. However, if the entire school is a learning organization filled with teacher leaders, then the school will learn
faster and enter the fifth discipline as coined by Senge (1990) making the whole of an organization more effective than the sum of its parts.

I want to work in a star district made up of Star Principals who support Star Teachers who cultivate star students! This study produced useful insights into the way Star Teachers view their work, their students, their professional interactions, and their relationships with their principals. These insights should be useful to me and to other principals who want to be Star Principals themselves, and shape school cultures that attract and sustain Star Teachers.
REFERENCES


Erb, T. O. (2001). *This we believe... and now we must act*. Westerville, OH: National Middle School Association.


Appendix A

Semistructured Interview Questions
Semistructured Interview Questions

1. What are your assumptions and beliefs about teaching and learning?

2. Describe for me people and events in your life you believe have played a role in shaping you as a teacher and person.

3. Tell me about who you are and how that shapes you as a teacher.

4. Tell me what you do in order to personally and/or professionally renew yourself.

5. Describe for me three defining moments in your life.

6. Describe a typical day and week in your classroom.

7. Describe for me what you think sustains you as an educator and/or person?

8. What conditions in your school and/or outside of school help you be the teacher you are?

9. What role if any does your administrator play in helping you be the teacher you are?
Appendix B

Email to Principals
Colleagues,

I need your assistance in order to conduct research for my dissertation. My research topic is concerned with studying Star Teachers of children in poverty. Specifically, I am conducting a qualitative study to further describe performing Star Teachers of children in poverty as well as better understand how administrators can support Star Teachers of children in poverty both professionally and personally. If you are interested in reading my proposal, I would be happy to share it with you. I will be conducting semistructured interviews with the teachers.

I need your help in identifying 5 teachers who you consider to be a performing Star Teacher of children in poverty and who also scored between 40 and 45 according to the Haberman Star Teachers of children in poverty interview protocol.

Please submit the names of the five teachers ASAP. The results of this study will be available to you and may be of assistance to you as you support your Star Teachers.

If you have any questions, please contact me.

Bobbi Morehead
269.209.3114
bmorehea@battle-creek.k12.mi.us
Appendix C

Email to Potential Participants
Hello,

My name is Bobbi Morehead, and I am a doctoral student at Western Michigan University. I am currently working on my dissertation. My dissertation is a qualitative study about Star Teachers of children in poverty. Your name was provided to me by your principal due to your outstanding work with students of poverty. I am hoping you will be interested in helping me with my research.

While there is no “reward” for participating in this research, you would be part of an effort to assist Battle Creek Public School administration in better understanding and supporting Star Teachers of children in poverty both professionally and personally. I would need you to participate in a semi-structured interview that would last approximately one hour. The questions would be provided to you before the interview to enable you to think about your responses in advance. Please know that you are under no obligation to participate in this research, and you can change your mind at any time in the process without consequences.

If you are interested in learning more about participating in this research, I am asking you to simply reply to this email to that affect. I, then, will contact you to establish a time to go over the information about the study and to conduct the interview if you consent.

Please call me with questions at 209.3114 or email me at bmorehea@battle-creek.k12.mi.us.

Bobbi Morehead
Appendix D

HSIRB Approval Letter and Participant Consent Document
Date: May 16, 2007

To: Patricia Reeves, Principal Investigator  
Bobbi Morehead, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 07-05-09

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled “Exposing Star Teachers of Children in Poverty” has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: May 16, 2008
Consent Document

Western Michigan University
Department of Education
Principal Investigator: Dr. Patricia Reeves
Student Investigator: Bobbi Morehead
Title of Study: Star Teachers of Children in Poverty

Hello __________,

You are invited to become part of a research study that is looking at the experiences of star teachers of children in poverty. I sincerely appreciate your assistance with this project.

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to further describe performing star teachers of children in poverty. I anticipate that this study will begin in June 2007 and go through September 2007.

As in all research, there may be unforeseen risks to the participant. A potential risk could be sharing sensitive, personal information. For example, teachers may share personal information as they describe significant factors, events, and people who have shaped them as educators and people. This information may lead to remembering both positive and negative experiences. Participants will only be asked to share information that they are comfortable sharing. Please know that I will honor any request by you not to share sensitive information. One way in which you may benefit from participating in this study is the ability to tell your story which may be of benefit to other teachers of at risk students as well as benefit administrators who support teachers of poverty children. Also, there will be no identifying information in the study meaning participants will be given pseudonyms to prevent identification. The key which matches pseudonym numbers and names will be kept in a password protected file server and deleted after the data is transcribed.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to be available for an interview which will last approximately 60 to 90 minutes. The questions are attached for your review. The interview will be semi-structured. You will be telling me your story. The interview will be audio taped, and will take place in your classroom at your convenience. You will be given a copy of the written results of your part of the study before it is completed to make sure I have captured the essence of your story, and to ensure that you do not feel you can be clearly identified in the study. I will honor your request to leave any portion of your information out of the written dissertation.

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This study is being done in partial fulfillment of my doctoral work and will be published as a doctoral dissertation. Please be aware that this doctoral dissertation is being published as a public document and may be read by other interested parties.

Please know that you can refuse to participate in this study, you can stop participation at any time, and you can refuse to answer any questions during the interview. There will be no personal or professional consequences to those who decline to participate. I also feel it is important that I disclose that I am an administrator in the Battle Creek Public School District.

If at any time, you need to contact me, please do so. My name is Bobbi Morehead. My number is 269.209.3114, and my email address is bmorehea@battle-creek.k12.mi.us. My faculty advisor is Patricia Reeves. Her office number is 269.387.3527. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (387-8293) or the Vice President for Research (387-8298) if questions or problems arise during the course of the study.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

Again, thank you for your time. Your signature below indicates that you have read and/or had explained to you the purpose and requirements of the study and that you agree to participate.

________________________  ____________________
Signature                      Date
Appendix E

Comparison of Star Teacher and Star Principal
Haberman’s Star Teacher Functions (1995b) and Haberman’s Star Principal’s Traits (Haberman & Dill, 1999)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Haberman (1995b) Star Teacher Functions</th>
<th>Haberman (Haberman &amp; Dill, 1999) Star Principal Traits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Persistence</td>
<td>Power</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protect Students’ Learning</td>
<td>Protect Students’ Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applications of Generalizations</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
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<td>Approach to At-Risk Students</td>
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<td>School Climate</td>
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<td>Fallibility</td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
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<td>Decision Making</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Fallibility</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Politician</td>
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Appendix F

Summary of Participants' Information
Summary of Participant Information Regarding Star Teacher Themes

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Janet</th>
<th>Lucy</th>
<th>Nina</th>
<th>Tracy</th>
<th>Penny</th>
<th>Ken</th>
<th>Betsy</th>
<th>Candy</th>
<th>Lonnie</th>
<th>Chris</th>
<th>Jill</th>
<th>Mary</th>
<th>Nelly</th>
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<th>Sherry</th>
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<td>Demonstrates through their actions that they believe that all students can learn</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<td>Seeks leadership roles within their school</td>
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<td>Depends on clear classroom routines and procedures</td>
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Note. Pseudonyms are used.
Appendix G

Comparison of Morehead’s and Haberman’s Findings
Comparison of Star Teacher Themes to Haberman’s (1995b; Haberman & Dill, 1999)
Star Teacher and Star Principal Framework

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<td>Demonstrates through their actions that they believe all students can learn</td>
<td>Functions</td>
<td>Traits</td>
<td>Findings consistent</td>
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<td>- Persistent Instruction</td>
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<td>Function</td>
<td>Trait</td>
<td>Findings consistent</td>
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<td>- Burnout</td>
<td>- Teamwork</td>
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<td>Haberman says Star Teachers focus on students and avoid the bureaucracy</td>
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<td>Function</td>
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