

RURAL MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' PERSPECTIVES OF  
SUPERVISION AND EVALUATION  
AS THEY IMPLEMENT  
GEORGIA'S A PLUS EDUCATION REFORM ACT OF 2000

by

CHARLOTTE KING EADY

(Under the direction of Dr. Sally J. Zepeda)

ABSTRACT

The perspectives of three rural middle school principals as they implement Georgia's *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000* were investigated in this study. A case study approach was utilized, employing both within case and cross case analyses. The constant comparative method of data analysis was employed to examine the perspectives of the participants. Three interviews were conducted with each of the three participants, resulting in a total of nine interviews. Additionally, the researcher compiled fieldnotes and examined documents obtained from the participants and accessed through the World Wide Web. Symbolic interactionism was the theoretical framework that guided this study. Four perspectives emerged from the data: (1) Evaluation of teacher effectiveness can be indicated only by the results of standardized tests, (2) Supervision consists of classroom visits and observations, (3) Ruralness affects how staff development is delivered, and (4) Lack of funding limits the effectiveness of the staff development component of teacher evaluation.

INDEX WORDS: Supervision, Evaluation, Rural schools, Middle schools, Rural principals, Legislated educational reform, Educational leadership, The University of Georgia.

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## **DEDICATION**

This effort is dedicated to my parents (both deceased), Giles and Jeannette Howard King; to my own dear and precious family—Isreal L. Eady, Jr., my husband; and to Lee, Maya, and Giles, our children.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of three rural middle school principals who, by state statute, were mandated to implement the teacher evaluation provisions of Georgia's *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*. In light of the provisions of the *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*, this study examined the perspectives of three middle school principals in rural Georgia as they implemented the evaluative provisions of the statute.

#### Background of the Study

The unveiling of Governor Roy Barnes's *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000* was met with concerns from teachers and administrators in the public schools of Georgia. (Jacobson, 2001). After more than a decade of operation under the Quality Basic Education Act, educators found themselves facing a new roadmap for the improvement of teaching and learning in Georgia public schools. Much of the responsibility for implementation of the *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000* rests with administrative personnel, most notably, principals, who are responsible for the supervision, evaluation, staff development of all certified staff.

Georgia embarked on large-scale reform in 1985 when the Quality Basic Education Act (QBE) was passed. The precursors of QBE were the Minimum Foundation Program (MFP) that was the initiative of Governor Carl Sanders (1963-1967), and the Adequate Program for Education in Georgia (APEG) initiated by

Governor Jimmy Carter (1971-1975). Both MFP and APEG tried to tie school finance to change in education in the state of Georgia.

Governor Joe Frank Harris (1983-1991) initiated the QBE reforms by establishing an Education Review Commission (1985) that was charged with studying developments in other states and the findings of education research. Following this pattern of gubernatorial involvement in 1998, Georgia Governor Roy Barnes assembled a commission, the Education Reform Commission of 2000. Governor Roy Barnes, in a speech delivered to the Georgia Education Reform Commission of 2000, indicated:

My simple charge to you is this: Let us come to the table and pool our best ideas, let us bring our best-hearted intentions, and let us steel up our best resolve to ensure for our children tomorrow a better system of public education than we find today. (Georgia Education Reform Commission, Governor Roy Barnes's Charge, ¶ 2)

House Bill 1187, formally entitled *The A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000* (hereafter referred to as *A Plus*), passed by the Georgia General Assembly in March 2000, was intended to be a comprehensive education reform statute designed to increase student academic performance in order to hold local school systems accountable for student academic achievement. Of the numerous provisions of *A Plus*, are reforms regarding accountability—specifically, teacher accountability. Of significance is the fact that *A Plus* provides that a teacher receiving an unsatisfactory evaluation will not be entitled to an increase in state salary based on credit for years of experience. *A Plus* requires that:

The placement of teachers on the salary schedule shall be based on certificate level and years of creditable experience, except that a teacher shall not receive credit for any year of experience in which the teacher received an unsatisfactory performance evaluation. (O. C. G. A. §20-2-212 (a))

Additionally, teachers receiving two unsatisfactory annual performance evaluations in the previous five-year period will not be re-certified until the perceived deficiency is remediated. To wit:

An individual who has received two unsatisfactory annual performance evaluations in the previous five-year period pursuant to Code Section 20-2-210 shall not be entitled to a renewable certificate prior to demonstrating that such performance deficiency has been satisfactorily addressed, but such individual may apply to the commission for a nonrenewable certificate. (O. C. G. A. §20-2-200 (a) (8))

In the past, the Georgia Teacher Evaluation Program (GTEP) was used for teacher evaluation throughout the state. Administrators were required to receive state-approved training on the instrument. While schools systems are no longer required to use GTEP, some systems may opt to use GTEP with the addition of the following minimal considerations of the statute:

1. The role of the teacher in meeting the school's student achievement goals, including the academic gains of students assigned to the teacher;
  2. Observations of the teacher by the principal and assistant principals during the delivery of instruction and at other times as appropriate;
  3. Participation in professional development opportunities and the application of concepts learned to classroom and school activities;
  4. Communication and interpersonal skills as they relate to interaction with students, parents, other teachers, administrators, and other school personnel;
  5. Timeliness and attendance for assigned responsibilities;
  6. Adherence to school and local school system procedures and rules; and,
  7. Personal conduct while in performance of school duties.
- (O.C.G. A. §20-2-210 (b))

One of the changes in the state required evaluation of teachers is the inclusion of the provision that requires the consideration of “academic gains of students assigned to the teacher” as a component of the teacher’s evaluation. Student achievement will be determined through use of a number of assessments, including standardized and criterion-referenced tests. This additional component elevates student assessment to a high-stakes



area as teacher salary and ultimately, continued teacher certification will be linked to student performance on assessments.

### Statement of the Problem

Georgia's *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000* represents gubernatorially initiated school reform. *A Plus* requires principals to assume numerous tasks and to add new responsibilities, such as serving as chairperson of the Parent Council, communicating the provisions of the mandate to the teachers, and assisting those entrusted with scheduling in devising schedules appropriate to middle school students. The evaluative functions of *A Plus*, due to the nature of its language, require substantive and procedural changes on the part of principals and other supervisory personnel who are legally charged with evaluating teachers. Principals will need to supervise and evaluate teachers in ways that are different from what has been done in the past given the language of the law.

The focus of this study is to examine the perspectives of three rural middle school principals as they function to provide instructional supervision while implementing the evaluative provisions of *A Plus*. The results of the study may contribute to a better understanding of how mandated change is implemented in rural middle schools.

When the results of standardized tests were linked to teacher evaluations and evaluations were, in turn, linked to teacher salary and continued certification, a high stakes environment was created in Georgia schools. Ultimately, the ability of teachers to retain gainful employment is threatened by student performance on selected standardized tests. In rural schools, these factors may be more crucial because of the small numbers of other types of employment available. The manner in which principals and other

administrators process and perceive the provisions of *A Plus* will have far-reaching effects on Georgia's teachers. The question of how rural principals perceive supervision and evaluation under the new guidelines is of vast importance.

### Contextual Framework

#### *Rural Schools*

Chance (1993) bemoaned the fact that often legislation is passed and policy developed without full knowledge of the ramifications on rural schools. The educational reform movement, according to Chance, is an example of a phenomenon that is producing results opposite of those desired. "The burden of compliance and the costs have been and will continue to be felt by the rural/small schools because of their size, isolation, and limited finances to implement required mandates" (p. 26). State and even federal educational mandates sometimes do not factor into the statutes, the unique circumstances of rural schools where often meeting minimum requirements demands Herculean efforts (Lewis, 1992).

Mandated reform initiatives become more costly to rural school districts than to non-rural districts. Additionally, it is debatable as to whether or not rural districts need the same types of reform initiatives as other districts do (Chance, 1993; Lewis, 1992). The "one size fits all" mentality may have deleterious affects on rural schools. Results of a study of mandated reforms in rural Kentucky, conducted by Kannapel, Coe, Aagaard, and Reeves (1999) raised the question: "whether it is possible or prudent to induce all schools, whether urban, suburban, or rural, to adopt certain tenets of a systemic reform movement that are purported to be crucial to the welfare of the nation" (p. 13). Fullan (1996) offered the following in regard to mandated change: "Policies are essential

catalysts. Where change is mandated, policies at best are likely to achieve only superficial compliance” (p. 496).

According to the U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (1998), of the 87, 000 schools in the United States, 21, 636 of them are rural schools. Of special note are the many rural schools in Georgia. Of Georgia’s 180 school districts, 63 are classified by the National Center for Education Statistics as being rural.

These schools may be defined by

1. their proximity from major metropolitan centers;
2. the populations of the communities they serve; or,
3. their size and enrollment.

“Change is non-linear, loaded with uncertainty, and sometimes perverse” (Fullan, 1997, p. 50). In other words, the most predictable factor regarding change is that it is inherently unpredictable. Fullan (1997) explained that the more complex change is, the less it can be forced. Fullan further detailed the requirements of educational change: new skills, new behavior, and new beliefs or understandings. School reform literature abounds with the findings that school leaders are the central agents of effective and efficient change (Deal, & Peterson, 1991; Fullan, 1992; Hilty, 1999; Johnson, 1996; Leithwood, Jantz, & Steinbach, 1995; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982; Sarason, 1982).

### *Middle School Reform*

While school reform—change—is controversial at best, mandated reforms are even more so (e.g., end of course and graduation tests, teacher salaries based on student achievement, increased certification requirements). One of the most significant markers of the school reform movement was the 1983 release of *A Nation At Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (National Commission on Excellence in Education). This report

rhetorically declared war on public schools. The Commission based their conclusions on international comparisons of the achievement of high school students and high school graduates, with a focus on pre-and post-Sputnik scores, on standardized tests. Students in the United States achieved at levels consistently below their international counterparts. Consequently, more than a dozen other major reports criticizing America's public schools were released in the early 1980s.

The publication of the Carnegie Council for Adolescent Development's *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (1989) marked a milestone in middle level education. The report called for a shift "from departmentalized, impersonalized, content-driven classrooms to child-centered, interdisciplinary learning communities, rich with opportunities for students to learn collectively and experientially through deep engagement in thematic, problem-based curricula" (Oakes, Quartz, Ryan, & Lipton, 2000, p. 51).

Middle schools nationwide implemented the *Turning Points* model, or parts of the model. However, Jackson and Davis (2000) wrote, "When reforms are implemented in a limited or scattershot manner and are not accompanied by substantial changes in teaching practices, improvement in student outcomes is more limited" (p. 6). The Center for Education Reform in Washington, D. C. (1998) offered, "Academically, we fall off a cliff somewhere in the middle and upper grades. Internationally, U.S. youngsters hold their own at the elementary level but falter in the middle years and drop far behind in high school" (¶ 9).

### *The Principal's Role*

Traditionally, principals concentrated on the day-to-day management of the school—from attendance issues to cafeteria schedules. However, Murphy (1994) suggested that principals involved in school reform movements must be transformational leaders in order to adjust to the demands of the widespread standards-based reform. Murphy related, “Largely because new legislation and other externally generated expectations have altered the context of education, principals believe that their roles have been altered in fundamental ways” (p. 21).

School reform essentially changes the tasks that students, parents, teachers, and principals must perform. Studying school reform is important not only to the educational community, but also to the community at large. Any educational agenda that occasions such wide-ranging change is worthy of intense examination. School reform becomes a vehicle wherein students, parents, teachers, and principals are called on to change or modify their traditional practices.

### *Supervision and Evaluation*

It is not unusual for the terms “supervision” and “evaluation” to be used synonymously. The purposes and intents for both are varied. Natriello (1990) described intended and unintended consequences of teacher evaluation. In the view of Darling-Hammond (1997):

Progressive school leaders realize that mandates cannot transform schools. Only teachers, working with parents and administrators, can do that. If students are to be well taught, it will be because they have knowledgeable and well-supported teachers, who are the central investment of schooling and the linchpin for school reform. (§ 7)

Of interest to this study was the manner in which three rural middle school principals implemented the changes required by the *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*. Specifically, the study explored the work of three rural middle school principals as they implemented the mandates related to teacher supervision and evaluation of the *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*.

### *High Stakes Tests*

The *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000* effectively created a high stakes environment for both students and teachers in Georgia. Specifically, one of the components to be considered in teachers' annual evaluations is "the role of the teacher in meeting the school's student achievement goals, including the academic gains of students assigned to the teacher" (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-210 (b) (1). Murnane (1987) argued that there is potential for "distorted, counterproductive local behavior" (p. 107) under high stakes conditions. Corbett and Wilson (1989) asserted that "raising the stakes associated with a test, focuses attention solely on student performance and promotes the attainment of higher scores without improved learning"(p. 30).

According to Koch (1999), 48 states now administer statewide, standardized tests with about a dozen of the same states administering tests that reflect curricular standards. "Testing is being used to drive education reform" (Casserly cited in Koch, 1999). Additionally, Koch made the point that many of the tests are of such poor quality that they "impede rather than enhance genuine education reform" (p. 415).

More recently, Kohn (2000) regarded high-stakes testing as "unfair as well as destructive to learning" (p. 315). Kohn argued that norm-referenced tests were not designed to assess the competency of teachers or the capabilities of students. One

additional caveat to norm-referenced testing is that such tests are more likely to require knowledge that is not taught in schools, “thereby heightening socioeconomic factors that are highly correlated to out-of-school learning” (Kohn, p. 319). Barksdale-Ladd and Thomas (2000) reported that the higher the stakes on any given test, the greater the level of teacher focus on test preparation to the detriment of other areas of teaching and learning. Teachers involved in this study reported that the testing programs give poor teachers license to do what they always do, “skill and drill teaching” (p. 386).

In 2000, the American Educational Research Association (AERA) issued an official position statement regarding high stakes testing. In this position statement, AERA set forth 12 conditions that every high-stakes achievement-testing program in education should meet. The organization summarized, “if high-stakes testing programs are implemented in circumstances where educational resources are inadequate or where tests lack sufficient reliability and validity for their intended purposes, there is potential for serious harm” (2000, p. 24).

### Research Questions

1. How did rural middle school principals perceive supervision as a result of the implementation of the *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*?
2. How did these perspectives affect supervisory practices?
3. How did rural middle school principals perceive changes in teacher evaluation as a result of the implementation of the *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*?
4. How did these perspectives affect evaluative practices?
5. What contextual factors influence the evaluative and supervisory practices of rural middle school principals?

## Significance of the Study

The *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000* presents the challenge of change to educators in Georgia. Due to the language of *A Plus*, teacher evaluation in the state of Georgia has become a high stakes proposition—pay raises, continued certification, and employability—are being linked to student performance on high stakes tests. While many studies have been conducted on the roles of principals in the change process; however, due to its infancy, no studies to date have been conducted in regard to the supervision and evaluation of teachers in light of *A Plus*.

Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2001) in a study of distributed perspective of leadership acknowledged that studies, which attend to the leadership practices of principals, are rare. Rather, researchers attend to the “micro” or everyday tasks of leadership, how school leaders “define, present, and carry out the micro tasks” and how they interact with others in the process of completing the tasks (Spillane et al., 2001). The existing literature lacks depth in the area of defining how principals execute macro and micro tasks such as supervision and evaluation of teachers in a high stakes era.

The findings from this study may serve to inform the supervisory and evaluative practices of principals of rural middle schools. This study could provide the impetus for continued research regarding *A Plus* and the perspectives of educators who must implement the statute.

Traditionally, educational reform initiatives are met with some anxiety, angst, and anticipation (Evans, 1996; Fullan, 1991; Sarason, 1990). State mandated change sometimes place a burden on both teachers and administrators. Considerable attention has been given to the changing tasks of principals. Bradley (1992), concurs “principals



have experienced more change under school reform than any other group” (p. 1). How principals in general and rural middle school principals specifically function and perceive the practices of supervision and evaluation under the constraints of legislative mandates is worthy of study.

Rural school reform and middle school reform provided the contextual framework for this study. The examination of the perspectives of how rural middle school principals adapt their supervisory and evaluative practices as they implement reform could inform the preparation and practices of new middle school principals.

### Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined within the context of this study:

*Middle schools*—are those schools which utilize a grade configuration which includes sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. Additionally, middle schools utilize flexible scheduling, interdisciplinary teams, and developmentally appropriate instruction.

*Supervision*—is the manner in which administrators provide direction to teachers in regard to effective teaching and the facilitation of professional or staff development.

*Evaluation*—is the process of obtaining information about the effectiveness of teaching and learning and utilizes a summative measure such as the Georgia Teacher Assessment Program (GTEP).

*Rural schools*—are defined by the total enrollment of the school district (less than 5,000 students), and with a geographical distance (approximately 60 or more miles) from a major metropolitan area.

## Overview of Research Procedures

A case study approach was utilized, and the constant comparative method of data analysis was employed to examine the perspectives of the participants, three rural middle school principals. Each principal was interviewed three times during the course of the study. Audiotapes from the interviews were transcribed and analyzed. The researcher kept fieldnotes throughout the study and collected and analyzed various artifacts.

The transcripts of each interview were coded and sorted. Categories and themes that emerged from the coding were noted. Fieldnotes were utilized to enhance perspectives that surfaced from analysis of the participant interviews. Member checks were conducted and participants were given the opportunity to examine transcripts from the tape recordings. Artifacts were also examined and coded.

## Conceptual Framework

Symbolic interactionism was the theoretical framework that guided this study. The term was first used by Blumer (1969) to label a particular genre of sociological thought that drew from the work of George Herbert Mead a professor of philosophy at the University of Chicago. The examination of perspectives is an idea central to symbolic interactionism. In this study, the researcher examined the perspectives of three rural middle school principals. Another idea central to symbolic interactionism is the idea that the meaning of a thing for a person grows out of the ways in which other persons act toward the person with regard to the thing. The researcher explored the meanings that the mandates of the *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000* had for three rural middle school principals and examined how the meanings (perspectives) were related to the principals' supervisory and evaluative practices.

## Organization of the Study

Chapter One included the statement of the problem, conceptual framework, research questions, significance of the study, theoretical significance, assumptions, definition of terms, limitations, an overview of research procedures, and the researcher's perspective of the study of three rural middle school principals' perspectives of their supervisory and evaluative practices as they implemented the mandates of the *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*. Chapter Two presented a review of the literature in the areas of rural education and reform, the evolution of middle school and middle school reform movements, teacher supervision, and evaluation. A summary of the mandates of the *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000* was also included. Chapter Three included the methods utilized for the research. The findings and analysis of data are included in Chapter Four. Chapter Five discussed of the results of the study and implications were offered.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of three rural middle school principals who, by state statute, must implement the teacher evaluation provisions of Georgia's *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000* as they provide for the supervision of teachers. This review of literature covered several areas relative to the purpose of the study. The following areas of the literature were reviewed: Rural Education, Rural School Reform, The Evolution of Middle Schools, Summary of the *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*, Middle School Principals, and Evaluation and Supervision.

#### Rural Education

When visualizing rural schools, many educators picture schools characterized by abject poverty and run by country “bumpkins.” As with any stereotype, further investigation leads to more complete understanding. Hilty (1999) reported that rural schools and school districts were “characterized as having qualities when taken together set them apart from their urban and suburban counterparts” (p. 156). Stern (1994) enumerated that:

1. Rural schools and rural school districts usually enroll small numbers of pupils (i.e., fewer than 1,000 pupils per school district).
2. Rural school districts commonly are experiencing significant enrollment decline.
3. Rural residents report incomes significantly less than their urban and suburban peers.
4. Rural school districts usually employ school buildings that house smaller numbers of pupils.
5. Rural school districts typically are sparsely populated.

6. Due primarily to small numbers of pupils generally located in large geographic areas, per-pupil transportation costs for rural schools are inordinately high.
7. Due to the absence of significant trading centers, rural school districts often are nearly exclusively dependent on real property taxations for their local revenue. (Stern, 1994, p. 48)

According to the U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (1998), of the 87, 000 schools in the United States, 21, 636 of them are rural schools. Harmon, Howley and Sanders (1996), in an analysis of rural education research conducted at the doctoral level, assert the lack of “relevant doctoral inquiry” (p. 68) in the field was of concern. Noting increased interest, Harmon et al., discussed a “menu” for future research and development in rural education. Developed in 1992 by the Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) and selected members of the Rural Education Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), the menu included six major topics worthy of future and on-going study, including:

1. Overall effectiveness of rural schools.
2. Curricular provisions in rural schools.
3. School and community partnerships on behalf of rural schools.
4. Human resources for rural schools.
5. Use of technology in rural schools certification mandates.
6. Financial support and governance for rural schools.

Harmon et al. (1996) acknowledged the lack of depth and breadth of some topics and noted that some important topics did not appear on the menu. One such topic missing from the “menu” was the supervision and evaluation of teachers in the rural setting.

Kannapel and DeYoung (1999) in a review and critique of the literature on rural schools noted:

For many rural education scholars, significant rural school problems exist, but the problems are a consequence of former “solutions” to rural education reform during the past century, in addition to issues involved with general demographic and economic decline in many rural places. (p. 67)

Kannapel and DeYoung, noted that the Committee of Twelve of 1896 concluded that rural schools were wasteful and inferior. Consequently, educators devised plans to “fix” and reform the schools, resulting in the loss of these schools’ uniqueness and strengths. The current reform agenda, systemic reform, imposes generic reform approaches on all schools. Further, the researchers noted that the literature contained reflection on the philosophical differences of the systemic reformers and those who believed that school improvement efforts should be tailored to fit the needs of rural schools. Kannapel and DeYoung postulated:

Generic reformers will need to rethink their attachment to the idea on context-free accountability mechanisms. Real accountability is found in community satisfactions with the schools, and in student ability to succeed after school in ways that are sustaining to themselves, the community and society at large. Using test scores or other artificial indices to measure school success and hold teachers accountable results in generic teaching to the test. Accountability systems without flexibility are flawed at best. (p. 77)

### Rural School Reform

As reported by Seal and Harmon (1995), West Virginia is one of several states in which mandated statewide school reform have been enacted. Educators welcomed the opportunity to upgrade the quality of education in the state. However, several county superintendents countered that rural districts did not share the same problems as their urban and suburban counterparts. The superintendents argued that it was imperative that statewide reforms consider the uniqueness of rural districts. The state school superintendent then established a special task force for the study of rural school districts. The results of the task force were reported in the local newspaper, and revealed that a child in a sparsely populated county of West Virginia:

1. Will begin the day with a fairly long bus ride;
  2. Is likely to be from a poor family;
  3. Is more likely than other students (i.e., those from more populous areas) to have parents who are unemployed;
  4. Is more likely than other students to receive special education services;
  5. Is less likely than other students to be classified as gifted;
  6. Is more likely than other students to have parents who did not graduate from high school; and,
  7. Has a greater chance than other students of becoming a high school dropout.
- (Seal & Harmon, 1995, 120)

Recently, Kannapel (2000) observed that two schools of thought exist in standards-based reform and rural school improvement: the advocates of standards-based reform and the advocates of rural school improvement. While the philosophies of the two groups are congruent in some areas, the incongruence is evident in the area of accountability. The standards-based reformers support holding schools accountable for state standards through statewide performance-based assessment, even while acknowledging that tying “teacher accountability to a state test can inhibit local creativity and initiative” (p. 4). Rural school improvement advocates believe that standards should be locally developed and professional development provided to enable teachers to “teach to high academic standards” (p. 4). Kannapel acknowledged that the rural school improvement advocates have not articulated strategies that would serve to implement this model.

### The Evolution of Middle Schools

“It is evident that as middle level educators move their schools into the twenty-first century they must do so from a clear understanding of the past” (Clark & Clark, 1994, p. 28). Few educational movements in the history of American public schooling have been as comprehensive as the middle school movement (George & Oldaker, 1986).

Beginning with junior high schools and evolving to the current middle schools, one of four grade configurations can be found: grades six through eight, grades seven through nine, grades seven and eight, or grades five through eight.

As early as 1892, Charles W. Eliot, president of Harvard University and chairman of The Committee of Ten on Secondary School Studies, proposed that elementary programs be shortened by excluding grades seven and eight, and enriched by offering coursework typically offered in high school programs. The Committee of Ten (National Education Association [NEA], 1894) recommended:

Several subjects now reserved for high schools should be begun earlier than now, and therefore; within the schools classified as elementary; or as alternative, the secondary school period should be made to begin two years earlier than at present, leaving six years instead of eight for the elementary school period. (p. 45)

While there is general agreement of scholars on when the first junior high schools were established, there is some controversy over where they were established. The first sites are variously considered to be Richmond, Indiana; New York City; Columbus, Ohio; and Berkeley, California (Briggs, 1920; Clark & Clark, 1994). Junior high schools grew at a remarkable rate for several decades; and, by 1961, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) published a second book, *The Junior High School We Need*, in which the following was submitted:

There may be serious question as to whether or not the junior high school of the future should include the traditional ninth grade. It may be more reasonable to start junior high school with what is considered the sixth grade and return the ninth grade to the senior high program. (Grambs, Noyce, Patterson, & Robertson, 1961, p. 23)



The authors predicted that the junior high schools of the future would permit student groupings to be designed without reference to number of years in school (ungraded). Further, there would be no bells and rich guidance services would be provided.

The “junior high we need” never became a reality, and the emergent middle school began to take its place. By 1968, Alexander, Williams, Compton, Hines, and Prescott called for a new school in the middle. In *The Emergent Middle School* (1968) they cited “three principal lines of justification which have major implications for the program of the emergent middle school” (p. 11). Middle schools, according to Alexander et al., would embrace the goals, to:

1. Provide a program especially adapted to the wide range of individual differences and special needs of the ‘in-between-ager’.
2. Create a school ladder arrangement that promotes continuity of education from school entrance to exit.
3. Facilitate through a new organization, the introduction of the needed innovations in curriculum and instruction. (p. 11)

The middle school concept rested on the premise that schools should be responsive to the unique needs of the adolescent (Alexander, et al., 1968; Atkins, 1968). While there was disagreement on how to create or configure this type of school, there was agreement on the need to make schools more developmentally appropriate for children who were “in the middle” of their academic careers. Eichhorn (1966) advanced the idea of developmentally responsive schools by declaring, “As it relates to the middle school, considering the nature of the youngster involved is vital” (p. 3). It is Eichhorn who coined the term “transescent” to describe the child who is experiencing “the stage of development which begins prior to the onset of puberty and extends through the early stages of adolescence” (p. 3). Hansen and Hearn (1971) believed that:

If the middle school has any real and valid reason for existence, it must be based upon the ability to do something for children of this age group that cannot be done as well by other organizational patterns or cannot be done at all. (p. 20)

The evolution of middle schools began with the birth of the junior high school.

The ideal junior high school was to include features that would have made it very similar to the middle school, and the middle school movement was born out of the recognition that the educational requirements of transescents are different and unique. Lounsbury (1991) summarized the evolution of middle level education this way:

*Eighty years (1911) ago* the idea of a junior high school was not yet clearly formed.

*Seventy years (1921) ago* it was just an infrequent experiment.

*Sixty years (1931) ago* the junior high school was the coming thing in American education.

*Fifty years (1941) ago* it had achieved considerable status and became a regular part of our educational system.

*Forty years (1951) ago* criticism concerning the junior high began to mount.

*30 years (1961) ago* the middle school was being touted as an alternative and solution to the failures of the junior high school.

*Twenty years (1971) ago* the first comparative studies and surveys revealed that new middle schools and old junior high schools were surprisingly alike in actual practice.

*Ten years (1981) ago* junior high and middle school proponents and practitioners began to coalesce into a single cause—the cause of improving early adolescent education.

*Today*, the phrase middle level education has gained acceptance as the best term to refer to a distinctive level in public education. (1991, pp. 67-68, emphasis in the original)

### Reform Movements in Middle Level Education

The issuance of *A Nation At Risk* precipitated a flurry of reform initiatives. The publication of the Carnegie Council for Adolescent Development's *Turning Points Preparing American Youth for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (1989) marked a milestone in middle level education. The report called for a shift “from departmentalized, impersonalized, content-driven classrooms to child-centered, interdisciplinary learning communities, rich

with opportunities for students to learn collectively and experientially through deep engagement in thematic, problem-based curricula” (Oakes, et al., 2000, p. 52).

*Turning Points* (1989) explicitly urged the creation of a middle school which:

Is profoundly different from many schools today. It focuses squarely on the characteristics and needs of young adolescents. It creates a community of adults and young people embedded in networks of support and responsibility that enhance the commitment of students to learning. In partnership with youth serving and community organizations, it offers multiple sites and multiple methods for fostering the learning and health of adolescents. The combined efforts create a community of shared purpose among those concerned that all young adolescents are prepared for productive adult lives, especially those at risk of being left behind. (p. 36)

Envisioning the cooperation of public and private agencies that serve adolescents, the

Task Force recommended that schools institute programs that would:

1. Create small communities for learning.
2. Teach a core academic program.
3. Ensure success for all students.
4. Empower teachers and administrators to make decision about the experiences of middle grade students.
5. Staff middle schools with teachers who are expert at teaching young adolescents.
6. Improve academic performance through fostering the health and fitness of young adolescents.
7. Reengage families in the education of young adolescents.
8. Connect schools with communities.

Middle schools nationwide implemented the *Turning Points* model, or parts of the model. However, Jackson and Davis (2000) hold that “When reforms are implemented in a limited or scattershot manner and are not accompanied by substantial changes in teaching practices, improvement in student outcomes is more limited” (p. 6).

*Turning Points 2000* is a more standards-based document. Jackson and Davis (2000) affirmed that the order of the recommendations in the original *Turning Points* (1989) were not prioritized by order for implementation. Consequently, the

recommendations were reordered (see Table 1). Jackson and Davis maintained that the reordering of the recommendations was done to “reflect the centrality of teaching and learning to ensuring every student’s success” (p. 25). *Turning Points 2000* made seven recommendations for change, which Jackson and Davis referred to as “design elements.” Central to each of the design elements is the original *Turning Points* recommendation: “Ensure success for every student.” There are five other changes in the two documents.

*Turning Points 2000:*

1. Made seven recommendations, as opposed to the eight from the original document;
2. Reordered the recommendations, not in order of importance, but “to reflect the centrality of teacher and learning to ensuring every students’ success;”
3. Changed the terminology that described what should be taught. The use of “core common knowledge.” Jackson and Davis (2000) believed that the term “core common knowledge” was a forerunner of the standards movement, but the term did not fully reflect the nature of the skills students needed to acquire;
4. Separated the recommendation regarding core knowledge into two recommendations: “teach a curriculum grounded in standards” and “use instruction designed to help students achieve higher standards;” and,
5. Combined two of the original recommendations: reengaging families and connecting schools to communities (pp. 24-26).

#### Summary of *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*

Governor Roy Barnes’s *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000* (hereafter referred to as *A Plus* or the Act) is perhaps one of the most comprehensive documents of its kind in Georgia history. In effect, it repealed the decade-old Quality Basic Education Act. The 179-page text of H.B. 1187 provided measures for teacher and student accountability, including revised evaluation standards for teachers.

Table 1. Comparison of *Turning Points 1989* and *Turning Points 2000*

<i>Turning Points 1989</i>	<i>Change</i>	<i>Turning Points 2000</i>
Create small communities for learning.	Reordered	Organize relationships for learning to create a climate of intellectual development and a caring community of shared educational purpose.
Teach a core academic program.	Separated	Use instructional methods designed to prepare all students to achieve higher standards and become lifelong learners.
		Teach a curriculum grounded in rigorous, public academic standards for what students should know and be able to do, relevant to the concerns of adolescents and based on how students learn best.
Ensure success for all students.	Is center to all recommendations	
Empower teachers and administrators to make decisions about the experiences of middle grade students.		Govern democratically, through direct or representative participation by all school staff members, the adults who know the students best
Staff middle grades schools with teachers who are expert at teaching young adolescents.	Expanded.	Staff middle grades schools with teachers who are expert at teaching young adolescents, and engage teachers in ongoing, targeted professional development opportunities.
Improve academic performance through fostering the health and fitness of young adolescents.	Expanded	Provide a safe and healthy school environment as part of improving academic performance and developing caring and ethical citizens.
Reengage families in the education of young adolescents.	Combined	Involve parents and communities in supporting student learning and healthy development.
Connect schools with communities.	Combined	

Sources: Jackson, A. W., & Davis, G. A. (2000). *Turning points 2000: Educating adolescents in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

*Turning points: Preparing American youth for the 21<sup>st</sup> century: The report of the Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents*. (1989). Washington, DC: Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents. Author.

### *Accountability*

A primary component of *A Plus* was accountability—for both educators and students. To oversee the accountability measures in the Act, the Education Coordinating Council (ECC) was created. The purpose of the ECC was to “promote interagency communications, provide a seamless education system for the state, prevent unnecessary duplication of services and oversee all education accountability programs” (O’Neal, 2000, p. 199). The ECC was to become the “superboard” that oversees all other agencies that deal with accountability.

The Office of Education Accountability (OEA) was then the “super agency” which operated under the ECC. The OEA replaced the Council for School Performance, and it became the agency that had as its primary task to create and implement a statewide program of accountability for grades kindergarten through 12. The program was intended to be performance-based in order to insure school accountability. Specifically, the OEA was to establish the level of satisfactory performance on each of the mandated state assessments and was to create benchmarks that compared Georgia’s students with students nation-wide. The OEA was to create and prepare for each school in the state, the official report card that was to supersede all or any other reports created by any other department of state government.

The OEA was vested with considerable power to audit schools and school systems to determine the level(s) of compliance with accountability standards. The OEA was to impose compliance through a series of rewards and “interventions” determined by the State Board of Education. The interventions can escalate to a point wherein the OEA

can recommend that a special “school master” or management team be sent to the school site to oversee and direct the duties of the principal.

The mere fact that school masters may be assigned to schools that were consistently labeled “failing” has major implications for school principals.

Administrators question: Does this master (or management team) become the principal in fact? Principals will then be required to adjust to new roles and practices that conform to the ideas and ideals of the master or management team.

Several changes were also made in the area of evaluation. *A Plus* sets forth seven minimum criteria that must be included in annual teacher evaluations. Those areas are:

1. The role of the teacher in meeting the school’s student achievement goals, including the academic gains of students assigned to the teacher;
  2. Observations of the teacher by the principal and assistant principals during the delivery of instruction;
  3. Participation in professional development opportunities and the application of concepts learned to classroom and school activities;
  4. Communication and interpersonal skills as they relate to interaction with students, parents, other teachers, administrators, and other school personnel;
  5. Timeliness and attendance for assigned responsibilities;
  6. Adherence to school and local school system procedures and rules; and
  7. Personal conduct while in performance of school duties.
- (O. C. G. A. § 20-2-210 (b))

With the exception of measures that evaluate the academic gains of students, the evaluation changes were very similar to those on which teachers have been evaluated previously. Perhaps the inclusion of the terminology “a wide range of student achievement assessments” mitigates the severity of the first consideration. Essentially, this means that academic gains can be measured through the use of assessments other than high-stakes standardized test scores. To this end, the Act provided that a teacher receiving an unsatisfactory evaluation would not be entitled to increased state salary

based on credit for years of experience. Additionally, teachers receiving two unsatisfactory annual performance evaluations in the previous five-year period would not be re-certified until the perceived deficiency was remediated. Of interest to the researcher is how the principals who execute these high stakes evaluations, perceived evaluation and supervision. Specifically, the researcher examined the perspectives of three rural middle school principals as the perspectives related to supervision and evaluation. How the principals' perspectives translated into administrative practice was also of importance.

#### *Middle School Program Changes in Georgia*

With the elimination of the middle school grants, the funding weights of Georgia's Middle School Incentive Program changed. Not only did the funding change, but also the organization of instruction changed as well. Beginning with the 2001-2002 school term, middle school schedules must provide a minimum of five hours of instruction in Language Arts, mathematics, science social studies, and other academic subjects as mandated by the State Board of Education. This represents an additional one-half hour of academic instruction daily. The Act provides that schools with a combined total of 65 % scoring "good" or "very good" in the previous school year on the Middle Grades Writing Assessment, and at the 65<sup>th</sup> percentile or above on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills will be allowed a school day that includes a minimum of 4 ½ hours of instruction in the core areas. The additional one-half hour of instruction is mandated for those schools whose scores are below the standards.

Additionally, students who do not perform at grade level (as defined by the OEA) will receive 30 minutes of additional academic classes in the place of exploratory classes



known now as Connections courses. The intent of this measure was to bring those students to grade level performance. After the implementation of the accountability system, for any middle school scoring an A or B on the “absolute standard,” the local board is only required to have 4 ½ hours of academic instruction. Because conceivably, some school systems would have a combination of schools that meet standards and those that do not, scheduling the school day becomes problematic. Scheduling different hours for different middle schools may create great difficulty with the transportation schedule and ill will from parents of students who attend either longer or shorter school days.

A hallmark of the middle school concept is the common planning time that interdisciplinary teams share. Previously, the state funded a minimum of 85 minutes for purpose of providing common planning time; however, beginning with the 2001-2002 school term, the state funded a minimum of 55 minutes of common planning time. While some more affluent systems would be financially able to fund the 30 minutes not funded by the state, other systems would be unable to do so. Consequently, interdisciplinary teams in those systems would be afforded only 55 minutes of interdisciplinary planning time. Past practices included teams using the time that students attend exploratory classes for interdisciplinary planning. Students would attend one exploratory class for a period of 40 to 45 minutes, and then would attend another exploratory class for the remaining 40 to 45 minutes. With only 55 state funded minutes, students (even those scoring at or above grade level) would have the opportunity for only one 55-minute exploratory course. The difficulty with scheduling may cause some middle schools to schedule the planning periods independent of one another. If this holds true, then the

middle school concept would be, based on the best practices advocated in the literature, jeopardized.

Not only is the middle school concept jeopardized by the curtailing of flexible scheduling, but also the middle school concept is further jeopardized by the possible elimination of exploratory classes. If only those students who score at or above grade level are able to enroll in exploratory classes such as band, chorus, technological exploration, art, or consumer science, to name a few, then an entire segment of the middle school population will be curtailed from enrolling in these classes. As noble as it seems to provide 30 additional minutes of academic instruction for students who score below the defined standards, it may not be developmentally appropriate to deny these students the opportunity to participate in exploratory classes that may help define the remainder of their academic careers.

Because *A Plus* so specifically mandates local behavior, it requires principals and other administrators to examine their practices and to supervise these changes in the education system. Different kinds of changes require different types of strategies. Increased skill in leadership is demanded of principals to effectively lead middle schools.

### Middle School Principals

The work of the middle school principal has become a hybrid of school manager and instructional leader. Curriculum development and instructional supervision are commonly accepted as appropriate work for principals (Valentine, Clark, Irvin, Keefe, & Melton, 1993). Farmer, Gould, Herring, Linn, and Theobald (1995) promoted that the middle school principal's role was to ensure that the curriculum was differentiated

according to the distinct needs and characteristics of middle school students; moreover, they believed that the middle school principal must also assure the staff of their worth by offering time and assistance when needed.

In his review of the evolution of middle schools during the last 30 years, George (2000) noted the specific changes in the leadership of middle schools. Middle school principals were more racially diverse and females composed a larger percentage of the total number of principals than in earlier years. George also found that middle school principals believed in more shared decision-making. Florida Governor Jeb Bush's A+ Program has compelled middle school principals to place added emphasis on academic achievement. According to the research of George, the question of finding a new generation of effective middle school leaders still remains a top priority for school systems.

Hallinger and Heck (1996) conducted a review of empirical research regarding the principal's role in school effectiveness from 1980 to 1995. The authors reviewed 40 studies from those published in blind-refereed journals to those published in chapters of books. The studies were examined both for methodological integrity as well as the findings. A majority of the quantitative studies focused on the effects of leadership. Findings supported the theory that principal leadership can make a difference in student learning.

Pagano (1989) conducted a quantitative study that utilized a sample of 116 middle school teachers from 40 randomly selected Pennsylvania middle schools. Through a survey, teachers assessed the leadership style of the principal. The instrument provided data regarding two different components of leadership style—concern for production and

concern for people. Pagano (1989) found in schools where the middle school concept was implemented, that teachers perceived more freedom to make decisions and a greater willingness of the principal to make changes.

Fuller (1997) conducted a two-part qualitative multi-case study to acquire an understanding of principals' leadership behaviors and their use of change strategies as they implemented the middle school concept in newly constructed buildings. In the first phase of the study, one recently opened, newly constructed middle school site was selected. Data were collected from the principal, team leaders, media specialist, special education instructor, exploratory teachers, parents and a school board member of the Nebraska middle school. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and documents and archival records were examined. In the second phase of data collection, telephone interviews were conducted with six additional principals of newly constructed middle schools in both the United States and in Canada. Fuller found that middle school principals, who educated their faculties about middle school philosophy and created a collaborative environment, were perceived as having greater effectiveness as instructional leaders.

Burget (2000) called for middle school principals to make a commitment to strong professional development programs for their teachers. Not only should middle school principals commit to strong professional development for teachers, but they should also provide opportunities for these experiences to occur. Ideally, middle level principals should create ways for teachers to grow professionally. This transforms the leadership role of middle level principals from that of building manager to instructional leader and staff developer.

Doud and Keller (1998) reported that results from a 1998 study commissioned by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), which supported the belief that there needs to be a shift of responsibilities for both elementary and middle school principals. The shift was most evident to the extent to which principals collaborated with teachers on the selection of new teachers, in supervision and evaluation of school staff, and in the development and evaluation of the instructional program. In response to Doud and Keller's (1998) survey, most principals gave staff supervision and staff contact their highest priority, followed by student discipline/management and interaction with students.

Garvin (1986) researched characteristics of leaders of instructionally effective middle schools. He found that effective middle school leaders had strong human relations skills, management skills, and technical skills. Essentially, these principals were able to work effectively with others, organize time, human and other resources, and they were knowledgeable of pedagogy appropriate for middle school learners.

Urdu, Midgley, and Wood (1995), in a study of issues in middle school reform, noted a distinct difference between the elementary and middle school leaders that were studied. At the elementary level, they found the principal to be in charge of change and reform, while at the middle school level, both the principal and the assistant principal and team/department leaders were in control of change and reform. For both elementary and middle school principals, the degree to which principals were involved in planning for change either inhibited or enhanced the process of change, according to the 1995 survey results of Urdu, et al.

Clark and Clark (2000) listed several suggestions for leaders to affect successful change. Leaders of successful programs should:

1. Work with faculty, students, and parents in defining a clear vision for the school.
2. Define the quality of student work.
3. Collaborate with teachers, parents, and central office administration in developing, implementing, and maintaining curriculum structures and instruction approaches that are developmentally appropriate.
4. Monitor all facets of the school program (student learning; curriculum implementation; instructional delivery)
5. Develop effective processes and procedures for assessing student learning and school progress.
6. Support ongoing professional development that is site-specific and relevant to program development.
7. Develop positive supportive relationships with teachers, students, parents, central office administration, and community members.
8. Build effective interpersonal and communication skills. (2000, p. 10)

In reference to leadership, Sergiovanni (1999) held that personality and leadership style are not as important as “substance” factors (p. 96); however, these factors are those most often discussed in the literature, and these factors are most often sought when considering candidates for the principalship. While he did not define “substance,” Sergiovanni considered leadership style to be a generic characteristic. Further, Sergiovanni suggested that:

At root, school leadership is about connecting people morally to each other and to their work. The work of leadership involves developing shared purposes, beliefs, values, and conceptions themed to teaching and learning, community building, collegiality, character development, and other school issues and concerns. (1999, p. 96)

Gonzales and Short (1996) conducted a study that investigated the relationship between principal use of power and teacher empowerment. The study was conducted in an urban school district in the south and consisted of 301 teachers from six elementary, five middle, and three high schools in Florida. Data were analyzed quantitatively.

According to the analysis, empowered teachers perceived principals to use expert power, referent power, and reward power with expert power being the most often used. Principals as experts offer the most potential for influencing teachers for school improvement.

Sergiovanni (1999) gave elementary and middle school principals high marks for attempting to base their leadership on the expert power, referent power, and reward power. He described transformational leadership as purposeful leadership.

Transformative leaders distribute power among others and know the difference between “power over” and “power to.” “Power over” places emphasis on controlling people and events and is concerned with dominance, control, and hierarchy. “Power to” is less concerned with what people are doing and more concerned with what they are accomplishing. Transformative leaders concern themselves with how the power of leadership can help people become more successful and to accomplish the things that they think are important.

Starratt (1995) defined transformational leadership as leadership concerned with moral values such as honesty, fairness, loyalty, integrity, and responsibility.

Transformational leadership seeks to elevate people’s views beyond self-interest to a joint effort on behalf of common aims. Starratt believed that transforming leadership shifts the emphasis from self-centered ones to “higher, altruistic beliefs, attitudes, and values” (p. 110). Consequently, Starratt prescribed transformational leadership for the implementation of school reform, defining those challenges that face administrators during reform as challenges to a democratic governance of the school system.

Blase, Blase, Anderson, and Dungan (1995) in a book based on an in-depth study of eight democratic principals, revealed that the principals exhibited leadership styles that utilized a mix of power-over and power-with approaches. Blase et al. equate power-with leadership with power-through leadership, and they asserted, “In both cases, administrators facilitate the development of collegial and reciprocal norms” (p. 15). Even though dialogue with teachers is encouraged, this type of dialogue occurs to a lesser extent in a power-through versus power-with approaches to leadership.

Cheng (1997) investigated the relationship between leadership style and organizational process in Hong Kong secondary schools. The research subjects were 64 secondary schools in Hong Kong. In each school, 10 teachers were chosen randomly to complete one of two sets of instruments. Data were analyzed quantitatively. Cheng found that “leadership style of the principal is a critical indicator of the organizational process of a school” (p. 31). After the data analysis was completed, a follow-up case study was conducted. In interviews with teachers from two sample schools, teachers revealed that the principal was playing a salient role in their professional development and the shaping of school climate. Additionally, the case study results supported the main study finding that there was a strong relationship of leadership style to perceived organizational effectiveness.

Noting a dearth of research investigating how the effects of principal leadership differ in elementary and secondary schools, Heck and Marcoulides (1993) conducted a study that focused on this difference. The sample included all public schools in California that had achieved above or below comparison criteria for three consecutive years as measured by the *California Assessment Program* (CAP). Heck and Marcoulides



studied specific instructional leadership behaviors. They found that the effects of principal instructional leadership on student outcomes at both levels were not strong, but were for the most part, positive.

In a follow-up study with participants from an original study that focused on selection of members of a change team, Carr (1997) investigated four middle schools. The schools, located in a major midwestern city, were selected based on their demographics and diversity and the perceived leadership style of their principals. While the research focused primarily on issues of membership, it revealed some dimensions of principal leadership. Carr analyzed data generated from observation notes and parental, staff, and principal interviews to determine the principals' leadership styles. While Carr admitted that causal analyses could not be drawn between leadership style and community empowerment, she listed some effects that the research suggested:

1. Administrators should be aware of their individual leadership style and its effects on the behavior of team members.
2. Administrators who wish to foster healthy, empowered involvement in schools should move toward a transformational leadership style.
3. Administrators should guard against subtle obstacles to open stakeholder involvement.
4. Principals should model the sorts of behaviors they wish their group to emulate. (p. 154)

#### Supervision versus Evaluation

One controversial discussion among educators and scholars is the difference between supervision and evaluation. While the terms are used synonymously, scholars of supervision (Glatthorn, 1997; Natriello, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1987; Zepeda & Ponticell, 1998) regard the two as different in both practice and purpose. Sergiovanni (1987) differentiated supervision from evaluation in this manner:

Supervision is a process inclusive of, but broader than, evaluation. In its general sense, supervision refers to a set of responsibilities and activities designed to promote instructional improvement in schools. General supervision refers to activities that are related to instructional improvement and teacher growth occurring within the broad context of schooling. (1987, p. 151)

Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (1998) make three propositions regarding supervision:

1. Supervision cannot rely on the existing work environment of schools to stimulate instructional improvement.
2. Supervisors cannot assume that teachers will be reflective, autonomous, and responsible for their own development.
3. Supervisors who hold formal leadership roles will have to redefine their responsibilities—from controllers of teachers' instruction to involvers of teachers in decisions about school instruction. (1998, p. 29)

Regarding the purposes of evaluation, Glickman, et al. (1998) purport that there are two broad purposes of evaluation. Formative evaluation is intended to improve a program and is ongoing throughout the program. Summative evaluation makes definitive judgments about the value of a program and may be the basis for decisions about the worth of a program. The purposes may not be exclusive of each other.

While an obvious purpose of supervision is to improve teacher competency and foster teacher growth, Natriello (1990) described some intended and unintended outcomes. The purposes of evaluation constitute the reasons why evaluation is initiated, while the effects are the results of the process. Natriello stated that evaluation could be used to control or influence performance of personnel in particular positions (such as teachers), to control movement into or out of positions, or to “legitimate the organizational control system itself” (p. 37).

According to Calabrese and Zepeda (1997), “Change represents going from the safety of the known to the insecurity of the unknown” (p. 109). Supervisors are agents of change and are challenged to create environments where positive change thrives. Even positive change becomes a source of stress and resistance. Mandated change, which may not be perceived as positive, is a source of stress and resistance as well.

Glatthorn (1997) coined the term “differentiated supervision” (p. 3) that supports teachers by empowering them through opportunity to select the kinds of supervisory services, staff development, and the types of evaluative services they receive. Glatthorn related that differentiated supervision fosters collegiality and collaboration. Ideally, principals monitor the process. A very delicate balance between supervision and evaluation is present. However, *A Plus* requires that principals disturb the balance by performing more evaluation than supervision.

Acheson and Gall (1994) highlight the conflict between evaluation and supervision when they relate:

One of the most persistent problems in supervision is the dilemma between (1) evaluating a teacher in order to make decisions about retention, promotion, and tenure, and (2) working with the teacher as a friendly critic or colleague to help develop skills the teacher wants to use and to expand the repertoire of strategies that can be employed. (p. 209)

Admitting an enduring struggle with the dynamics described above, Acheson and Gall argue that supervision and evaluation are ultimately for the same purposes: “the improvement of instruction” (p. 48). Finally, Acheson and Gall (1994) suggest that it would be best to separate the role of supervisor or helpful colleague from the role of evaluator.

In Georgia's middle schools, especially rural middle schools, the availability of personnel prevents separating the supervisor's role from the evaluator's role. More often than not, the principal and or his/her designee serve in both capacities. Georgia's middle school principals are mandated to be staff developers, supervisors, and evaluators. Barth (quoted in Acheson and Gall, 1994) "emphasized the need for interacting with teachers in ways that encourage growth rather than merely force compliance (p. 214). Finally, Sergiovanni and Starratt (1993) proposed that learning communities are created when moral authority is the primary source for supervisory practice. The establishment of learning communities is an important part of the *Turning Points* model of middle school reform.

### Evaluation and Supervision

It would seem that teacher evaluation has evolved through an extremely circuitous process: from accountability for standardization, to collegial models, and back to accountability and improved teacher performance. The model that administrators utilize to evaluate teachers seems largely dependent on the perceived purposes of evaluation.

There exists a plethora of studies and publications regarding teacher evaluation. In a review of teacher evaluation literature, Darling-Hammond, Wise, and Pease (1983) divided their findings into two distinct streams of research. The first was research on effectiveness of teaching, its measurement, and the development of models for evaluation. The second area consists of organizational and implementation research.

Darling-Hammond (1986) also illustrated the relationship between the concept of teachers' work and evaluation approaches by distinguishing between bureaucratic and professional concepts of teaching:

The bureaucratic conception of teaching implies that administrators and specialist plan curriculum, and teachers implement a curriculum planned for them. Teachers' work is supervised by superiors whose job it is to make sure that teachers implement the curriculum and procedures of the school district. In a more professional conception of teaching, teachers plan, conduct, and evaluate their work both individually and collectively. Teachers analyze the needs of their students, assess the resources available, take the district's goals into account, and decide on their instructional strategies. Evaluation of teaching is conducted largely to ensure that proper standards of practice are being employed. (p. 532)

Many current teacher evaluation processes usually consist of "a principals' report of teacher performance, usually recorded on a checklist form, and sometimes accompanied by a brief meeting" (Peterson, 2000, p. 18). This description is apt for the model used in Georgia today. Peterson (2000) also noted that serious flaws exist with the approach, and recalled that 70 years of research shows that principals' ratings do not work well.

Additionally, Peterson (2000) suggested 12 new directions for teacher evaluation that will bring better results:

1. Emphasis of the function of teacher evaluation should be to seek out, document, and acknowledge the good teaching that already exists.
2. Use good reasons to evaluate.
3. Place the teacher at the center of evaluation activity.
4. Use more than one person to judge teacher quality and performance.
5. Limit administrator judgment role in teacher evaluation.
6. Use multiple data sources to inform judgments about teacher quality.
7. When possible, include actual pupil achievement data.
8. Use variable data sources to inform judgments.
9. Spend the time and other resources needed to recognize good teaching.
10. Use research on teacher evaluation correctly.
11. Attend to the sociology of teacher evaluation.
12. Use the results of teacher evaluation to encourage personal professional dossier, publicize aggregated results, and support teacher promotion systems. (pp. 4-12)

Clearly, Peterson perceived evaluation as being integral to educational reform and student achievement. He recommended that educators "quickly adopt these directions—or

continue to have evaluation not taken seriously, miss examining what teachers actually do, fail to address teacher uncertainty and isolation, and suffer a blind spot in educational reform” (p. 13).

A dichotomy, and as Acheson and Gall (1994) proposed, a “tension” (p. 48) exists between accountability and professional growth. Acheson and Gall (1994) believed that the goal of clinical supervision was to utilize a supervisory style that was “more responsive to their [teachers] concerns and aspirations” (p. 7). They further suggested that clinical supervision “is the heart of a good teacher evaluation system” (p. 60). Time and personnel constraints could make clinical supervision problematic for principals, especially rural principals.

The role of the supervisor is a very complex one, and Wiles and Bondi (1996) listed several roles that require competence:

*Supervisors are developers of people.* Supervisors need to be sensitive to the fact that schools are diverse learning communities.

*Supervisors are curriculum developers.* Curriculum development is a cycle that begins with clarifying goals and objectives and ends with the evaluation of the curriculum effort.

*Supervisors are instructional specialists.* The instructional role of supervision has three dimensions: research, communication, and teaching.

*Supervisors are human relations workers.* Multiple human relations skills are called for in the daily interaction with diverse groups.

*Supervisors are staff developers.* Planning staff development is a major method of improving instruction.

*Supervisors are administrators.* Administrators need a very specialized set of skills.

*Supervisors are managers of change.* Systemic reform movements require supervisors to manage and implement change.

*Supervisors are evaluators.* The evaluative role is constant.  
(1996, pp. 18-22, emphasis in the original)

“Staff development is not an event” and Sullivan (1997) regarded staff development as a part of supervision and a way in which the intents of supervision could

be accomplished (p. 160). Even though staff development has emerged as a field in and of itself, staff development and supervision share goals and delivery systems. Sullivan (1997) suggested that the two systems should overlap as local preferences and more importantly, local needs dictate.

The link between supervision and staff development was also elucidated by DuFour (1991). The link offered by DuFour (1991) involved teachers acquiring new skills and understandings through staff development and applying and refining the skills through clinical supervision. Central to the integration of staff development and clinical supervision are the “assumptions and processes which guide principals in their approach to supervision” (p. 74).

Zepeda (1999) described the peer-coaching model of staff development as an affirmation of clinical models of supervision. This model would require coaches to gain certain skills in the following areas:

1. Human relations and communication;
2. Clinical supervisory processes: pre-observation, observation, and post-observation techniques; and,
3. The uses of data collection instruments. (p. 110)

This particular model of staff development would place the responsibility of supervision on someone other than the principal.

Cramer and Koskela (1994) conducted a study of 315 Wisconsin middle and junior high schools regarding the use of cycles of clinical supervision as a component of staff development in their buildings. They found that the use of clinical supervision was mandatory in some districts and that the building administrators operated the programs. Only one school reported that staff development was staff operated. However, in a significant number of schools, teachers were trained in clinical supervision.

## Chapter Summary

Middle schools have had, at best, a tumultuous history. Evolving from the old junior high school model, numerous reform movements were directed toward middle schools. Specifically, middle students (transescents), middle school teachers, and administrators are much studied. Rural schools, especially middle schools, are not afforded similar celebrity. Rural school districts experience numerous constraints, especially under legislated mandates. High stakes testing, which tests knowledge not gained in school (experiential knowledge), is often a bane to rural middle school students. Georgia legislators, in enacting the *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000* exercised the belief that their actions were in the best interests of Georgia's students. It is the responsibility of middle school leaders, most often principals, to facilitate the changes mandated by *A Plus*. Even though principals are mandated to evaluate, they must still supervise teachers for the improvement of teaching and learning in Georgia's classrooms. A study that examines the evaluative and supervisory perception of rural middle school principals is of importance in light of the provisions of *A Plus*.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of three rural middle school principals who, by state statute, must implement the teacher evaluation provisions of Georgia's *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000* as they provide for the supervision of teachers. The principal or the principal's designee is the individual responsible for the supervision and evaluation of all certified staff. In light of the provisions of the *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*, this study examined the supervisory and evaluative perspectives of three middle school principals in rural Georgia as they implemented the provisions of the statute. Research has been conducted to determine the effects of mandated reform on administrative practices and styles; however, little of this research has specifically focused on principals of rural schools.

A qualitative case study was conducted to gain an understanding of the supervisory and evaluative perspectives of three rural middle school principals. During a six-month period, interviews were conducted with three rural middle school principals in three different school systems. Artifacts were collected from each school, and the researcher wrote extensive fieldnotes.

Chapter three includes (a) the design, (b) the data sources, (c) data collection procedures, and, (d) data analysis methods.

## Rationale for Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative methodology was well-suited for this study because the purpose of this research was to examine, understand, and describe the perspectives of three rural middle school principals as they implemented Georgia's *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*. Bogdan and Taylor (1975) suggested that "qualitative methodologies refer to research procedures which produce descriptive data: people's own written or spoken words and observable behavior" (p. 4). Qualitative research allows the researcher to retain the "humanness" of the participants. Rather than reducing the participants to statistics and disaggregated data, qualitative methodologies allow the researcher to keep in mind the inherent subjectivity of human behavior.

Qualitative methodologies also allow the researcher to construct multiple realities, which surround a phenomenon. Rather than a search for one objective truth, qualitative research seeks understanding (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher's search to understand the "hows" and "whys" associated with the *A Plus* mandate as three rural middle school principals implemented the law, dictates qualitative methodology and the theoretical construct, symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969).

### *Symbolic Interactionism*

Symbolic interactionism was the theoretical framework that guided this study. The term was first used by Blumer (1969) to label a particular brand of sociological thought that drew primarily from the work of George Herbert Mead and John Dewey. Blumer believed that symbolic interactionism rests upon three assumptions that assert that:

1. Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them.
2. The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows.
3. The meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters.

Symbolic interactionism is set apart from similar approaches to sociological research by contrasting the source of meaning for the researcher in that the meaning “of a thing for a person grows out of the ways in which other persons act toward the person with regard to the thing” (p. 4). That is, from one person's perspective, a cinderblock may be a hollow rectangular building block made of cement and coal cinders. To another person, it may be one leg of a bookcase, and to still another person, it may be a support for a barbeque grill. Each individual brings to the cinderblock different experiences and thus different perspectives.

Perspectives are made up of words and an observer uses words to make sense out of situations. Perspectives should not be thought of as true or false or as good or bad, as one person's perspective on a given event or process may change as the person's angle in relation to the events change. Individuals have many perspectives that arise in interaction and are role related. Symbols may be human acts, physical objects, or words. Symbols have meaning to humans because they can be described using words. Perspectives are a set of symbols. The data collection strategies (semi-structured interview and document analysis) allowed the researcher to explore meaning from the perspectives of the participants and practice as reported by the participants and verified by document analysis. The symbolic interactionist approach suggests that standards and rules, such as those that govern the evaluation and supervision of teachers, are important in understanding behavior as they are defined and used in specific situations.

Denzin (1969) described five methodological assumptions of research based on a symbolic interactionism framework.

1. The researcher must examine both covert and overt forms of behavior. Through the participant interviews and document analysis, the researcher attempted to examine the principals' perspectives regarding evaluation and supervision, and the manner in which the principals translated the beliefs into practice.
2. The researcher must examine behavior from the perspective of those being studied and to describe the process of shifting meanings of that behavior.
3. The researcher must link the subjects' symbols and meanings to the social circles and relationships that furnish those perspectives. This suggests a process wherein the researcher described the meanings evaluation and supervision hold for the participants and how these perspectives interacted with practice.
4. The researcher must consider the situational aspects of human conduct. Of concern are the meanings attached to a behavior in a particular situation or environment that may influence the behavior in another situation. The principals in this study operated in small and rural environments. The researcher attempted to examine how ruralness affected meaning and practice.
5. The research strategies reflect both the stability and the dynamics of group life. (p. 51)

The researcher examined the principals' perspectives as they process the changes in evaluation and supervision as prescribed by the *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*.

The approach of symbolic interactionism focuses on a point of view or perspective. Symbolic interactionism places observers at differing angles in relation to events. Consequently, observers are influenced by the angle at which they see events.

The task of this researcher was to explore the perspectives of three rural middle school principals as they implement evaluation and supervision according to the Georgia's *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*. Since one person cannot see all aspects of a situation at the same time, it is practical for the individual to isolate particular aspects.

This study explored the meanings or perspectives that evaluation and supervision held for

the participants or “actors,” and examined how these perspectives translated into practice for them, three rural middle school principals.

### The Design

The selection of a case study design was determined by the research questions posed in this study. Yin (1984) suggested that questions that seek to determine “how and why” could best be investigated utilizing a case study method. This study examined the perspectives of three rural middle school principals as they implemented the supervisory and evaluative provisions of *Georgia’s A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*.

Qualitative case studies are prevalent throughout the field of education, and case studies of students, programs, schools, innovations, teachers, and policies are common (Merriam, 1998). Yin (1994) defined case study as a research process, while Stake (1995) defined case study by focusing on the case, and Wolcott (1992) defined the case study as “an end-product of field-oriented research” (p. 36). Further, Merriam (1998) conceived the case as what can be “fenced in” to study (p. 27). Thus, the case becomes a bounded system or entity such as a student, a teacher, a principal, or a school. The three rural middle school principals whose perspectives were examined for this study constituted three separate cases as well as one bounded case.

Merriam (1998) also suggested that if what one is studying cannot be “intrinsically bounded, it is not a case” (p. 27) and that one way of assessing a topic is to consider how finite the data collection would be in terms of the number of participants and the amount of time spent examining the subject. For this study, the researcher chose three participants, all principals of rural middle schools. The researcher conducted 3 interviews with each of the 3 participants for a totaling approximately 25 hours. The 3-

interview construct enabled the researcher to study the participants in more depth and detail over a 7-month period (2001-2002).

Yin (1994) observed that case study design is well suited to instances in which it is impossible to separate the phenomenon's variables from their context. Principals' supervisory and evaluative perspectives are difficult to separate from the context of school reform. The perspectives of principals throughout the state of Georgia supervision and evaluation have direct bearing on the success or failure on Georgia's educational reform efforts. The goal of this research was not to test a hypothesis regarding the phenomenon, but to understand, describe, and interpret the phenomenon—the perspectives of three rural middle school principals as they implement Georgia's *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*.

Additionally, Bogdan and Biklen (1992) asserted that generally, the design of a case study is “best represented by a funnel” (p. 62). The beginning of the case study is the wide end of the funnel that narrows as the researcher looks for possible places and people that might be sources of data. For this researcher, the work began by browsing the Georgia Department of Education's website to skim data from a number of schools that classified themselves as rural. Then the researcher browsed specific school websites for information such as enrollment and principal's name. Finally, the researcher chose five possible sites within two hours of the researcher's residence. Two sites were eliminated because the principals were in their first year as principals. This was determined as a factor, which would limit the comparisons the participants would be able to make regarding changes since the enactment of *A Plus*. The final sites were chosen because: 1) the researcher was previously employed in the school, but the present principal was

not the employing principal; 2) the school was in close proximity to the researcher's former residence; and, 3) the school was in close proximity to the researcher's present residence. As the researcher collects data, reviews, and explores them, the funnel narrows even more.

Case study research derived from multiple data sources and sites are variously termed collective case studies (Stake, 1995), cross-case studies, multi-case or multi-site studies, or comparative case studies (Merriam, 1998). Data were collected from three different middle school principals at three similar rural middle schools. Cross-case analysis was utilized to examine data. Lawrence-Lightfoot's (1983) study of six good high schools, a seminal example of a collective case study, provided a model of a cross-case study.

Findings from this study were presented as three individual cases, and the themes that emerged from each of the three interviews were noted. Additionally, a cross-case analysis was conducted for the purpose of noting common themes. Even though the primary goal of this study was to understand and describe perspectives, the implications from the data may serve to inform the practices of other rural middle school principals and to assist policy makers in their understanding of reform movements as they evolve in rural middle school settings.

### Design of the Study

Three interviews were conducted with three rural middle school principals from the state of Georgia. A total of nine interviews were conducted. Interviews were audiotape-recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Notes taken during the interviews and the contents of the transcripts provided the content for subsequent interviews.

Patton (1980) contended that the purpose of interviewing,

Is to find out what is in and on someone else's mind. The purpose of open-ended interviewing is *not* (emphasis in the original) to put things in someone's mind but rather to access the perspective of the person being interviewed. (p.196)

Semi-structured interview protocols were used for this study (See Appendix F).

Participants were asked questions such as "How do you evaluate teachers?" "What do you think supervision is?" and "How has implementation of *A Plus* affected your role as supervisor?" Bogdan and Biklen (1992) suggested that a single study might employ different types of interviews. In the beginning stages of this study, the open-ended and semi-structured interview allowed the researcher to get a "general understanding of a range of perspectives on a topic" (p. 97). For example, open-ended questions included, "How are you going to utilize test scores with say for instance, band or chorus?" "Tell me what you know about the evaluative mandates of the *A Plus Reform Act*." "In regard to *A Plus*, what is a major source of stress for you?"

After the initial interview, a more structured interview was conducted in order to focus on topics that emerged during the initial interview. For example, to gain understanding about how staff development was conducted at the three schools, the researcher asked, "How are staff development opportunities determined at your school?" An interim analysis of the principals' responses to each interview yielded additional questions, which required both explanations and examples. For instance, a principal who was concerned that "it [*A Plus*] does not take into account the different geographical regions of the schools" was asked to give examples of what he meant by "different geographical regions."



A total of nine semi-structured interviews were conducted to examine the middle school principals' supervisory and evaluative perspectives in light of the *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) contended that “when the interviewer controls the content too rigidly, when the subject cannot tell his or her story personally, in his or her words, the interview falls out of the qualitative range of interviewing” (p. 136). Figure 1 summarizes the research design.

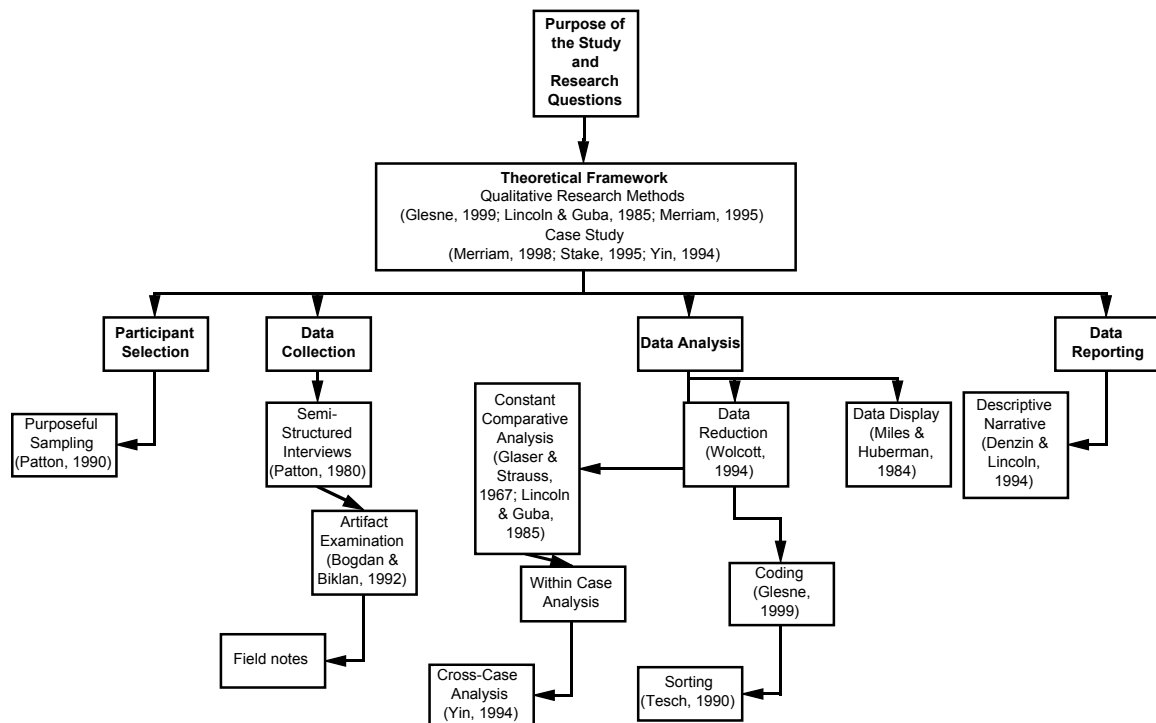


Figure 1. Summary of research design

## Data Sources

For this study, participants were “purposefully” selected (Patton, 1980, p. 100). The participants were three rural middle school principals who were implementing the mandates of *Georgia’s A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*. Patton (1980) indicated that purposeful sampling was useful when “one wants to learn something and come to understand something about certain select cases without needing to generalize to all such

cases” (p. 100). The researcher traveled to three sites on three occasions to interview participants. A total of nine interviews were conducted utilizing a semi-structured interview protocol (See Appendix F).

LeCompte and Preissle (1993) use the term criterion-based selection as opposed to the term purposeful sampling. Further, LeCompte and Preissle (1993) suggested that in criterion-based selection, researchers “create a list of the attributes essential” to the study and then “proceed to find or locate a unit matching the list” (p. 70). The criteria used for the selection of the three rural middle school principals were as follows:

1. The participants were principals in the state of Georgia.
2. The participants were current principals of middle schools, and they had two or more years of administrative experience in their present schools.
3. The participants were principals of middle schools that were located in districts that have a total enrollment of less than 5,000 students.
4. The participants were principals of middle schools that were located 60 or more miles away from a major metropolitan area.

Figure 2 summarizes the profiles of the school districts involved in the study, while Figure 3 profiles the middle schools.

The principals of Heritage Middle School, a rural middle school in southwest Georgia, Manning Middle School in South Georgia, and Boyd Middle School in Central Georgia were chosen. Figure 4 profiles the principals’ educational careers. Ease of entrée for the researcher provided another purpose for the specific selections in that the sites of the two of the middle schools were no more than two hours away from the

School District	Total Enrollment	Number of Miles from Major Metropolitan Area	Number of Teachers
Manning County	2800	65	195
Heritage County	4800	65	382
Byrd County	3200	60	202

Figure 2. Profiles of school districts.

	Enrollment	Certified Staff	Assistant Principals	Instructional Lead Teachers	Interdisciplinary Teams	Connections Teachers
Manning Middle School	591	43	1 ½	0	0	9
Heritage Middle School	650	49	1	0	8	7
Boyd Middle School	876	57	2	0	4	9

Figure 3. Profiles of middle schools

Principal	Number of Years As A Teacher	Number of Years As a Principal
Betty	19 years	7 years
Mark	5 years	6 years
Jasmine	19 years	8 years

Figure 4. Principals' educational careers.

researcher's residence. The remaining middle school was 30 minutes away from the researcher's former residence.

### Data Collection Procedures

The three principals were asked to participate in the study first through contact by electronic mail, then by letters sent by postal mail (See Appendix B). A sample letter of authorization from the participants' supervisors appears in Appendix C. The researcher gave assurances to each principal that their names, the names of their districts, and of their schools would remain confidential. The researcher and the participants developed pseudonyms to assure anonymity. Participants were asked to sign two Participant Consent Forms (See Appendix D). One copy was given to the participant, and the other copy was retained for the researcher's records. A demographic questionnaire was distributed to the participants prior to the initial interviews (See Appendix E). Each participant was interviewed on three different occasions (See Appendix F). Initial interviews were conducted in late October, with additional interviews conducted in December and January.

Each semi-structured interview was audiotape recorded to ensure accuracy of data reports (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Audiotapes were transcribed after each interview. Additionally, the researcher wrote fieldnotes. "Fieldnotes are the written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data in a qualitative study" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 74).

In addition to semi-structured interviews, artifacts were collected from each principal. Samples of classroom observation forms, memoranda, district profiles, district

report cards (prepared by the Georgia Department of Education), faculty handbooks, and school newsletters were collected to corroborate participants' self-reports regarding the supervision and evaluation of teachers. Glesne (1999) suggested that artifacts "provide historical and contextual dimensions" (p. 59) to a researchers' observations and interviews. The artifacts collected in this study served to give the researcher additional insight about the perspectives of the three rural middle school principals and to give the researcher additional insight into the context in which the principals worked.

### Data Analysis

According to Merriam (1998) case study analysis has as its goal the communication of understanding, arrived at through interviews, observations, document analyses, and other qualitative means. Because data derived from case study research is unique in view of other types of qualitative research, analysis of the data adopts and adapts to differing formats. In this study of three rural middle school principals, two stages of analyses were conducted: within-case analysis and cross-case analysis.

Within-case analysis was performed utilizing the data sets derived from each of the three principals. Each case was treated as a comprehensive, contextual unit. Themes that emerged from each interview were noted and summarized to facilitate the within-case analyses. After the within-case analyses were completed, cross-case analysis began. Analyses were conducted during the data collection phase of the study and between interviews. In cross-case analysis, the researcher attempts "to build a general explanation that fits each of the individual cases, even though the cases will vary in their details" (Yin, 1994, p. 112). Analyzing the data in this manner led to the generation of categories

and then themes. Figure 5 summarizes the categories, while Figure 6 summarizes the themes.

<b>How principals evaluate teachers</b>	<b>How principals supervise teachers</b>	<b>How principals comply with the law</b>	<b>How principals relate to teachers</b>	<b>How principals adapt to change</b>
INS= Instruments	EMP= Empowerment	ACCT= Accountability	COM= Compliance	STRSS= Stress
OBS= Observations	OBS= Observations	T= Standardized tests	ACT= Action plans	PPW= Increased paperwork
	SD= Staff Development	EVAL= Evaluations	EMP= Empowerment	TIME= Time restraints
		MAN= Mandates	CON= Consensus	
		INT= Interpretation		
		GR= Grades		
		SCH= Scheduling		
		GEO= Geographical differences		

*Figure 5. Summary of Categories.*

Miles and Huberman (1994) believed that data analysis included three interrelated processes: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. The analysis of data collected for this study utilized each of the three processes, and data were analyzed after each interview and after each round of interviews.

## Data Reduction

Data were reduced by transcribing and coding audio tape recordings. Wolcott (1994) referred to the process of data reduction as “breaking down the elements until there are small enough units to invite rudimentary analysis” or “chunking it out” (p. 30).

<b>Betty (Themes)</b>	<b>Mark (Themes)</b>	<b>Jasmine (Themes)</b>
All teacher must have standardized test results attached to their evaluation reports.	All teacher must have standardized test results attached to their evaluation reports.	All teacher must have standardized test results attached to their evaluation reports.
It is impossible to attach standardized test results to the evaluation reports of Connections teachers.	It is unfair to attach standardized test results to the evaluation reports of Connections teachers.	It is possible to attach standardized test results to the evaluation reports of Connections teachers.
Supervision consists of classroom visits and observations.	Supervision consists of classroom visits and observations.	Supervision consists of classroom visits, observation, staff development, and mentoring.
Staff development is a component of teacher evaluation as prescribed by <i>A Plus</i> .		Staff development is a component of teacher evaluation as prescribed by <i>A Plus</i> .
Evaluative mandates of <i>A Plus</i> are not supported by appropriate staff development funding.	Evaluative mandates of <i>A Plus</i> are not supported by appropriate staff development funding.	Evaluative mandates of <i>A Plus</i> are not supported by appropriate staff development funding.
Staff development opportunities are based on teacher needs.	Staff development opportunities are based on teacher needs.	Staff development opportunities are based on school and school system goals.
		Evaluative measures in <i>A Plus</i> assure accountability for principals and teachers.

Figure 6. Summary of Themes.

A word processing package, *Microsoft Word 2000*, was used, in part, to assist with data reduction. The researcher used the “find” command of the word processor to

find key words and phrases present in the transcripts. The “highlight” feature of the word processor was then used to highlight the key words and phrases. D’Andrade (1995) noted, “perhaps the simplest and most direct indication of schematic organization in naturalistic discourse is the repetition of associative linkages” (p. 294). Essentially, one way that the researcher began to determine the content of what participants were talking about, was to note the frequency with which they made reference to certain terms, concepts, and ideas. Line-by-line open coding was then conducted. For example, the following data sample shows key words and phrases that were highlighted by using *Microsoft Word 2000*. The key words are underlined for the purposes of this text.

Well, the system looks at what direction we’re going in and what it is we’re trying to implement and programs and stuff we’re working with and improvement in those programs. Then we determine from there whether or not we need staff development in those areas. We know staff development is an on-going process because teachers are always in need of improvement, most especially if we’re doing a new program or starting something new. We like to offer staff development in those areas so we get a good start in those areas.

The resulting key words and phrases constituted the basis for several rudimentary codes (See Appendix G). Additionally, text from fieldnotes and documents were coded.

Chunks of data, such as the previous excerpt, were then inserted into a computer database program, *Microsoft Excel*, for easy retrieval. Figure 7 displays a sample of the codes and a key which explains the meaning of the codes.

ACCT.....Accountability			
ACT.....Action Plans			
APLUS..... <i>A Plus Education Reform</i>			
Codes	Betty	Mark	Jasmine
ACCT			X
ACT			X
APLUS	X	X	

Figure 7. Sample codes and key to sample codes.



The researcher utilized *Microsoft Excel* to compile, order, and sort codes that emerged from the data. The data were made manageable through this process. Care was taken not to assign codes to the words, but to the concepts and meanings the words communicated. According to Coffey and Atkinson (1996) “coding is much more than simply giving categories to data; it is also about conceptualizing the data, raising questions, providing provisional answers about the relationships among and within the data, and discovering the data” (p. 31). Glesne (1999) suggested that each code should identify a concept or a central idea. Chunks of data were alternately sorted, defined, sorted, and redefined.

The researcher reexamined the highlighted texts to note emergent categories. Patton (1990) refers to categories that emerge from local terms as “indigenous categories” (p. 306). When the search for indigenous categories was exhausted, the researcher utilized a computerized database, *Microsoft Excel*, to sort and combine categories. While computer software exists for the processes employed by the researcher, a review of the software indicated that similar results could be achieved through the use of a generic word processor and database.

Categories and subcategories were noted. Several small subcategories were subsumed by larger categories. For example, the categories “How principals adapt to change” and “How principals comply with the law” were combined. Categories were finally derived from a total of 39 codes. Data were decontextualized and recontextualized. Tesch (1990) defines decontextualizing data as segmenting or dividing up the data while retaining meaning. Strauss and Corbin (1990) prescribed basic questions that served to assist the researcher in formulating categories: Who? When?

Where? What? How? How much? and Why? According to Strauss and Corbin, each of these questions, “are likely to stimulate a series of more specific and related questions, which in turn lead to the development of categories, properties, and their dimensions” (p. 77).

The constant comparative method of analysis as well as analytic induction was imposed on the data. The researcher constantly questioned the meaning of the data. Categories and the responses of each of the participants were then compared and contrasted. The researcher asked questions of the texts such as: “How is this text different from the preceding one? What are the similarities?” Answers were compared across participants and across interviews. The researcher, in essence, interviewed the interviews. While Glaser and Strauss (1967) proposed this method for the purpose of generating theory, Lincoln and Guba (1985) countered that the constant comparative method was useful as a means of processing data. Instead of using the method to generate theory, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that constant comparative analysis might be utilized for “construction” (p. 343). This method was used in this study to assist in determining themes that emerged from the data. Analytic induction facilitated the location of patterns, themes, and categories rather than these entities “being imposed prior to data collection and analysis” (Patton, 1990, p. 390).

### Validity

Merriam (1998) suggested six basic strategies to enhance internal validity:

1. Triangulation—using multiple investigators, sources of data, or methods to confirm the emerging findings.
2. Member checks—taking data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible.
3. Long-term observation at the research site.

4. Peer examination—asking colleagues to comment on the findings as they emerge.
5. Participatory or collaborative modes of research—involving participants in all phases of research from conceptualizing the study to writing up the findings.
6. Researcher's biases—clarifying the researcher's assumptions, worldview, and theoretical orientation at the outset of the study. (p. 204)

Triangulation of data, member checks, and clarifying the researcher's biases were the primary means of establishing the validity of this study. Data were collected from multiple sources to provide triangulation of data. In addition to participant interviews, the researcher obtained artifacts from each participant and school district webpage. The artifacts included school improvement plans, observation checklists, and teacher feedback forms. These documents were examined and coded. The three-interview structure used by the researcher was also a means of establishing validity. Siedman (1998) asserted that the three-interview structure enhances the accomplishment of validity and "by interviewing a number of participants, we can connect their experiences and check the comments of one participant against those of others" (p. 17). Per Seidman's model, internal consistency was achieved by spacing the interviews over a one-to-two month period, placing participants' comments in context, and including the same points of focus in each interview. The three-interview format provided data triangulation in terms of content, time, and subject.

Member checks were conducted in the process of the study and at the end of the study. Participants were sent by postal mail, transcripts of each interview and the researcher's interpretations of the interviews. They were invited to comment on the accuracy of interview transcripts and interpretations prior to subsequent interviews. None of the participants commented on the interview transcripts and interpretations prior

to the subsequent interviews. However, immediately before each interview, participants were invited again to comment. Each participant seemed to have reflected on their previous interview and each participant added comments. For example, Betty made the following remarks when invited to make clarifications in the transcript:

I'm not exactly satisfied with the fact that I blundered through it. [Laughter] As far as corrections are concerned, no. There were some things about House Bill 1187 that I didn't talk about. I had some concerns there. And I've thought about it since that time and if I had to do it all over again, I would certainly talk about school councils, most of which is based on experiences I've had.

The researcher invited Betty to discuss school councils, even though that particular component was not a part of the research focus. Interpretation of that additional data was made available to Betty before the next interview.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that member checks are the “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314). Moreover, Lincoln and Guba (1985) differentiated member checks from triangulation as the former being relative to constructions while the latter is relative to data or datum. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended that member checking be utilized to facilitate a judgment of overall credibility or validity.

The researcher clarified personal biases at the outset of the study. Merriam (1998) asserts, because the primary instrument in qualitative research is human, all observations and analyses are filtered through that human beings worldview, values, and perspectives” (p. 22). Peshkin (1988) believed that qualitative researchers should monitor their biases and subjectivity. Peshkin (1988) related that researchers monitor themselves as they conduct research by looking for the “warm and cold spots,” and by making note of the areas in which subjectivity may be present (p. 21). Peshkin valued

uncovering biases and subjectivities. The researcher clarified her biases, as they related to this study, by listing and revealing them (See Appendix A).

### Reliability

The dynamic nature of human beings renders the issue of reliability in studies of human nature problematic. Merriam (1995) argued that:

Qualitative researchers are not seeking to establish “laws” in which reliability of observation and measurement are essential. Rather, qualitative researchers seek to understand the world from the perspectives of those in it. Since there are many perspectives, and many possible interpretations, there is no benchmark by which one can take repeated measures and establish reliability in the traditional sense. (p. 170)

Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended that naturalistic (qualitative) researchers strive for “dependability” or “consistency” (p. 288). The real goal of qualitative researchers, argued Lincoln and Guba (1985) is not replication, but whether the data collected and the results of the study were consistent. Merriam (1995) suggested three strategies to ensure greater consistency:

1. Triangulation—The use of multiple methods of data collection, in particular as well as other forms of triangulation.
2. Peer examination—This strategy provides a check that the investigator is plausibly interpreting the data.
3. Audit trail—This strategy operates on the same principle as a business audit. (Merriam, p. 56)

This study utilized triangulation of data as an indicator of reliability or dependability. Data was derived from multiple sources, specifically interview transcriptions, fieldnotes, and artifacts. Fieldnotes were written as soon after the interviews as was plausible. Participants furnished the researcher with artifacts relevant to the topics explored in the interviews.

## Generalizability

Merriam (1988) argued, “In multi-case or cross-case analysis, the use of sampling, predetermined questions, and specific procedures for coding and analysis enhances the generalizability of findings in the traditional sense” (p. 174). Merriam (1988) suggested three ways that case study researchers could improve the generalization of findings:

1. Provide rich, thick descriptions.
2. Establish the typicality of the case.
3. Conduct a cross-site or cross-case analysis. (p. 177)

Cross-case analysis was utilized in this study to strengthen generalizability or transferability of findings. The researcher acknowledges that generalization was not the goal of the research undertaken. Stake (1978) introduced the concept of naturalistic generalizability. While the goal of qualitative researchers is not to generalize findings, Stake proposed that case studies may not utilize generalization as experimental design, but cases are useful in adding to understanding for readers.

## Chapter Summary

A case study approach was utilized to examine the supervisory and evaluative perspectives of three rural middle school principals as they implement Georgia’s *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*. Data were gathered through the use of three semi-structured interviews. The researcher transcribed interviews. Data were reduced through the use of the constant comparative method and were coded. Coding was accomplished through the use of a computerized word processor and database. Within-case analyses and a cross-case analysis were conducted.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of three rural middle school principals who, by state statute, were mandated to implement the teacher evaluation provisions of Georgia's *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*. The questions specifically addressed in this study were:

1. How did rural middle school principals perceive supervision as a result of the implementation of the *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*?
2. How did these perspectives affect supervisory practices?
3. How did rural middle school principals perceive changes in teacher evaluation as a result of the implementation of the *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*?
4. How did these perspectives affect evaluative practices?
5. What contextual factors influence the evaluative and supervisory practices of rural middle school principals?

In this chapter, the context of each study site was described and the participants were profiled. The chapter presents findings and reports the themes from each of the three interviews with each participant, and the themes across the cases are reported. The themes that emerged from the interviews center around the principals' perspectives of evaluation and supervision and the principals' practices as they relate to evaluation and

supervision were discussed. Figure 8 reports the common themes and prevalent perspectives that emerged from the cross-case analysis. Each perspective and how the perspective influenced the principals' practices is discussed. To introduce the reader to the participants, each is profiled as well as the contexts in which they work.

Common Themes	Prevalent Perspectives
All teachers, including Connections teachers, must have standardized test results attached to their evaluation reports.	Evaluation of teacher effectiveness can be indicated only by the results of standardized tests.
The implementation of <i>A Plus</i> has increased the occurrence of classroom visits.	Supervision consists of classroom visits and observations.
Staff development is an important component of teacher evaluation.	Ruralness affects how staff development is delivered.
Evaluative mandates of <i>A Plus</i> are not supported by appropriate staff development funding.	Lack of funding limits the effectiveness of the staff development component of teacher evaluation.

*Figure 8.* Common themes and prevalent perspectives.

### The Context of the Study

The principals of three rural middle schools in Georgia were interviewed for this study. Two of the schools were located in South Georgia and one was located in Central Georgia. Two of the principals were females and one was male. Additionally, two principals were African-American and one was white. Each of the schools utilized the traditional middle school grade configuration that included grades 6, 7, and 8. Each school had programs in special education, gifted education, and exploratory (Connections). One of the school facilities was less than 6 years old, one school was less than 2 years old, and 1 school was more than 40 years old. In order to maintain



confidentiality of the subject sites, pseudonyms were developed: Manning Middle School, Heritage Middle School, and Boyd Middle School.

Findings are reported as they relate to the evaluative measures of *A Plus*. *A Plus* sets forth seven minimum criteria that must be included in annual teacher evaluations.

Those areas are:

1. The role of the teacher in meeting the school's student achievement goals, including the academic gains of students assigned to the teacher;
2. Observations of the teacher by the principal and assistant principals during the delivery of instruction;
3. Participation in professional development opportunities and the application of concepts learned to classroom and school activities;
4. Communication and interpersonal skills as they relate to interaction with students, parents, other teachers, administrators, and other school personnel;
5. Timeliness and attendance for assigned responsibilities;
6. Adherence to school and local school system procedures and rules; and
7. Personal conduct while in performance of school duties. (O. C. G. A. § 20-2-210 (b))

An examination of local school board policy for each of the three sites in the study revealed that each local board policy is exactly parallel to the criteria and even the language found in *A Plus*.

#### Within Case Analysis

At the time of the study, the participants were principals of rural middle schools in Georgia. The districts in which the schools were located were similar in that they were rural, but were in different areas of the state. The participants had varied levels of educational attainment, as well as administrative experience. The participants had been employed as assistant principals before becoming principals. Each participant appeared to be familiar with the provisions of the *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*. Figure 9 summarizes the participants' profiles.

	<b>Educational Level</b>	<b>Educational Experience</b>	<b>Administrative Experience</b>	<b>Teaching Background</b>	<b>Employment in District</b>
<b>Betty (Manning Middle School)</b>	Masters	26 years	7 years	High School	9 years
<b>Mark (Heritage Middle School)</b>	Specialist	11 years	6 years	Middle School	11 years
<b>Jasmine (Boyd Middle School)</b>	Doctorate	27 years	8 years	Elementary School	27 years

*Figure 9.* Summary of participants' profiles.

#### *Betty*

Betty's case yielded four themes, three themes related to evaluation and one theme related to supervision, reported in Figure 10.

<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>Supervision</b>
All teachers, including Connections teachers, must have standardized test results attached to their evaluation reports.	The implementation of <i>A Plus</i> has increased the occurrence of classroom visits.
Staff development needs are determined by teachers.	
Evaluative mandates of <i>A Plus</i> are not supported by appropriate staff development funding.	

*Figure 10.* Betty's themes.

Betty, principal of Manning Middle School, had been an educator for 26 years, and she holds the Master's degree in Educational Leadership. Before becoming a principal, Betty was an English and speech teacher for grades 9-12, and was an assistant principal for four years. Betty was not new to the district, having worked in Manning

County for a total of nine years. She had been principal of Manning Middle School for three years, and describes the geographical area where she had spent most of her career as rural. Betty was enthusiastic about the *America's Choice* design, a school-wide reform model that was being implemented at the school and about the school improvement measures of the *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*.

During the study, Betty was affected by the firing of the principal of the lone high school in the district. Betty related that because Manning was such a small town and because the district had only four schools, there was much speculation on the cause of the high school principal's dismissal. Betty expressed apprehension about the security of her position as middle school principal, especially since she is not a resident of Manning County. The dismissal of the high school principal, according to Betty, caused the faculty of Manning Middle School to be negatively affected by rumors that were rampant throughout the community. Consequently, Betty found it difficult to focus at one of the interviews. She appeared nervous and distracted. She did, however, complete the interview and added data she felt she had omitted at a subsequent interview.

Dismissal of a school administrator was not only a rarity in Manning, but was also an incident that dominated the local weekly newspapers for several months. The incident led to increased speculation on whether or not Betty would remain principal of Manning Middle School. A profile of Manning County and the town of Manning will give the reader a snapshot of the context in which Betty works.

Manning was the county seat of Manning County, a county with a geographic area of 513.8 square miles. According to the most recent census data, the population of Manning County was 23,932 with 5,669 persons living within the city limits of Manning.

The population of Manning County was almost evenly divided along racial lines, with a 49.6 % white population and a 47.9% African-American population. Various other minorities comprise the remaining 2.5%. Only 33% of Manning County residents have at least a high school diploma; 14.3% have some college education; 5.4% possess a bachelor's degree; and 2.4% hold a graduate or professional degree. Approximately half of Manning County's adult population had not completed high school, and this number was statistically higher than the statewide average of 29%. The median household income in Manning County was \$24,600, while approximately 36.6% of residents under 18 live below the poverty level (U.S. Census Bureau, Census, 2000).

Professional employment was scarce in Manning and teacher attrition was minimal. The Manning County Board of Education was the second largest employer in the county. Best Ever Foods was the county's largest employer. Other sources of employment include agriculture, grocery store chains, retail sales chains, and textile-related factories. The majority of Manning County residents work within the county, and the remaining number of residents commute outside of the county to work.

Manning Middle School was located within the city limits of Manning and serves the majority of middle school-aged students in Manning County. Three other schools in the county (Penn City Middle School, an independent city school; Eastwood Academy, a private school; and the Bennett Charter School, a public charter school) also served middle school students in the county. Additionally, Manning Middle School served eighth grade students from the neighboring Beacon County, pursuant to a contract with the Beacon County Board of Education. Manning Middle School was a five-year old facility at the time of the study. It was a clean building that displayed little student

generated exhibits. The school was located within a one-mile radius of Manning Primary School and Manning-Beacon High School. Manning Elementary School was located in another area of the city of Manning.

The *A Plus Education Reform Act* mandated that by 2003-2004 any school that is graded “low performing” will be required to have a Georgia Department of Education Intensive Services Team assigned to assist them in improving student achievement. The designation “low performing” would be determined by the results of standardized tests. Manning Middle School volunteered to participate in this improvement initiative during the 2001-2002 school year. Results of norm-referenced tests released in 2000, indicated that Manning Middle School students consistently scored below the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile on all subsections of the test. Additionally, 57% of the sixth-grade students at Manning Middle School did not meet the competency level in reading as required by the Georgia State Department of Education; 63% of the sixth-grade students did not meet the competency level in Language Arts; and 54% of the sixth-grade students failed to meet the competency level in mathematics. Consequently, Manning Middle School was in the first stages of implementing the state recommended model for whole-school reform, *America’s Choice*. Betty reported that both she and the faculty of Manning Middle School had grave concerns regarding the results of standardized test results of Manning’s students. Betty expressed relief that the Manning School District did not find it necessary to aggressively recruit teachers, as most of the current faculty are natives of Manning, and for the most part, could be expected to be employed by the district until retirement.

*America’s Choice* was a school-wide comprehensive reform model founded by the National Center on Education and the Economy. The primary goal of *America’s*

*Choice* was to “enable all students to reach internationally benchmarked standards” (Northwest Regional Educational Library [NWREL, 2001], *Catalog of School Reform Models, America’s Choice*, General Description). Manning Middle School had an enrollment of 591 students with a total of 71 full- and part-time faculty and staff members. There were three sixth-grade teams, three seventh-grade teams, and three eighth-grade teams. Additionally, there were five special education teachers and six Connections (exploratory) teachers (technology, home economics, agriculture, keyboarding, band, and art).

The school had two counselors, one and one-half assistant principals, and one principal. Both four-member and five-member interdisciplinary teams were utilized; there was no instructional lead teacher or administrator whose sole job description was the supervision of the curriculum. The principal, assistant principal, and part-time assistant principal divided the supervisory and evaluative duties, with the Betty, the principal, assuming the greater portion of responsibility.

Betty noted that she was conversant with the changes in evaluation procedures affected by *A Plus*. Additionally, she expressed concern that the “usual” evaluation instrument did not provide a means of attaching scores from standardized tests to teachers’ evaluation results. She stated:

I know that we have the option of using various forms of evaluation in addition to using the GTOI, the usual instrument, the standard one that we have been using in the past, as well as being able to add addendums to the one that we currently use.

An examination of the evaluation policy approved by the Manning County Board of Education revealed that the criteria for teacher evaluation were exactly those itemized in *A Plus*.

Betty also seemed to view evaluation as a procedure to be imposed on teachers. While she consistently made teachers aware of how the evaluation instruments had changed and how the instruments were to be used, Betty did not solicit teacher input into the formulation of an alternative instrument. Because central administration in Betty's county made decisions of this magnitude without input from school site administrators, perhaps this option did not appear to be a viable one to Betty. When asked about the evaluation mandates in *A Plus*, Betty replied, "You have an option of drawing up your own evaluation instrument to use on teachers if you choose not to use the GTOI [Georgia Teacher Observation Instrument], the standard instrument." Betty planned to "draw up her own instrument" as she talked about forms that could be used to evaluate teachers like this:

We talked about since each administrator is assigned to a particular grade level, devising forms that each of us could use with our particular grade level because we know what we can expect from our teachers. And it asks certain questions like, 'Were your teachers in total compliance?' or 'Do the students appear to understand the standards that are being taught in the classroom?' And all of these questions are taken from the new design that we will be using this year called *America's Choice, Georgia's Choice in Education*.

Betty documented informal observations through the use of "forms" as well. When asked if teachers received feedback on informal observations, Betty answered, "Sure. We have informal forms or little notes that we do ourselves individually, that we give them, letting them know if it was a good day, fine."

Betty's concern about standardized tests and test results emerged during her interviews. Of particular concern was attaching results of standardized tests to teachers' evaluation results. While she remarked that it "wasn't necessary" to attach standardized test results to the previous year's teacher evaluation results, Betty acknowledged that the

mandates of *A Plus* dictated that these results be attached for the current year. She noted, “It wasn’t necessary last year, but we’re coming to that point where we have to utilize test scores in evaluating teacher performance.” Betty seemed unaware that the language of *A Plus* does not specifically require that standardized test results be attached to teachers’ evaluation results. To the contrary, the law states, “Annual teacher evaluation shall at a minimum take into consideration the role of the teacher in meeting the school’s student achievement goals, including the academic gains of students assigned to the teacher.” Section 32 (c) of the *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000* further elucidates:

In making a determination of the academic gains of the students assigned to a teacher, evaluators should make every effort to have available and to utilize the results of a wide range of student achievement assessments, including those utilized by the teacher, set by the local board of education, or required under this article.

It seemed that most of Betty’s use of student achievement data centered on standardized test results. When asked if any other types of student assessments had been considered, Betty answered, “The only thing we’ve considered adding so far is the standardized test results. Certain information we can’t provide in an evaluation until we get test results.”

Betty was experiencing a dilemma when deciding what standardized test results she would attach to the evaluation results of the Connections (exploratory) teachers in her building. Betty seemed to be at an impasse because her particular interpretation of the mandates of *A Plus* regarding results of student achievement measures. When discussing how Connections teachers would be evaluated, Betty offered:

Well, there is no standardized test for that [art, music, physical education, consumer science] and that was one of the questions that we asked at our recent meeting, administrators’ meeting. *There is no way* [italics added]. In fact, that is a concern, because there is no way to evaluate them. Not when you consider



student performance and how well they fared, because there's no way to determine that.

Betty noted that she and the other administrators in Manning Middle School used a system for determining which teachers they evaluated. She acknowledged that all administrators were responsible for the evaluation of Connections teachers. Additionally, she emphasized that the presence of the *Georgia's Choice in Education* design made it possible for administrators to use different kinds of "forms" or instruments for evaluating teachers.

Betty reported that the changes presented in *A Plus* affected the manner in which the Manning Middle School's master schedule is devised. The logistics of scheduling was a major source of stress for Betty. Also, Betty reported that because "people aren't too apt to make changes anyway," additional stress associated with change was incurred.

When asked about her major source of stress, Betty replied:

We have to provide a minimum of 55 minutes planning time, common planning time for teachers. But because of what is required of teachers, they really don't get the 55 minutes. We find ourselves taking more work home, which is not out of the ordinary. But it's more. It has increased the load. So we're pretty much back to the traditional one-hour per period, or periods all day long, every day like the old junior high days. Right? And it leaves little room for teachers to do anything.

The decrease in planning time for interdisciplinary teachers precipitated a decrease in instructional time for Connections teachers. Betty observed that this caused the Connections teachers to change many of their instructional practices and adapt curricular requirements to conform to the decreased instructional time. In Betty's words:

“Connections teachers such as band, chorus, and art teachers are distressed by the lack of time they now have for instruction. It’s not so much a lack of time as it is a lack of students.”

Betty discussed teacher evaluation in light of how she informed teachers of the new evaluation guidelines. Specifically, Betty reported how she explained to teachers the manner in which standardized test scores would be used for teachers’ annual evaluation reports. Betty noted that neither interdisciplinary team teachers nor Connections teachers questioned the validity of using standardized test scores for the purposes of evaluation.

Betty reported:

We’ve already met with them [teachers] to explain the kinds of things we’ll be looking for. Primarily, the students should show some kind of improvement. They should achieve the same kinds of [standardized] test scores as schools in our area and other schools that are very similar to our school. Now we’re trying to figure out how we will get the statistics. You know, this year we got the scores late. Even though we’re informing them that scores will be a part of their evaluations, they may not get it until late, if it’s like it was this year. We will be utilizing technology to figure out ways that we can pull up [access] test scores to determine how certain teachers fared, and compare those scores with how students did last year. We want to see if improvements are made.

Classroom visitations comprise Betty’s supervisory design. While she considers finding time for classroom visits to be problematic, she also considers classroom visits to be necessary. She also characterized many managerial and monitorial duties as supervisory. Betty defined supervision as “supervising all of the programs, monitoring the total operation of the school.” Betty shared:

We have early morning duty, duties during change of classes. We’re constantly in the hall. I guess it’s good to say, I’m not an office principal. We’re constantly out of the office. We’re constantly in the classroom. We must spend at least one hour in a classroom per day. The design we’re using this year requires that anyway. It’s hard to do, but we don’t stay in the office.

When asked if classroom observations were conducted differently for beginning teachers and mid-career teachers, in regard to beginning teachers, Betty answered, “We all make sure we go into their classrooms for at least one evaluation (in addition to the other occasions on which we visit them). That gives us different perspectives.” The Georgia Teacher Evaluation Program (GTEP) requires a standard evaluation to be conducted in at least three 20-minute unannounced classroom observations, while the formative evaluation requires at least one 20-minute unannounced classroom observation. It should be noted that these are minimum requirements. However, Betty was faithful to the GTEP as she conducted the required the number of classroom visits. She was especially careful when visiting the classrooms of beginning teachers. She noted:

Well, it’s [*A Plus*] made me attend to doing things the right way. It’s certainly made me beef up the way I provide feedback to teachers, and the extent of the documentation I keep. Since we have to tell them why they are non-renewed, it makes you be sure that you have the proper documentation. The standard evaluation process provides me with much more data than the formative.

Betty maintained that staff development, one component of teacher evaluation, was based on needs, but she did not report the manner in which needs were determined. She reported that teachers sometimes asked for classes, and that the school had in place, a staff development committee. She said:

Staff development is done on a needs basis. We have the administrators, and recently we added the curriculum director who is not usually a part of the staff development committee. If there is a need for staff development in a particular area, specifically for new teachers coming in and need coursework to complete certification, then naturally those classes will take priority over others. Sometimes teachers will come and request to take classes that they feel will benefit them or improve them as teachers.

Betty also reported that “ultimately,” the principal exercised “veto power over staff development requests.” The function of the staff development committee was not

reported. An examination of the school's Title I Staff Development Plan for 2001 revealed the following targeted activities:

1. In-service computer training
2. Reading workshops
3. Conflict resolution workshops
4. Peer mediation training
5. Classroom management workshops
6. Effective communication
7. Establishing workable relationships between parents/school/community
8. Workshops on bus safety, management, and interpersonal skills
9. Food service workshops
10. Maintenance training
11. Secretarial workshops
12. Test analysis
13. Custodial workshops
14. Training to identify at-risk students
15. Workshops on developing more effective student disciplinary strategies

No mention was made in the plan as to how its staff development activities were identified or correlated to identified needs. Betty continued to assert veto power over staff development activities, and when asked what her staff development role was, Betty said:

Well, I'm the primary person, or the person who makes the final decision, and I'm the one who signs off on those classes. So there will be times, when I, for whatever reason, will have the authority to say that this person should not be able to take a class, whereas the committee says yes. It's like the president—I have the authority to veto the decision of the committee. I have the authority to go in and say, 'This is what I'd like for a certain teacher to take,' even though the committee had not decided. Although we have the staff development committee, naturally that's expected of the principal.

When discussing how the size of the school system and the distance the school system was from major metropolitan areas (ruralness), Betty did not report that ruralness was a determining factor in staff development offerings. Betty indicated:

I think it [consolidation of services] has to do with the need for others to take the same classes. And if you see that you can kill two birds with one stone, why not?

If there are teachers in other systems that need the same staff development as teachers in Manning County, then why not offer it together as space allows.

Betty identified the local Regional Educational Services Agency (RESA) as being an important resource for staff development opportunities. When asked if teachers have to endure extensive travel to avail themselves to staff development, Betty answered, “They’re [classes] offered in a centralized location. They try to invite teachers not only from Manning School System, but also teachers who are a part of their RESA area.” Little mention was made of local or on-site staff development, and only one artifact related to staff development was provided to the researcher.

At the time of Betty’s final interview, she expressed considerable concern about how the staff development mandates of the *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000* would be supported by legislative funding. Even though funding for staff development had recently been decreased by one-third, Betty and the staff development committee had not determined any alternative means of funding or offering staff development to teachers.

She related:

They need to pour more funds into staff development. It’s understandable that cuts are made—they’re being made everywhere, especially in our profession. It’s understandable even though it comes at a time when we need more. There’s been some talk about a tax increase. But I don’t think that will come in the near future, because we’ve already had one.

Manning County School district was the most rural and smallest school district in the study. Betty, however, did not report that ruralness was a factor in the manner in which she evaluated and supervised teachers. Betty noted that she does not live in Manning County, but in a neighboring county that is larger than Manning County. Betty’s demeanor implied condescension when she noted this factor. These remarks

suggested that Betty was not sensitive to the rural nature of the community in which Manning Middle exists.

### *Mark*

Mark's case yielded 5 themes, four of which related to evaluation and one which related to supervision. These themes are reported in Figure 11.

<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>Supervision</b>
All teachers, including Connections teachers, must have standardized test results attached to their evaluation reports.	Supervision consists of classroom visits and observations.
Staff development needs are determined by teachers.	
Evaluative mandates of <i>A Plus</i> are not supported by appropriate staff development funding.	

*Figure 11.* Mark's themes.

In 1996, Mark became only the fifth principal to serve as administrator of Heritage during the school's history. Mark displays considerable pride in the rich history of Heritage Middle School and the surrounding neighborhood. The commitment of the community to Heritage Middle School is cited by Mark as an integral component of the success of the school. Mark recounted that the pride that county residents take in Heritage Middle School, has a positive effect on both curricular offerings and the financial support the school receives from the county board of education.

Mark attended high school in the late 1970s, and as a result of his involvement in the Civil Rights Movement, was expelled from the high school in his home county. He went on to receive his high school diploma in a neighboring county. After high school, he found employment in a textile factory, married, and raised a family. During the mid-

1980s, Mark decided to return to school at the local junior college where he received the Associate of Science Degree. Mark continued his education at a regional university, receiving the Bachelor of Science Degree in Middle Grades Education, and entered the classroom at Heritage Middle School as a sixth-grade science teacher in 1990. Mark is a resident of Heritage County and at least one of his two children completed high school in the Heritage County School System.

After five years of classroom teaching and after receiving the Educational Specialist degree, Mark became an assistant principal at Heritage Middle School, a post in which he remained for one and one-half years. Mark had been a principal for five years, had been employed in the Heritage County District and Heritage Middle School for all of the 11 years of his career, and was matriculating at a regional university in the Doctor of Education program with a concentration in educational leadership. Boasting an extremely low incidence of discipline infractions, Mark supervises 71 staff members, which includes 1 assistant principal. Mark expressed amazement that his career had progressed in a rapid manner.

Mark's daughter attended Heritage Middle School which was located in extreme South Georgia, in the rural town of Heritage. Heritage Middle School was chosen for this study because the enrollment of the Heritage School System was 5,065 students, with Heritage being located more than 60 miles from a major metropolitan area. Both factors help define Heritage Middle School as small and rural. A total of 61.8% of the students enrolled in the district were eligible for free or reduced lunches. White students comprise 44.8% of the total school population, while African-American students comprise 51.4%;

and Hispanic, Asian, and Indian students make up approximately 4% of the total enrollment.

Heritage was the county seat of Heritage County, a county with a geographic area of 623.2 square miles. The city of Heritage had a population of 11,722. According to the most recently released census data, the current population of Heritage County was 28,240. Racially, the population of Heritage County is 57.1% white and 39.9% African-American. The Hispanic or Latino population was 3.2%. Only 29.2% of Heritage County residents possess at least a high school diploma; 11.69% possess a college degree or higher. Approximately 40% of Heritage County's adult population had not completed high school.

Heritage Middle School was originally opened in 1869 as Freedmen's Normal School, with the purpose of educating former slaves. Located on the same plot of land, in 1905, the Rev. G. G. Goodman was appointed principal, and at that time, the school was known as the Heritage County Training School. In 1905, a frame building was constructed at the same site that was demolished in 1924 and rebuilt using some of the original lumber. In 1940, a grammar school was added to the normal school, and the facility was used to serve grades 1-12. When Heritage County Schools were desegregated in 1970, Heritage High School was renamed Heritage Junior High School and served students in grades seven and eight. Following major renovations in 1989, the facility began serving grades six, seven, and eight and was renamed Heritage Middle School. The current campus is composed of nine buildings. Mark reported that the community of Heritage expressed considerable pride in the history of the school.



Heritage Middle School employs 49 teachers, 2 counselors, and 1 assistant principal. No instructional lead teacher is employed. Of the approximately 5000 students enrolled in Heritage County Schools, 650 attend Heritage Middle School. There were eight interdisciplinary teams serving sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. The school employs special education as well as Connections (exploratory) teams. Connections classes include art, physical education, health, weight lifting, chorus, band, agriculture, consumer science, and computer utilization. The responsibility of the assistant principal was to supervise curriculum matters. The average years of experience of the administrative staff was 21 years, and the average years of experience of the faculty was almost 12 years. Only one teacher had over 30 years of teaching experience. Mark noted that existing faculty was loyal to the school and school system, and generally did not transfer or leave the school system except under extreme circumstances. Mark admitted, however, that recruitment of teachers was difficult for administrators in Heritage County Schools. Mark attributes the difficulty to Heritage's isolation from major metropolitan areas.

Scores (released in 2000) on the state mandated norm-referenced tests indicated that Heritage Middle School scored slightly above the state level in reading comprehension, Language Arts, and social studies. Heritage Middle was slightly below the state level in reading, vocabulary, mathematics, and science. On the Georgia Middle School Writing Assessment, Heritage Middle School posted 68% of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students who met or exceeded the (state imposed) target, compared to a state average of 76 percent. Results of the state mandated criterion-referenced assessments indicated that 74% of 6<sup>th</sup> grade students at Heritage Middle met or exceeded the standard in reading,

69% met or exceeded the standard in Language Arts, and 71% met or exceeded the standard in reading. On the same measure, 84% of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students at Heritage Middle met or exceeded the standard in reading, 79% in Language Arts, and 61% in mathematics. Mark expressed pride that Heritage was not a “low performing” school, but noted that “there is room for improvement.”

Mark was very enthusiastic about the “promise” of the *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*. More specifically, he was very opinionated about the evaluation mandates of *A Plus*. When discussing evaluation of teachers as *A Plus* prescribes it, Mark said:

Evaluating teachers, in my opinion (which is pretty much all I have at this point) it’s a joke coming from the state [Department of Education]. I don’t think it helps the situation at all. I think that it’s something that they’re requiring us to do, that they don’t even want to see anymore.

Mark seemed unfamiliar with the local school board policy that enumerated the same criteria as that of *A Plus*. Mark also expressed concern regarding the instrument that he would use to evaluate teachers like this:

We use the regular state instrument right now, along with some county-made instruments that are basically verbal type things that we’re looking for. We go over with the teachers the things we’ll be looking for when we come into their classrooms.

The “state instrument” Mark referred to is the Georgia Teacher Evaluation Program (GTEP) instruments. He did not provide the researcher with any of the “county-made” instruments. Mark’s concern for the instrument he would use for evaluation was also evident in his discussion of evaluating Connections (exploratory) teachers. Mark reported:

We haven’t decided how we’re going to do that yet. That is a tricky thing to do, because their grades are nine-week grades because we rotate Connections every nine weeks. And if I evaluate a Connections teacher using grades, it won’t be a

semester or full grade. It'll only be a partial grade. So we probably won't be using test scores at all to evaluate those teachers.

In a subsequent interview, Mark communicated that he felt it unfair to attach test scores to the evaluation reports of Connections teachers. Mark commented, "I try very hard to be fair to everyone, so this [evaluation of Connections teachers] really bothers me."

When asked in a subsequent interview if he had created a "fair" procedure for evaluating Connections teachers Mark observed:

That's a difficult one, because a Connections teacher only teaches those kids nine weeks and they move on to another group. So their semester grade is a combination of perhaps a computer grade and an art grade. It doesn't seem fair to use grades, and then there's no standardized test for, let's say agriculture. So it's going to be kind of difficult to do that. We haven't quite worked out all of the kinks about how we'll finally evaluate them.

Even though Mark had not worked out a plan for using test scores, especially for Connections teachers, he did plan to use "the CRCT [Criterion Referenced Curriculum Test] and the SAT-9 [Stanford Achievement Test] in the off grades [grades that have no state-mandated CRCT]" for purposes of teacher evaluation. Mark did not seem to think that the use of standardized test results would be adverse for teachers. Mark reported that he felt the presence and pressure of high stakes test results would compel teachers to improve. Mark elaborated:

So the *A Plus Education Act* (I have a copy right here) House Bill 1187. It's good in a sense. Like I say, it's going to force those sorry teachers (I shouldn't use the word 'sorry') those teachers who are getting by, with the evaluation of it, and the way we're doing things now, the so called lazy teachers won't be able to piggy back on the back of the good teachers.

Mark and one assistant principal were the only administrators in the building.

The assistant principal's focus was primarily curricular with Mark processing disciplinary matters. Consequently, Mark reported, some grade level chairpersons were used to assist in evaluations. Grade level chairpersons were trained to use the Georgia Teacher

Evaluation Program (GTEP), but Mark did not use the chairpersons in formal evaluation procedures. Mark reported that with the adoption of *A Plus*, grade level chairpersons no longer conducted formal evaluations, but that:

They do some informal evaluations. They used to do formal evaluations before the *A Plus* thing came into effect. Then we stopped them from doing that because they felt that some of them didn't really want to tell their peers what was what, so we stopped that.

Mark also reported that the changes presented in *A Plus* had a profound affect on the manner in which he operated the school on a day-to-day basis, and on his supervisory practices. When discussing a typical day before the advent of *A Plus*, Mark explained:

You probably wouldn't see me in the classroom nearly as much. You probably would not see me looking over lesson plans like I do. I check lesson plans. For instance, if I am going into your classroom, I check your lesson plans. And I know that you may not be here or you may be past that point or whatever. But I check all of those things to make sure you're on track or whatever.

During a subsequent interview, Mark reflected on the discussion from the previous interview. Mark offered additional insight into teacher evaluation:

We evaluate teachers, as I mentioned to you earlier, using a self-made instrument that we have. Now evaluation is certainly more that what is actually going on in that classroom. Evaluation involves preparation and all those other things that teachers should be doing in addition to what's going on in the classroom.

Mark also reported that his role as an evaluator and as a supervisor had changed with the adoption of *A Plus*. The role change seems largely related to high stakes test results. When discussing the nature of his role as an evaluator, Mark explained:

It has caused me to look for things that I thought I should be looking for and overlook some things that I normally I would not have overlooked. Now I evaluate making sure that I'm seeing teaching instead of looking for certain things that *A Plus* says we should be looking for. For example, I know when learning is taking place and what a teacher is doing with students when they are learning. At the same time, with *A Plus*, I'm asking myself if the students will be tested on what the teacher is teaching. They may be dissecting worms. Will they be tested

on that? No, they will not be tested on dissecting worms. But the skills they get are important.

When asked to define supervision, Mark discussed his meanings of supervision at length. Mark explained:

I think supervision is the ability to have a vision about a job or a directive that has been given to you, and being able to accomplish that by either persuading other people who are working with you or by directing people who are working with you to follow the same vision and accomplish the same goal. Supervision involves a lot of things. It does not involve dictatorship, in my opinion. I can tell you what to do, but if I can get you to buy in to it, make you feel that it's your idea too, then it works better. So my idea of supervision is more of convincing and getting 'buy in' to get people to do something, allowing them to do it, then following up and giving that person help with what we want done.

Later in the interview, Mark stated:

Supervision also involves the grapevine. You need to listen to the grapevine to see what's going on with supervision, because if they are not talking about the supervisor, then the supervisor is not doing anything. The only way the supervisor is going to find out what is going wrong, is through the grapevine. Very few people are going to come directly to you and tell you what's going wrong. So you listen to the grapevine to find out what's going on.

Mark readily discussed the nature of staff development at Heritage Middle School. He related that the central administration guided and directed Heritage Middle School's instructional program and staff development was provided to initiate new programs and practices. When asked how staff development needs were determined, Mark reported:

Well, the system looks at what direction we're going in and what it is we're trying to implement and programs and stuff we're working with and improvement in those programs. Then we determine from there whether or not we need staff development in those areas. We know staff development is an on-going process because teachers are always in need of improvement, most especially if we're doing a new program or starting something new. We like to offer staff development in those areas so we get a good start in those areas.

Many of the staff development activities were those activities provided to initiate new programs. For example, Mark talked about Creating Independence through Student-owned Strategies (CRISS) training. Teachers at Heritage decided the students in the school system needed the program. Teachers from Heritage Middle School provided the training to the staff and to the staffs of the other schools in the Heritage County School System.

Mark reported that teachers at Heritage Middle School were empowered to initiate and facilitate on-site staff development. No mention was made of a staff development committee, however. When discussing how staff development needs were determined, Mark offered:

Any time a teacher mentions to us where they see there is a need for staff development or improvement in their area or any area, we certainly look at it with intention of if it's needed, we go ahead and schedule it. If we can do it ourselves here on site, then we do that in-house.

Consequently, much of the staff development Mark reports is conducted on-site by teachers, the assistant principal, and outside consultants.

When asked what his role in staff development was, Mark explained that his role “is to assist, to evaluate, to find out from the teachers and my curriculum coordinator, what it is that they would like to do and to make plans to get those things in place—to facilitate staff development activities.” Mark reported that Heritage Middle always capitalized on the skills of in-house personnel.

Regarding funding of staff development, Mark commented that even though the school often depleted its staff development funds, additional funds were allocated from local funds to supplement the original allocations. Mark reported:

We spend every penny we can get and then some on staff development. We often times run out of staff development money because we are offering so much staff development. That is, we often run out the state's allocation of it. Then we have to kick in local funds. Usually if we can convince them [central administration] that our effort is a worthwhile one, they add monies for staff development.

Additionally, Mark reported that staff development allotments were decreased during the time this study was being conducted. Mark noted that the decrease in staff development funds could cause difficulty by reducing the quantity of staff development opportunities for teachers. In Mark's words, "They [the legislature] told us to evaluate teachers on professional development—staff development—then they took away the money we would use to do it with. Isn't that just great?"

Mark was sensitive to the need for an alternative type of evaluation instrument for Connections teachers, but had not created the instrument at the time of the study. As a resident of Heritage, Mark was very sensitive to the ruralness of the school community. However, much of Mark's concerns were centered on the cultural differences between rural and non-rural students. Mark's concern was that even though teachers at Heritage Middle School would be evaluated in the same manner as teachers, state wide, using standardized test results, students in rural Heritage would not fare as well on the tests as their non-rural counterparts. Consequently, Mark was concerned that teachers in Heritage would be penalized through evaluations that included standardized test scores.

### *Jasmine*

Jasmine's interviews yielded five themes. Four of the themes related to evaluation and one theme related to supervision. These themes are reported in Figure 12.

<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>Supervision</b>
All teachers, including Connections teachers, must have standardized test results attached to their evaluation reports.	Supervision consists of classroom visits and observations.
Evaluative mandates of <i>A Plus</i> are not supported by appropriate staff development funding.	Supervision includes staff development and mentoring.
Staff development opportunities are based on school and school system goals.	
Evaluative measures in <i>A Plus</i> assure accountability for principals and teachers.	

*Figure 12. Jasmine's Themes.*

Jasmine, the principal of Boyd Middle School, was in the 28<sup>th</sup> year of her career as an educator. Jasmine had been principal of Boyd Middle School for two years, after having been an assistant principal of an elementary school in the Byrd County School System for six years. Jasmine had served her entire 27-year tenure in Byrd County. Jasmine described Byrd County as a rural county, one in which residents are familiar with each other on a personal basis. Jasmine lives in Byrd County and related that she knows her students and most of their parents, having taught many of the parents, as well as having taught the siblings of her students. Jasmine holds the Doctorate of Educational Leadership and describes Boyd Middle School as a school focused on the needs of students and teachers. Jasmine admitted to being excited about the NetSchools Wireless Project and the possibility that the project would allow rural Byrd County residents, equal access to current technology. Jasmine related that Boyd Middle School used a modified block schedule in grades seven and eight in which students in have two hours of mathematics and reading each day.

At the time of the study, Jasmine was in her second year as principal of Boyd Middle School. She appeared to be very busy, though extremely well organized.



Jasmine was animated and engaged in each interview. She expressed high interest in reading the findings of the study as to compare the functioning of Boyd Middle School with that of the two other middle schools.

Boyd Middle School was located in middle Georgia, in the rural town of Byrd. Boyd Middle School was chosen for this study because the enrollment of the Byrd County School System was 3,202 students, with Byrd being located more than 60 miles from a major metropolitan area. Both factors helped to define Boyd Middle School as small and rural. A total of 45.1% of the students enrolled in the district were eligible for free or reduced lunch. White students comprise 61.1% of the total school population; African-American students 36.9%; and Hispanic, Asian, and Indian students make up less than 2% of the total enrollment.

Boyd was the county seat of Byrd County, a county with a geographic area of 187 square miles. The city of Boyd had a population of 3,934. According to recent census data, the current population of Byrd County was 19,522. Racially, the population of Byrd County is 70% white; 29.2% African American; and the Hispanic or Latino population was 1.4%. Approximately 37% of Byrd County residents possess at least a high school diploma; 7% possess a college degree or higher; and almost 43% of Byrd County's adult population had not completed high school.

Boyd Middle School originated as Boyd High School and was named for Mrs. Frances Boyd, a Byrd County educator for over 40 years. Prior to 1938, there was no public high school for African Americans, but in that year, a new building was constructed to house a high school for African American students. The class of 1939 was the first class to graduate from the Boyd Negro High School. In 1952, the school board

purchased land on which to build a new Boyd Negro High School. The school was completed in 1955 and housed all African American students in the county in grades 1-12. It consisted of 36 classrooms, a library and a cafetorium.

In 1968, Byrd County was compelled to desegregate its schools. It began by transferring all ninth grade students and teachers from Boyd Negro High School to Byrd County High School. In 1970, Byrd County was ordered to fully desegregate all of its schools. The Byrd County Board of Education adopted a plan whereby all seventh and eighth grade students would attend the Boyd campus. Boyd Negro High School became Boyd Junior high School. The name and grade configuration was changed eventually to Boyd Middle School and remained in the same building until 1999. Construction delays caused the new Boyd Middle School to delay opening until January of 1999, when teachers and students moved into a larger, completely modern building that cost over 10 million dollars.

Boyd Middle School employs 57 teachers, 2 counselors, 2 assistant principals, and 1 principal. No instructional lead teacher is employed. Of the approximately 3,202 students enrolled in Byrd County Schools, 876 attend Boyd Middle School. There were six interdisciplinary teams serving sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. The school employs special education as well as Connections (exploratory) teams. A wide-array of Connections classes are offered and include art, physical education, health, personal finance, study skills, keyboarding, chorus, band, agriculture. The principal and both assistant principals share supervisory duties.

Recently released scores (2000) on the state mandated norm-referenced test indicated that Boyd Middle School scored slightly below the state level in all subtests of

the state-mandated Criterion Referenced Competency Test. On the Georgia Middle School Writing Assessment, Boyd Middle School posted 57% of eighth grade students who met or exceeded the (state imposed) target, compared to a state average of 76 percent. Results of the state mandated criterion-referenced assessments indicated that 59% of *6th grade* students at Heritage Middle met or exceeded the standard in reading; 51% met or exceeded the standard in Language Arts, and 53% met or exceeded the standard in reading. On the same measure, 66% of eighth grade students at Boyd Middle met or exceeded the standard in reading; 53% in Language Arts; and 38% in mathematics. Boyd Middle School appears on the state's list of schools that need improvement.

Additionally, Boyd Middle School was involved in an experimental technology program. The project, NetSchools Orion, was an effort to link the rural Byrd County to the Internet by providing each student with laptop computers that utilized a wireless connection to the school's computer network, the teacher's laptop, and the Internet. Teachers, students, and parents receive extensive training on how to use the technology and the Internet-based curriculum. Students used their laptops in class, and homework is collected in the students' electronic folders on the school's central server. Teachers post the next day's assignments, which are instantly transmitted to each student's laptop. At the end of the school day, it is intended that students take their laptops home and complete the homework assignments, do additional Internet research, and collaborate on group projects with other classmates via e-mail. Teachers at Boyd Middle School had extensive technology training to facilitate their use of the wireless technology.

The Byrd County Board of Education required parents of students who would take laptop computers home overnight, to participate in mandatory training sessions. Jasmine, the principal of Boyd Middle School, reported that there was an overflow crowd of parents at the first training session, which required scheduling additional training sessions. Jasmine praised the program for “placing the families in rural Byrd in the technology age” and “giving students access to a more level playing ground.” Since the initial training sessions, Jasmine reported that there were numerous problems (damage to computers, unwelcome e-mail to students and teachers, student or parental access to risqué websites) that have occurred during home use of the laptop computers.

Jasmine reported that central administration of Byrd County Schools sanctioned the Georgia Teacher Evaluation Process and had been proactive in preparing for attaching the results of standardized tests to teacher evaluation results. In discussing teacher evaluation, Jasmine reported:

In our county, we have gone to different trainings on how to look at the addendum that has to go on the GTEP observation, which we have done for years. Last year, each principal was asked to do some type of using the test data to add an addendum to a teacher’s evaluation. And we did that. Then we came back together (we’re a small system, only four schools) and we’re looking at making now a uniform, consistent addendum to go with that. Basically, we’re looking at the way we do action plans and test utilization plans. I’ll ask teachers to identify their three goals, the three lowest in the class and we’re start with where we are in the beginning and where we want to end. Also, those directly tie back to school goals, which are also my goals and the personal goals of the superintendent. It needs to all be connected. And I don’t think it’s a bad thing.

Commenting on the utilization of test results and on the need for accountability, Jasmine stated that:

It needs to all be connected. And I don’t think it’s a bad thing. We need accountability and I don’t think the teachers really fear that as long they know up front what they’re being asked to do. So I’m not asking for all to be on grade level. What I am asking is that there be one year of gain for one year of service.

A child is with you one hundred and eighty days, it's only reasonable--even if a child is sitting in sixth grade reading on a fourth grade level—I expect that child to leave you reading on a fifth grade level. I expect that when you identified your three areas of weakness and what we do is come up with an action plan, then I expect those areas to improve. So they fully understand that, and I don't think we have a problem with that.

Jasmine admitted that using high stakes test results for Connections teachers was problematic, but that the leadership committee at Boyd had devised a plan for this.

Jasmine elaborated:

Now that one is a little bit harder because the vein that goes across the school and one of the best ways to raise your test scores is vocabulary. We're a prime example of it. Last year, when I came here, the first thing that we all had to join hands and work on is vocabulary. If you look at teaching ESOL students, if you look at students that are at risk, if you look at students that are not performing up to potential, the first thing you work on is vocabulary. That will increase reading scores faster than anything else. Every single person in the building, no matter if you're a music teacher, or a PE coach, whoever you are, you must teach vocabulary. Vocabulary scores will be for those folks [Connections teachers] and then other things will be determined.

Jasmine reported that all teachers in the building teach Connections courses. Jasmine explained this as a change that had occurred with the adoption of *A Plus*, and as a remedy to the scheduling conflicts that she reports as a result of *A Plus*. Jasmine believed that:

Now it's similar to a junior high in seventh and eighth grades where we have the larger teams. That's the flavor of a junior high school. But we still have them in teams. Then with the changes with 1187, we had to have additional instructional time as well as everybody had to go to one planning period, which is 55 minutes. So in that, we changed and teachers do their four regular classes, and then they have a Connections class. Every person in the building teaches a Connections class.

When asked how the determination was made as to what Connections classes academic and special education teachers taught, Jasmine explained:

I surveyed teachers. I think folks don't spend enough time asking teachers what they think about different things. So as we came up with those, we went back and looked at the roster of teachers to determine who would want to do what, and then we asked them.

Jasmine reported that teachers were also empowered in other areas as well. She asserted:

The way I believe to reach consensus is that when we come up with a plan, no matter whose plan it is, we all sit around the table (that leadership group). We either have to be part of the solution or part of the problem. You can't say 'I don't like it.' We all have to agree to disagree.

At several points in the interview, Jasmine explained how she perceived accountability to be a positive outcome of *A Plus*. Jasmine reported that Boyd Middle School was already meeting some of the accountability mandates of *A Plus*, and she believed that other schools should have been doing the same. From Jasmine point of view, the new evaluation measures focus on teacher and administrative accountability. She assured the researcher that accountability was not to be feared, but embraced when she stated:

The bottom line of being accountable does not bother me. I was reading something about the promotion and retention policy that came from the superintendent's office about we're supposed to be having SSTs for these children if they're at risk. To me, that's almost an insult. If schools are doing what they ought to be doing, that should have been already in place.

Additionally, Jasmine offered:

I don't fear accountability. I know our school is one of those at-risk and on the list because our test scores are so poor. But we've got to do something. We cannot keep doing things in the same way. So overall, the accountability part is not bad. Some of the tactics we're using and the techniques we're using to get at the problems, I think we could have done in a much better fashion. We've got to do something. I know there are parts of it that I'm not sure what this is going to do or work out. Everything from the five days of teaching that administrators are asked to do.

You know, when you say things like that, it sounds great and wonderful, but then the actuality of when you actually do some of those things. But there again I believe that some of the things that were done in *A Plus* are because there are some people out there that are not doing what they are supposed to do. So my point would be things I disagree on, things that I question are where was the person that was supervising that principal or that assistant principal and things were not happening in that building. That would be my first question.

Jasmine related how staff development needs are determined and how staff development is a component of supervision, as well as evaluation. Teachers were empowered to initiate staff development in the school. Jasmine explained how the staff, grappling with a previous block schedule configuration, initiated staff development to maximize the use of block scheduling. Jasmine explained:

It's [the schedule] totally brand new. The year before, the school had moved in the middle of the year, and teachers were given a pure block schedule with no training. So we've gone back and trained. I just asked individuals. We sat down and talked. The thing that was loud and clear was they want training. They wanted more time with the students, but they wanted to know what to do.

However, Jasmine reported that some of the staff development provisions of *A Plus* were unnecessary for her staff. For example, Jasmine reported that the staff of Boyd Middle School were required to participate in Integrating Technology in the Classroom [INTech ] training which was required of all teachers throughout the state. Jasmine reported that the staff of Boyd Middle was already engaged in a technological project that had required at least 50 hours of technological staff development for each teacher. The staff development for the Wireless Project was conducted on-site and during the summers; the INTech staff development takes place away from the site, requiring at least five teachers to spend seven days out of the classroom each year. Jasmine complained,

Well, in the eight schools that have the wireless project, I think that all of those schools should be afforded the opportunity to be INTech trained in another way. My teachers will have 'gazillion' hours in technology training. Half my staff is already INTech trained, but half are not. Now we're looking at seven days out of the classroom or two weeks in the summer, when they've already had to come in during the summer for two days of training. They've had a consultant here for two weeks and he's working with students and with teachers with on-site training. So, I think we're just doing the wrong thing when they have to take another class. We need to do it on an alternative plan. I would like to have that autonomy to come up with that. But it's not over yet; we're trying to work that out. I'm proposing that.

Staff development emerged as an important component affecting change in the building, and she reported:

They've [the staff] done block scheduling, state changes, graphic organizers, word walls. In all of these changes, if you don't support people with new staff development, it's not going to work. You'll just be trying to make apple pie with oranges.

Jasmine related how staff development needs are determined at Boyd Middle

School and how staff development activities are documented. Jasmine reported:

We have an on-going staff development here that we discussed as connected to our goals, but also, I have a lot of teachers who go outside and take things on their own, whether it's graduate study, Staff Development Unit [SDU] credits at Regional Educational Services Agency [RESA] and other places as well as what I believe strongest in, local staff development is the most effective. So they keep up with their hours, we keep up with their hours. One of my AP's keeps up with the staff development hours. But if a teacher has had other hours that we don't know about, then that's all included in there. And then the teacher sees the amount of hours they have, the average number of hours they've had at school, so you can sort of gauge yourself as to where you are on the continuum.

Jasmine further elaborated:

We don't do anything that is not on those goals. Our staff development is goal driven. Once in a while, I'll have a teacher who says, "I'd sure like to go take such and such." It's something that may be great and wonderful but it's not the great and wonderful thing we need to focus on, then I won't do that. Jasmine does not report a change in her role in staff development at Boyd Middle

School. Jasmine perceives staff development as a part of accountability—which she embraces. She compared her staff development role before *A Plus* to her role after the adoption of *A Plus* in the following manner:

It has not been different. I've always believed in keeping an action research notebook, looking at the test scores, the three goals, how we write them here. Before I was a principal, I did those as an assistant principal for seven years and used the same format because that guides you to continuous improvement. There's not going to any overnight silver bullets, so when you get a framework in place, and consistently trod along with that, you'll make improvement.



Jasmine further defined her role in staff development with this pronouncement:

I think I still need to model for my teachers that I'm still a teacher myself. I'm never going to change that role. Like when I do a discipline workshop, I show the data on the whole school and I break it all down, we go over it. They need to see me in the light that I know how to teach and I know how to instruct. I don't need to do that as much as I used to as an assistant principal because of the other things I have to do. But I think it's good for the staff to see me in that light. And I'd like to continue to stay in that light.

Jasmine also discussed the need for local staff development from the perspective of funding and teacher ownership and commitment. Jasmine reported that she conducts staff development activities, the assistant principals and teachers who possess certain expertise, conduct staff development. Jasmine explained:

You involve the entire staff. All of us own this problem; all of us own this solution. And if we're all trained for a common goal then we build that team leadership and that buy-in from all of us. When you send a person off to a conference, what happens there is that's one person doing it. You're paying mileage, you're paying registration, it may cost you \$1000 to send somebody to a conference and that's a one shot deal. But if we train everyone, we all have the common goals, the common knowledge, the common vocabulary.

Jasmine also related that the redelivery model of staff development was used at Boyd Middle School. A redelivery model requires that a one teacher or a group of teacher receive initial training. That teacher or group of teachers returns to the school to train other teachers. She also felt strongly that teachers are paid for extended day and extended year staff development. Jasmine related that she felt that compensating teachers for extra work was justifiable and necessary. Jasmine reported:

The other thing I like to do, if we can have teacher stay after school, extended day or extended summer, I like to use my staff development funds to directly pay them stipends. Because there are a lot of things teachers do outside of those clock hours anyway. That's being professional, that's how it is. So if I can give them some extra dollars and the credit, then I prefer to do that.

Jasmine noted that she had a standard stipend that was offered to all teachers for all staff development activities. Jasmine also showed concern that the staff development budget was decreased at the time of this study, and that she had to modify funding to accommodate the staff development needs. When asked about the amount of the individual teacher stipends, Jasmine answered:

Well, I have a set amount that I like to keep consistent. Now right now my budget is so low on staff development. You know the state cut 30% of that, so it's not hitting that (\$500) for these last few hours. But they still appreciate that. Even though Bryd County is more than 60 miles away from a major metropolitan

area, Jasmine reported that teachers did not have travel long distances to take classes.

Jasmine related how she made college classes available to teachers at Boyd Middle School. Jasmine said:

Knowing some folks at Benfield College, and having a relationship with them for the last couple of years, I wanted, and then I surveyed the entire county, as well as my staff here, we were able to secure college classes here at the school. So every Thursday, there's a college class taught here. We have folks in it. So that's been a real plus that people can continue their education and just walk down the hall and not have to drive.

Finally, Jasmine explained that her "ultimate goal is for us to become a staff development school where we have student teachers and a whole cadre of folks and this is our beginning."

Jasmine had strong ideas about teacher supervision, and she defined supervision as:

Making sure that I know what's going on in all the different departments. I think it means that you need to empower people to make good decisions and to have an accountability piece in process so we can all share those—so you can look at the continuous improvement. Not that I have to be at every meeting; that's not my thing. There's a process we have here called a "feed forward or a feed backward" which is a one-pager of what went on and any questions and concerns they may have. We keep those in our action research notebook.

Jasmine continued to report how teachers were supervised at Boyd Middle School. She described the process as an iterative process, which includes goal setting, teacher evaluation, observation, and staff development. Jasmine reported:

The way we supervise teachers is this: There are certain criteria, such as they write their goals the first of the year and we discuss them. They write their course descriptions. They let me know how they're going to grade, which they have the autonomy to set up that. I ask them to do it by grade level and content and I review those. So they have a structure in place. Now the teacher observation and being in the classroom is the key because that's very important to me and the entire staff. We always have the walk-about, the walk through the classrooms and the formal GTEP. I personally don't believe in peer observation where that is the evaluation process being used in a school. Now I like for my teachers to observe each other, videotaping or self-analysis for improvement, but I think it's wrong to put a peer in a position where they evaluate another peer.

Jasmine also reported that a strong mentoring program was in place that included peer coaching. She explained, "We do have a strong mentoring program here that is similar to a peer-coaching model. Mrs. Frances Oldly, (a teacher) is in charge of that. We have that in place and its been very successful."

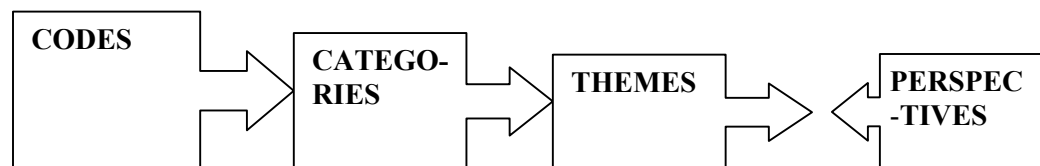
Even though Jasmine reported that the administrative staff uses the Georgia Teacher Evaluation Program (GTEP), she also discussed how staff development was a component of teacher evaluation. She also discussed the county's addendum and the formal evaluation process she utilized. She explained:

We use the formal GTEP and primarily that has been a proven instrument. I always like to write more things about than that space provides. But that is legally defensible and is used by the state and those are the things we use. Now along with that, due to 1187, there's been an addendum we've added like most counties have. And we address test scores, we address discipline referrals, staff development hours, all of those things that go into making a good teacher. So that's an addendum that we've started this year. And the teachers have been trained on that.

Jasmine maintained that accountability was beneficial for teachers and principals, when she stated, “Accountability will create an atmosphere of responsibility for teachers, students, and for principals. My personal feeling is that the accountability change has not affected me. I’ve done these things before. I don’t think accountability is a bad thing.” Jasmine was sensitive to how ruralness affected the Boyd Middle School community. As ruralness relates to staff development, Jasmine, a resident of Byrd County, expressed the difficulty she experienced while pursuing the advanced degree she holds. Jasmine noted that her empathy for teachers who must travel long distances to pursue staff development and advanced degrees was the impetus for her initiation of a partnership with a regional university. Through the partnership, Boyd Middle School teachers were able to enroll in classes which were taught on-site by university personnel.

#### The Funnel

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) asserted that generally, the design of a case study is “best represented by a funnel” (p. 62). Broad areas are examined and the examination becomes narrower, until perspectives are derived. Individual cases were examined and themes were noted. Next a cross-case analysis was conducted to examine the similarities and differences of the themes of the three participants. Finally, perspectives, which emerged from the themes, were noted. Figure 13 represents the analysis procedure. A discussion of common themes is also included.



*Figure 13.* Analysis procedure.

## Common Themes

Nine interviews with three rural middle school principals resulted in five common themes: (1) All teachers, including Connections teachers, must have standardized test results attached to their evaluation reports, (2) Supervision consists of classroom visits and observations, (3) Staff development is an important component of teacher evaluation, and, (4) Evaluative mandates of *A Plus* are not supported by appropriate staff development funding. The common themes yielded influence over the practices of the three principals: The principals: (1) sanctioned construction of uniform instruments for evaluating teachers, (2) conducted a prescribed number of classroom observations, (3) attempted to attach standardized tests results to all teacher evaluations, (4) facilitated on-site or local staff development, (5) facilitated staff development in a central location, and (6) requested local funding to supplement state allotments for staff development opportunities.

While four common themes emerged, the principals' practices in response to the themes were varied. For example, a practice that emerged from the theme "All teachers must have standardized test results attached to their evaluation reports" resulted in one principal using vocabulary scores from standardized test results to evaluate Connections teachers. The other two principals responded to the same theme by considering the use of standardized test scores in evaluating Connections teachers as impossible and a task which is essentially unfair to Connections teachers. These two principals were in a dilemma as to how Connections teachers would be evaluated.

Local school board policies for each of the three school districts were identical. Each of the policies paralleled the evaluative requirements of *A Plus*. While there was no

explicit mention of supervision in the policies, the seven requirements for teacher evaluation imply extensive supervisory practices. Staff development was an explicit requirement for teacher evaluation in that teachers are required to participate in regular staff development opportunities as a component of teacher evaluation.

### Cross Case Analysis

Cross-case analysis can be used for the purpose of constructing generalizations. This researcher used cross-case analysis for the purpose of extracting meaning or perspectives from the emergent themes. The researcher both compared the common themes and contrasted the different practices that the three principals employed. The common themes are presented before each discussion. At the beginning and end of each discussion, the resulting perspective is presented.

**Theme 1:** *All teachers, including Connections teachers, must have standardized test results attached to their evaluation reports.*

**Prevalent Perspective:** *Evaluation of teacher effectiveness can be indicated only by the results of standardized tests.*

From the perspectives of the three principals, the most only means they had to evaluate teacher effectiveness was through the results of standardized tests. This perspective persisted among the principals and even applied for teachers, such as Connections teachers, whose content was not tested through the use of standardized measures. Figure 14 highlights the practices and perspectives related to Theme 1. For example, Betty expressed concern that a “form” be used for formal and informal evaluations. When asked to tell what she knew about the evaluative provisions of *A Plus*, Betty reported:

I know that we have the option of using various forms of evaluation in addition to using the GTOI, the usual instrument, the standard one that we have been using in the past, as well as being able to add addendums to the one that we currently use. Because certain information we can't provide in an evaluation until we get test results.

Betty sanctioned and welcomed the creation of a uniform instrument that each administrator could use in evaluating “their teachers.” Betty explained:

Since each administrator is assigned to a particular grade level, devising forms that each of us could use with our particular grade level because we know what we can expect from our teachers.

Theme	Practices	Perspectives
All teachers, including Connections teachers, must have standardized test results attached to their evaluation reports.	The principal sanctioned construction of uniform instruments, specifically addenda, for evaluating all teachers.	Evaluation of teacher effectiveness can be indicated only by the results of standardized tests.
	The principal attempted to attach standardized tests results to all teacher evaluations, including Connections teachers.	

*Figure 14.* Practices and Perspectives related to Theme 1.

Betty welcomed the assistance of the Regional Educational Services Agency [RESA] in her area, in constructing a uniform addendum by which the results of standardized tests could be reported. When asked how the local RESA provided assistance to her school, Betty said, “They’re supposed to be working on an instrument for us to use in evaluating teachers along with the [Georgia Teacher Observation Instrument] GTOI, because we still use that. What they are coming up with is an addendum to the GTOI.”

Even when conducting informal evaluations, Betty expressed that she used “forms.” Betty noted that “We have informal forms or little notes that we do ourselves individually, that we give teachers, letting them know if it was a good day.”

Jasmine sanctioned the construction of a uniform instrument for evaluating teachers. She expressed that because the school system was small, each administrator (principal) would assist in constructing such an instrument. Jasmine explained her concern in this manner:

In our county, we have gone to different trainings on how to look at the addendum that has to go on the GTEP observation, which we have done for years. Last year, each principal was asked to do some type of using the test data to add an addendum to a teacher’s evaluation. And we did that. Then we came back together (we’re a small system, only four schools) and we’re looking at making now a uniform, consistent addendum to go with that. Basically, we’re looking at the way we do action plans and test utilization plans.

Mark, on the other hand, was not as concerned about the construction of a uniform instrument. He reported that:

Evaluating teachers, in my opinion (which is pretty much all I have at this point) it’s a joke coming from the state. I don’t think it helps the situation at all. I think that it’s something that they’re requiring us to do, that they don’t even want to see anymore.

However, Mark expressed concern that he conducts a prescribed number of classroom observations. He said, “We’re required to spend at least an hour or an hour and a half some days two hours in the classroom. I’m in half of them every week.”

Betty conducted a prescribed number of classroom observations. Betty used the Georgia Teacher Evaluation Program (GTEP), and she was careful to note that the standard evaluation procedure of three unannounced classroom visits yielded more data than the formative evaluation procedure of one unannounced classroom visit. Betty



reported, “Each evaluator starts out with the same number of teachers [to conduct evaluations for]. We try to balance out the formative with the standard evaluations. The standard evaluation process provides me with much more data than the formative.”

Jasmine conducted a prescribed number of classroom visits to support the GTEP, but she was more concerned that informal classroom visits for purposes other than evaluation took place. Jasmine reported, “Teacher observation and being in the classroom is the key because that’s very important to me and the entire staff. We always have the walk-about, the walk through the classrooms and the formal GTEP.”

As it relates to the theme, Jasmine attempted to attach standardized test results to all teacher evaluations. Jasmine explained the procedure she would use for teachers on interdisciplinary teams:

I’ll ask teachers to identify their three goals, the three lowest in the class and we’re start with where we are in the beginning and where we want to end. Also, those directly tie back to school goals, which are also my goals and the personal goals of the superintendent. It needs to all be connected. And I don’t think it’s a bad thing. We need accountability and I don’t think the teachers really fear that as long they know up front what they’re being asked to do. So I’m not asking for all to be on grade level. What I am asking is that there be one year of gain for one year of service. A child is with you one hundred and eighty days, it’s only reasonable--even if a child is sitting in sixth grade reading on a fourth grade level--I expect that child to leave you reading on a fifth grade level. I expect that when you identified your three areas of weakness and what we do is come up with an action plan, then I expect those areas to improve. So they fully understand that, and I don’t think we have a problem with that.

Jasmine explained a plan she devised for attaching standardized test results to the teacher evaluations for Connections teachers, even though no standardized tests are administered in band, chorus, consumer science, or foreign language, for example. When asked how she would attach standardized test results to teacher evaluations for Connections teachers, Jasmine explained her plan:

Now that one is a little bit harder because the vein that goes across the school and one of the best ways to raise your test scores is vocabulary. If you look at teaching ESOL students, if you look at students that are at risk, if you look at students that are not performing up to potential, the first thing you work on is vocabulary. That will increase reading scores faster than anything else. Every single person in the building, no matter if you're a music teacher, or a PE coach, whoever you are, you must teach vocabulary. We started that last year and continued that. This year, we've had additional training on word walls, graphic organizers; the whole school has to come with us, not just the academic folks. But when you look at Connections, the other thing I did was assign educational assistants. Every Connections person in the building, unless they have a really unusual schedule is an educational assistant. But in their time they still do, say for example, the music teacher still does her music time, but 20 minutes, four days a week, she goes down and she's assigned to one of the academic teams, to assist them: to assist at-risk kids, to be a mentor, to assist with whatever is needed in that class. And now they're connected back in with the rest of the group, so everybody has a piece of the pie. You'll also notice if you go out to our gym, that the PE teacher has a word wall on the board, and they have a vocabulary test each week on PE terms. The same thing happens down in home arts or consumer science. Vocabulary scores will be for those folks and then other things will be determined.

Betty had not yet determined how she would attach standardized tests scores to the teacher evaluations of Connections teachers. In fact, Betty expressed that it was impossible to evaluate Connections teachers because test scores could not be attached, and she explained:

Well, there is no standardized test for that [Connections] and that was one of the questions that we asked at our recent meeting, administrators' meeting. There is no way. In fact, that is a concern, because there is no way to evaluate them. Not when you consider student performance and how well they fared, because there's no way to determine that. The only thing you can do is look at the past failure rate, and go in and constantly observe what they're doing in the classrooms every day, because that's the only thing you can do.

In contrast, Mark explained that it was possible to evaluate Connections teachers on the basis of student achievement, but that the process was problematic. Mark cited the fact that Connections teachers enrolled a different set of classes each grading period, and he felt that it was not fair or equitable to attach standardized tests scores to their evaluations. Mark reasoned that classroom grades could be used to determine student

achievement in Connections classes. When asked how he would attach standardized test scores to evaluations of Connections teachers, Mark explained that the process was also problematic:

That's a difficult one. Because they only teach those kids nine weeks and they move on to another group. And their semester grade is a combination of one teacher's computer grade and some other teacher's art grade, for example. So it's going to be kind of difficult to do that. We haven't quite worked out all of the kinks about how we'll finally evaluate them. We're looking into how we're going to do that. And it's going to be difficult.

None of the three principals regarded the teacher evaluation process as being a flexible one. The principals' interpretation of the law was that the law prescribed the attachment of standardized tests results or at least classroom grades to teacher evaluations. Two of the principals welcomed and sanctioned a uniform instrument for evaluating teachers. The perspective that emerged from this theme was: *Evaluation of teacher effectiveness can be indicated only by the results of standardized tests.*

**Theme 2:** *The implementation of A Plus has increased the occurrence of classroom visits.*

**Prevalent perspective:** *Supervision consists of classroom visits and observations.*

Each of the principals reported increased time visiting classrooms and conducting classroom observations. Neither disclosed that observations were followed by conferences in which they provided feedback to teachers. Figure 15 highlights the practices and perspectives related to Theme 2.

Betty reported that because Manning Middle School was involved in implementing the school-wide reform model, *America's Choice*, she was required to conduct more classroom visits. Betty said:

Theme	Practices	Perspective
The implementation of <i>A Plus</i> has increased the occurrence of classroom visits.	The principal increased the number of classroom visits and observations.	Supervision consists of classroom visits and observations.
	The principal conducted a predetermined number of observations.	

*Figure 15.* Practices and Perspectives related to Theme 2.

Neither of us, I guess it's good to say, is an office principal. We're constantly out of the office, so it would be hard to catch up with us anytime you called us. But it's for that reason that we're in and about the classrooms. And the design that we're using this year requires that anyway. We're constantly in the classroom. We must spend at least one hour in a classroom per day. But prior to that we had said that we would spend a couple of hours per day for at least a minimum. It's hard to do, and it has been hard to do in the past because of the number of office referrals we get. We do get the one hour now because it's required. We have to. We have to.

Betty reported that some of the classroom visits were "informal observations". It seemed that the differences between informal and formal observations for Betty's purposes, was the manner in which she provided feedback to the teachers. When discussing informal observations, Betty reported:

We have informal forms or little notes that we do ourselves individually, that we give them, letting them know if it was a good day, fine. If it was destructive criticism, or what some would people call destructive criticism. We like to think that all criticism is constructive. If something is more negative than positive, we let them know that too, and give them some suggestions as to how they can improve it. Even if they are doing a good job, teachers want feedback to let them know how they're doing. So we talk to them, we put it in their boxes and let them know in writing.

Formal observations conformed to the Georgia Teacher Evaluation Program (GTEP). Consequently, feedback was given through the use of the GTEP instrumentation and teacher evaluation forms. Because she was concerned about the number of times she observed teachers, Betty also reported that she favored the standard GTEP over the

formative GTEP. Betty reported, “We have to get into the classroom more and in addition to evaluating teachers the way they should be, or the number of times they should be, we are responsible for going into the classroom five extra days.”

Well, it’s [*A Plus*] made me attend to doing things the right way. It’s certainly made me beef up the way I provide feedback to teachers, and the extent of the documentation I keep. Since we have to tell them [beginning teachers] why they are non-renewed, it makes you be sure that you have the proper documentation. in The standard evaluation process provides me with much more data than the formative.

As one of the major changes in the day-to-day operation of Heritage Middle School, Mark identified increased time in classrooms. When contrasting a typical day after the implementation of *A Plus* with a typical day before *A Plus*, Mark said, “You probably wouldn’t see me in the classroom nearly as much.”

Mark explained why he increased the time he spent conducting classroom visits. Local school practice required that administrators visit classrooms for at least one and one-half hours daily. Mark commented:

We’re required to spend at least an hour or an hour and a half some days two hours the classroom. My assistant principal, who is in charge of the curriculum, will visit every classroom on this campus every week. There no doubt about that, she goes into every classroom, every week. And I’m in about half of them every week.

Mark used the GTEP to conduct teacher observations and evaluations in addition to his regular classroom visits and observations. Though GTEP required at least one 20-minute unannounced classroom observation, Mark reported that his classroom visits were much more frequent and prolonged. Mark commented:

They [teacher] see me lots of time other than the 20-minutes and sometimes some of them get upset because they feel like we’re disturbing or distracting the kids. The kids are really not distracted; we’re in there so much, they’re pretty much used to us.

As did Betty, Mark reported that he conducted numerous informal or mini-observations. Some of these evaluations were followed up by short conferences or “conversations” with teachers. Mark revealed that in some instances, “mini-evaluations were announced to teachers.

Of course, we use a lot of “mini-observations.” We use a lot of just pop-in evaluations. Sometimes we go in and teachers have no idea we’re coming, and then sometimes we announce that we’re coming, so we can get a look at what makes up a “dog and pony show” and what makes up what is really going on in the classroom. Because of course, when I announce to teachers that I am coming to their classrooms, they get prepared. It allows me to determine get a perspective of this is really what she does everyday, or this is what the person does when an administrator comes in.

Contrastingly, Jasmine revealed that she perceived classroom observations and classroom visits to be part of a normal day. Jasmine was adamant that administrators visit classrooms daily. Jasmine said, “I’m a great believer in visiting classrooms. If all administrators would visit classrooms as they should, we would not have to mandate accountability.” Jasmine utilized the GTEP for classroom observations and feedback. Jasmine explained:

With folks that are on standard [GTEP], I’m the primary evaluator, and I’m the primary evaluator for all new teachers. I do the first observation, the next assistant principal does the second, and the next assistant principal does the third one and then I write the annual. We rotate through. So all of us have a full understanding of what the teachers in the building are doing.

Jasmine reported that observations were formal and informal. Feedback was provided to teachers on informal and formal observations. She also noted that peer observation was conducted at Boyd Middle School, but not for the purposes of teacher evaluation. Jasmine explained:

Now the teacher observation and being in the classroom is the key because that’s very important to me and the entire staff. We always have the walk-about, the walk through the classrooms and the formal GTEP. I personally don’t believe in

peer observation where that is the evaluation process being used in a school. Now I like for my teachers to observe each other, videotaping or self-analysis for improvement, but I think it's wrong to put a peer in a position where they evaluate another peer. I think that is an assistant principal and principal's position. The way I set up that is all three of us (the two assistant principals and I) use a rotation. There's a primary group for which I am responsible. I do the first GTEP, the next AP [assistant principal] does the second, and the next does the third, and I write the final review or evaluation. Every staff member, as well, has an interview at the end of the year. They fill out a questionnaire about the school and we sit down, one on one with the primary evaluator to discuss the year and discuss things about what the person wants to grow in as well as any concerns we may have or concerns they may have.

Each of the three principals reported increased time conducting classroom observations and classroom visits. Two of the principals increased classroom visits and observations because it was mandated that they do so. The other principal regarded numerous classroom visits as a component of accountability. Each of the principals used the formal Georgia Teacher Evaluation Program (GTEP) to process formal evaluations and observations. However, each of the three principals reported that other classroom visits were conducted in addition to those that were used for evaluation purposes. There was variety in the manner in which each principal gave feedback to teachers. The perspective that emerged from Theme 2 was: *Supervision consists of classroom visits and observations.*

**Theme 3:** *Staff development is an important component of teacher evaluation.*

**Prevalent perspective:** *Ruralness affects how staff development is delivered.*

The principals reported that ruralness affected how they implemented the staff development component *A Plus*. The three principals reported that the impact on ruralness was greater for some of them than for others. For example, Mark, whose rural community is farthest away from a major metropolitan area, explained that the mandates of *A Plus* seemed to disregard geographical differences related to students and to

resources. Mark called the law “a blanket, one-size fits all law.” Figure 16 highlights the practices and perspectives related to Theme 3.

Jasmine reported that ruralness affects the manner in which teachers received staff development opportunities, as well as continuing education. Teachers at Boyd Middle School experienced extensive travel time when they enrolled in college classes. To prevent this factor from becoming a deterrent to Boyd Middle School’s teachers’

Theme	Practices	Perspective
Staff development is an important component of teacher evaluation.	The principal facilitated on-site or local staff development.	Ruralness affects how staff development is delivered.
	The principal facilitated staff development in a central location.	

*Figure 16.* Practices and Perspectives related to Theme 3.

enrollment in college and continuing education classes, Jasmine devised a plan for local staff development. Jasmine described how the plan works in the following manner:

I know some folks at Benfield College, and have had a relationship with them for the last couple of years. I surveyed the entire county, as well as my staff here, to find out if people were interested in taking classes for college credit through Benfield. There were about 15 people interested, so we were able to secure college classes here at the school. Every Thursday, there’s a college class taught here. We have folks in it. So that’s been a real plus that people can continue their education and just walk down the hall and not have to drive. I feel like that puts folks in a rural community like ours on a level playing ground. We’ve got to work out ways that we can accommodate people, and not have people drive for hours at a time. That’s very difficult. I’ve been in those situations. That’s hard to do. Offering classes on-site helps teachers in their recertification efforts, as well as helps them get a higher degree.

Betty also reported that staff development opportunities were offered, but not many in Manning County. Betty explained that Manning County teachers were often included in staff development classes with teachers from other school systems. Betty



reported that this was not a negative factor, even though Manning Middle School teachers were required to endure extensive travel time to access selected staff development opportunities.

Staff development opportunities are offered in a centralized location. They try to invite teachers not only from the Manning School System, but also teachers who are a part of their RESA area. I think it has to do with the need for others to take the same classes. And see if you can kill two birds with one stone, why not? If there are teachers in other systems that need the same staff development as teachers in Manning County, then why not offer it together as space allows? Even though teachers have to travel to classes, it's an economical thing to do.

Mark reported that staff development opportunities are offered at the "system level" or locally and that some staff development was offered on-site. Mark also reported that the administration brought consultants to the school to ensure that teachers have adequate staff development opportunities.

Well, the bulk of it [staff development] is done through the system. There is staff development at the school level wherein we determine what we want. For example there may be staff development on classroom discipline or classroom management, because we determined that several teachers may need staff development in that area. We seek out those consultants who can do that and we bring them here to Heritage. If there are other teachers in the school system who need the same staff development, we welcome them.

Each of the three principals reported that ruralness had an affect on the way they implemented the staff development component of *A Plus*. The most striking affect they reported was the travel time that teachers had to endure to access staff development opportunities. One principal provided a remedy for teachers who had to travel long distances—she arranged for college classes to be offered at her school and local staff development as well. One principal reported that not only did ruralness affect staff development, but also that ruralness affected student achievement results.

The perspective that emerged from this theme was: *Ruralness affects how staff development is delivered.*

**Theme 4:** *Evaluative mandates of A Plus are not supported by appropriate staff development funding.*

**Prevalent Perspective:** *Lack of funding limits the effectiveness of the staff development component of teacher evaluation.*

The three principals reported that the mandates of *A Plus* are not supported by appropriate funding. The researcher interviewed the three principals during a period of “speculation” which resulted in frustration regarding funding. It was being speculated that funding, especially in the area of staff development, would be decreased by at least one third. The principals reported their frustration, and they reported how staff development would continue to be financed. Figure 17 highlights the practice and perspective related to Theme 4.

Theme	Practices	Perspective
Evaluative mandates of <i>A Plus</i> are not supported by appropriate staff development funding.	Principals requested local funding to supplement state allotments for staff development.	Lack of funding limits the effectiveness of the staff development component of teacher evaluation.

*Figure 17. Practices and Perspectives related to Theme 4*

Betty reported that even though staff development funds were decreased, the Manning County School System used local funds to ensure that staff development opportunities would not be eliminated. When asked “How supportive is your district, your school system of staff development?” Betty related the following:

We’ve never had a problem with staff development. They’ve been very supportive. If there is something we’d like to have our teachers take and we’ve voiced a concern in not being financially able to do it, because we’re site-based managed, we call them [central administration] and they provide funds to do it.

We've never been turned down. They ask the nature of it, of course. We have to justify it, but that's okay.

When asked if she wanted to add anything to her answer regarding staff development funding, Betty answered:

I don't think so. Except the fact that they need to pour more funds into staff development, I don't have anything to add. The Governor just cut that in his budget, but that's understandable because cuts are being made everywhere, especially in our profession. It's understandable even though it comes at a time when we need more. We've had to reserve almost a third of our budget. Money that we could have used for other purposes we can't use now, because we don't know what we'll have coming to us in the future. There's been some talk about a tax increase. But I don't think that will come in the near future, because we've already had one. Our tax base is very low anyway.

Jasmine reported that Boyd Middle School already had in place, an economical system of delivering staff development. She admitted that the decreases affected the manner in which staff development would operate at Boyd Middle. Jasmine explained the Boyd Middle practice for staff development funding like this:

I believe strongly in local staff development because you can involve the entire staff. All of us own this problem; all of us own this solution. And if we're all trained for a common goal then we build that team leadership and that buy-in from all of us. For example, we all took the brain based learning, or the state changes, or learning how to teach in the block. When you send a person off to a conference, what happens there is that's one person doing it. You're paying mileage, you're paying registration, it may cost you \$1000 to send somebody to a conference and that's a one shot deal.

Jasmine further elaborated on staff development funding as she related that Boyd Middle minimized the need for outside consultants to deliver staff development.

I do some myself, as well as my AP's. Like the reading and writing class that middle grades folks have to take. I sent one of my AP's and a team of teachers, and they're the redelivery group. Same with INTech, we believe in redelivery. The other thing I like to do, if we can have teacher stay after school, extended day or extended summer, I like to use my staff development funds to directly pay them stipends, because there are a lot of things teachers do outside of those clock hours anyway. That's being professional, that's how it is. So if I can give them some extra dollars and the credit, then I prefer to do that. They like that, and we've never done that until last year at this school. When you can get a 5 SDU

credit and a \$500 stipend for work in the summer, that's a nice little bonus. I have a set amount that I like to keep consistent. Right now my budget is so low on staff development. You know the state cut 30% of that, so it's not hitting that (\$500) for these last few months. But they still appreciate that. We can still request local funds if we absolutely need to.

Mark reported that staff development funding was not problematic in Heritage County. When Heritage Middle School's staff development funds are depleted, Mark reported that the Heritage County School System would "kick in local funds." When asked to describe his district's support of staff development, Mark replied:

They're very supportive of it. We spend every penny we can get and then some on staff development. We often times run out of staff development money because we are offering so much staff development, that is, we often run out the state's allocation of it. Then we have to kick in local funds. Usually if we can convince them that our effort is a worthwhile one, they add monies for staff development. However, if we don't show a need for it, we won't get it, what with the Governor making his cuts and all.

The three principals employed similar practices regarding staff development funding. Each principal reported that they could request additional staff development funds from local allotments. Each principal also expressed concern regarding staff development budget cuts. None of the principals reported funding concerns in other areas of school operation. The perspective that emerged from this theme was: *Lack of funding limits the effectiveness of the staff development component of teacher evaluation.*

Based on the data, four themes emerged from within-case analysis. Cross-case analysis yielded four prevalent perspectives. This chapter discussed the findings and the common themes that emerged from the data.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

This study provided an examination of three rural middle school principals. The principals, by state statute, were mandated to implement the teacher evaluation provisions of Georgia's *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*. The research was conducted to answer the following questions:

1. How did rural middle school principals perceive supervision as a result of the implementation of the *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*?
2. How did these perspectives affect supervisory practices?
3. How did rural middle school principals perceive changes in teacher evaluation as a result of the implementation of the *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*?
4. How did these perspectives affect evaluative practices?
5. What contextual factors influence the evaluative and supervisory practices of rural middle school principals?

This chapter presents a summary of the study, a discussion of the findings, and implications for further research.

#### Summary of the Study

A case study design was used to examine the perspectives of three rural middle school principals who were mandated to implement the provisions of Georgia's *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*. Nine semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted over a six-month period. Perspectives noted by the researcher included (1)

there is little flexibility in *A Plus* as it relates to teacher evaluation and supervision, (2) mandates in *A Plus* conflict with accepted practices currently being used in middle schools, (3) rural communities are at a disadvantage when implementing *A Plus* teacher evaluation and components of supervision, and (4) Local communities should supplement state allotted staff development funds to enable schools to implement the staff development measures of *A Plus*.

### Research Design

Data collection in this case study consisted of three semi-structured interviews with each of the three rural middle school principals, as well as collection of artifacts from each research site. Interviews were guided by questions from a pre-determined interview protocol (See Appendix F). Each participant completed a demographic questionnaire prior to the initial interview (See Appendix E). Interviews were audiotaped, transcribed, and analyzed using the constant comparative approach to analysis.

Symbolic interactionism provided the theoretical framework for this study. The term “symbolic interactionism” was first used by Blumer (1969) as a label for a particular brand of sociological thought that drew from the work of George Herbert Mead. Meaning and perspective are central to symbolic interactionism. The meaning “of a thing for a person grows out of the ways in which other persons act toward the person with regard to the thing” (p. 4). The meaning of a thing becomes that person’s perspective. Perspectives are made up of words and an observer uses words to make sense out of situations. The researcher utilized the components of symbolic interactionism to examine the perspectives of three rural middle school principals as they implemented the *A Plus*

*Education Reform Act of 2000*. Perspectives were examined in terms of evaluation and supervision as these two factors related to the mandates of *A Plus*. Additionally, the researcher examined the self-reported supervisory and evaluative practices of the three rural middle school principals.

Two levels of findings were analyzed in Chapter 4. First, findings from within each case were reported and discussed. Second, findings from across cases—the cross-case analysis was discussed and analyzed. Four themes emerged from the within case analysis and five prevalent perspectives emerged from cross-case analysis. Discussion and implications with regard to further research were determined based on the findings from the cross-case analysis.

### Discussion

The purpose of this section is to discuss the major findings in this study in relation to the literature reported in Chapter 2. Each section below includes a prevalent perspective and the relationship to the literature.

**Perspective:** *Evaluation of teacher effectiveness can be indicated only by the results of standardized tests.*

Even though the language of *A Plus* does not require that teacher evaluation rest entirely on the results of standardized tests, the perspective of the three principals in this study was that teacher effectiveness could be indicated only by the results of standardized tests. The principals' in this study insisted on attaching the results of standardized tests to the evaluation reports of all teachers, even Connections teachers whose content was not assessed through the use of standardized measures. Kannapel and DeYoung (1999), writing about the effect of accountability systems on rural schools argued, "Using test

scores or other artificial indices to measure school success and hold teachers accountable results in generic teaching to the test. Accountability systems without flexibility are flawed at best” (p. 77). Teachers spend vast amounts of time teaching objectives that they anticipate will appear on the tests and teaching test-taking skills. The tests become the curriculum, to the detriment of student learning.

The language of the statute encouraged principals to use a “wide range of measures;” however, the principals in this study only reported using test results as an indicator of teacher performance. The exclusive use of standardized tests elevates the tests to a high stakes level for both students and teachers. Kohn (2000) regarded high-stakes testing as “unfair as well as destructive to learning” (p. 315). Kohn argued that norm-referenced tests were not designed to assess the competency of teachers or the capabilities of students. One additional caveat to norm-referenced testing is that such tests are more likely to require knowledge that is not taught in schools, “thereby heightening socioeconomic factors that are highly correlated to out-of-school learning” (Kohn, p. 319). How can the lack of student exposure to diverse cultures and the lack of experiential knowledge affect the tests results of rural students? This factor alone not only penalizes students, but also their teachers as well.

Using standardized tests to evaluate teacher effectiveness may have an effect opposite of what is intended. Specifically, because teachers increase their focus on standardized test results, student learning and actual teacher effectiveness may suffer due to the narrow focus of teaching only what will be tested.

*A Plus* is so designed that student achievement factors will impact certification and job retention for Georgia’s teachers. Teachers and principals approach evaluation



differently when the results of an unsatisfactory evaluation are the loss of pay or certification. Does the exclusive use of standardized tests afford all of the state's teachers an equal opportunity to become re-certified and re-employed? Even though principals may be aware of this particular pitfall, they often do not examine other possibilities for assessing student achievement.

The official report card issued by the Georgia Office of Educational Accountability and the Georgia Department of Education's Public Education Report Card revealed the results of standardized tests to the general public. Scores are reported on the Department of Education website as well as the official state of Georgia website. Even though results of standardized tests give the public only a "snapshot" of teacher effectiveness and of school performance, it is this snapshot that is best remembered and most critiqued. Principals want the snapshots of their schools to be as positive as possible. Thus, principals increase their focus on standardized test results much to the detriment of teachers and their students. Accountability measures will eventually allow parents to remove their students from "failing schools." "Failing schools" are to be reconstituted—the schools will be given new teachers as well as new principals. There exists a threat to administrative job security in reconstituting schools.

This researcher was concerned by the lack of creativity the principals displayed in regard to the evaluation of Connections teachers. Connections classes include, but are not limited to art, band, chorus, computer literacy, physical education, agriculture, consumer science, and drama. Some schools design Connections classes based on student interests in such areas as banking and money management.

Regarding the purposes of evaluation, Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (1998) asserted that there are two broad purposes of evaluation. Formative evaluation is intended to improve a program and is ongoing throughout the program. Summative evaluation makes definitive judgments about the value of a program and may be the basis for decisions about the longevity of a program. The purposes may not be exclusive of each other. Both formative and summative evaluations are valid for Connections teachers.

How can principals evaluate teachers' contributions to the academic progress of students in Connections classes? Portfolios have commonly been used by professionals such as writers, actors, artists, and musicians to chronicle their growth and development through the very artifacts included in them. These professionals rely on portfolios to demonstrate their skills, achievement, and creativity. Teacher portfolios may serve the same purpose. Teacher portfolios would permit immediate feedback and allow for the process of evaluation to be continuous. The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1981) identified four attributes that are essential for sound educational evaluation: utility, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy. These standards can also be served by the portfolio approach.

Portfolios allow teachers to evaluate their performances, and to contribute data that are helpful to principals for determining staff growth and future opportunities for staff development. Additionally, portfolios provide opportunities for teachers to select materials that they perceive to be their best work, and through such an activity, teachers become part of the evaluation process. By such involvement, they are more likely to

focus their attention on how their work changes. This is productive for students as well as for teachers.

**Perspective:** *Supervision consists of classroom visits and observations.*

The principals' perspectives of supervision centered on classroom visits and classroom observations. Each principal reported increased classroom visits and formal classroom observations precipitated by *A Plus*. These observations were either those dictated by the Georgia Teacher Evaluation Program (GTEP) or other observations and visits whose purposes were undefined. When GTEP observations are conducted, the purpose of the observations *is* evaluation. The unannounced 20-minute observations, in the opinion of this researcher, confuse evaluation with supervision. Sergiovanni (1987) differentiated supervision from evaluation in this manner:

Supervision is a process inclusive of, but broader than, evaluation. In its general sense, supervision refers to a set of responsibilities and activities designed to promote instructional improvement in schools. General supervision refers to activities that are related to instructional improvement and teacher growth occurring within the broad context of schooling. (1987, p. 151)

The question becomes: Does a 20-minute observation that generates generic feedback enhance teacher growth? The observation itself becomes a high-stakes enterprise, and instructional improvement does not occur in a high-stakes environment. Observations of this type further confuse evaluation with supervision. Acheson and Gall (1994) highlight the conflict between evaluation and supervision when they relate:

One of the most persistent problems in supervision is the dilemma between (1) evaluating a teacher in order to make decisions about retention, promotion, and tenure, and (2) working with the teacher as a friendly critic or colleague to help develop skills the teacher wants to use and to expand the repertoire of strategies that can be employed. (p. 209)

The perspectives of the principals in this study corroborate Acheson and Gall's assertion. One way the conflict can be resolved is to separate the role of the supervisor from the role of the evaluator. Separating the role of supervisor from that of evaluator is rarely possible in rural and small schools because appropriate personnel are not available. Consequently, rural principals must maintain a delicate balance in the roles they assume.

The principals in this study revealed that they conducted "walk-about" and "pop-in" observations. The principals never defined the purpose of these types of observations. Undefined observations would be more effective if principals had specific plans for observing. That is, observations where principals are looking for specific practices or products that were previously defined by teachers would be, perhaps, more effective and positive for teachers and principals as well. Clinical supervision can accomplish these purposes. Rural principals, who may not have the time or the personnel to conduct clinical supervision cycles, must consider other options.

One such option is peer coaching. Peer coaching facilitates effective staff development and differentiated supervision. Zepeda (1999) described the peer-coaching model of staff development as an affirmation of clinical models of supervision. This model would require coaches to gain certain skills in the following areas:

4. Human relations and communication;
5. Clinical supervisory processes: pre-observation, observation, and post-observation techniques; and,
6. The uses of data collection instruments. (p. 110)

This particular model of staff development would place the responsibility of supervision on someone other than the principal. Peer coaches would conduct clinical supervision cycles. This is positive for the coach and for team members in that peer coaching requires all participants to reflect on their practices and the strategies they employ.

While teacher supervision for these principals did not include classroom visits and classroom observations, the researcher argues that teacher supervision entails much more. Glatthorn (1997) coined the term “differentiated supervision” (p. 3) that supports teachers by empowering them through opportunity to select the kinds of supervisory services, staff development, and the types of evaluative services they receive. Glatthorn related that differentiated supervision fosters collegiality and collaboration. Ideally, principals would monitor the process while giving teachers the autonomy to make decisions about what type of supervision they need to grow and develop.

It is noteworthy that the term “supervision” never appears in the text of *A Plus*. However, the activities that principals are required to conduct imply differentiated supervision, at least. For example, the statute requires that principals evaluate teachers on “participation in professional development opportunities and the application of concepts learned to classroom and school activities.” Inclusion of staff development in the evaluative requirements can allow principals to develop leadership styles that positively benefit teachers and students.

**Perspective:** *Ruralness affects how staff development is delivered.*

Staff development is an important component of teacher evaluation as prescribed by *A Plus*. From the perspectives of the principals in this study, ruralness affects how staff development is delivered. While this may seem obvious to some readers, the specific effects are not as obvious.

Learning from other teachers is an important way in which teachers engage in professional development. However, teachers who work in rural schools are often isolated from others who teach the same content areas or grade levels. Consequently,

they have limited opportunities to learn successful practices from other teachers. For example, the school districts where the principals in this study were employed are districts that have only three to four schools, typically one school at each level: primary, elementary, middle, and high school. Specifically, there was only one middle school in each of the districts. Teachers at those schools basically collaborated with other teachers in the same school. While this type of collaboration is beneficial for forming learning communities, collaboration with teachers from other middle schools would also be beneficial.

Burget (2000) called for middle school principals to make a commitment to strong professional development programs for their teachers. Not only should middle school principals commit to strong professional development for teachers, but they should also provide opportunities for these experiences to occur. Ideally, middle level principals should create ways for teachers to grow professionally. This transforms the leadership role of middle level principals from that of building manager to instructional leader and staff developer.

"A successful rural school administrator must possess a variety of skills and abilities in order to appropriately meet the divergent needs of teachers, students, parents, and community members" (Kennedy & Barker, 1989, p. S2). Appropriate networking skills and adequate research skills are essential for rural principals. Additionally, Kennedy and Barker (1989) positioned that teachers in rural districts are more isolated from ongoing developments in education, teach a wider range of courses, often without adequate staff development; often have outdated or inadequate supplies, and receive lower salaries than their counterparts in urban and suburban school systems.

Principals in rural schools must be creative in facilitating staff development opportunities. The use of technology is an innovative means of connecting isolated rural teachers with teachers and schools in other areas. This could be easily facilitated in one of the schools in this study. Because Boyd Middle School was participating in the NetSchools project that provided laptop computers for all students, teachers, and administrators in the building, the principal in this school could readily facilitate technological staff development. That is, through administrative leadership, computer technology could be used for communication with other teachers and schools.

One such project existed in Arkansas—the Arkansas AdVentures in Networking (AAN). Superintendents and principals use telecomputing tools to provide such teachers a source of professional development. Principals in school districts involved in the project led teachers in learning how to use computers for the purpose of communicating with teachers from whom they were geographically isolated (Jacobsen, 1986).

While it is important that principals lead staff development, Clark and Clark (1994) hold that “the principal alone cannot and does not create successful staff development programs” (p. 244). Those who will be participating in the staff and professional development programs should share decision-making and leadership. Further, Clark and Clark believe staff development experiences can be most appropriately constructed around the framework of the school as a community of learners.

Zepeda (1999) defined a learning community as “a group of individuals who share a similar vision of educational values and beliefs” (p. 58). Zepeda concluded that learning communities could not develop if principals did not become facilitators in the process. The principals in this study considered themselves to be facilitators of staff

development. Because their schools are often isolated, rural principals must escalate their efforts to facilitate staff development. Rural principals must facilitate planning and provide resources for professional development in their schools. The principals in this study revealed that on-site and local staff development was effective for themselves and for the teachers in their schools. Scarce funding precluded the facilitation of extensive off-site staff development for teachers in these schools. To maximize funding, the principals networked and shared leadership with assistant principals and teachers who exhibited expertise in areas that addressed the school goals or needs.

**Perspective:** *Lack of funding limits the effectiveness of the staff development component of teacher evaluation.*

One of the seven components of teacher evaluation as mandated by *A Plus* concerns professional development. However, even when principals empower teachers to initiate their own staff development, lack of funds can impede the progress of such ventures. Each of the three rural middle school principals reported that recent decreases in funding affected how staff development funds would be allocated for their schools. In an electronic mail communication to staff development directors statewide, dated November 20, 2001, Stephen M. Preston, Director of State Staff Development Services, related the following:

I am sure you all know by now that of the \$15.6 million the Governor's Office cut from the education budget, \$14,568,273 is coming from State Staff Development (by changing our earnings from 1.5% of certified salaries to 1 %). I am very sorry for this and believe this decision to be an imprudent one. We must work together to reverse these fortunes by redoubling our efforts to get the good news about Georgia Staff Development (Professional Learning) out to everyone in the educational and governmental community.



Additionally, Dr. Preston recommended that staff development directors, superintendents, and principals pursue other sources of funding staff development.

Each principal also reported that in instances where school-based allotments were depleted, the common practice was to find additional funds from locally generated allotments. This can, however, become problematic for rural school districts where the tax bases are not substantial. The Georgia School Superintendent's Association (2000) in their declaration of legislative priorities for 2000-2001, issued the following statement:

Our Association believes that the quality of a child's education should not be a function of the wealth of the community in which he or she happens to be born, but, rather, should be a function of the wealth of the State of Georgia. The local fair share and equalization provisions of the current funding formula have not diminished inequities sufficiently. Unless the formula is adequately funded by the state, inequity is intensified. ¶ 7

Because funding inequities exist in rural schools, decreases in funding of any type have an extremely detrimental affect on the schools' teachers and students. Decreases in staff development funds magnify the differences in rural and non-rural schools and leave those principals and teachers lacking in a component that essentially fuels school improvement.

### Implications

#### *Implications for Rural Middle Schools*

Some implications for rural middle schools especially in Georgia are that rural middle school principals and other school leaders should maximize staff development and other state allotted funds in more creative ways to support teachers in their efforts to provide a quality education to children. Even though staff development budget decreases may be inevitable, rural middle school principals must seek creative means to provide professional development opportunities for teachers. Additionally, these principals

should encourage teacher leadership in assisting in the search for alternative funding sources.

#### *Implications for Middle School Principals*

Middle school principals, in Georgia, should study the parameters of *A Plus* as it relates to the use of standardized tests for the purposes of teacher evaluation. Middle school principals should explore alternative means for evaluating Connections teachers. Are standardized tests results the only tools that principals can use to evaluate teachers? Middle school principals should study ways in which supervision, staff development, and evaluation can become a unified process. Staff development should be focused not only on the schools' teachers, but also on the administrative staff as well. Perhaps increased professional development on the part of administrators would allow them the opportunity to explore more effective means of evaluation and supervision of teachers.

#### *Implications for Institutions That Prepare Principals*

Institutions should recognize that the preparation of rural principals should differ from the preparation of their urban and suburban counterparts. Many institutions currently offer classes that focus primarily on urban education issues. Similarly, institutions could offer classes that focus specifically on rural education. These institutions should encourage students to conduct more expansive rural education research.

#### *Implications for Further Research*

Further research might be conducted relating to rural schools. This research might address questions such as: How do state and federal policies impact rural schools and rural communities? What are some successful leadership styles of rural principals?

How do rural school principals comply with state mandates? What are the salient differences that exist in rural, urban, and suburban middle schools? How does high-stakes testing affect rural students and teachers? Research of this nature would be beneficial to both rural and non-rural schools and communities.

### Concluding Thoughts

This study provided a careful examination of the perspectives of three rural middle school principals regarding the evaluation and supervision of teachers as they worked to implement *Georgia's A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*. These perspectives are indicative of the manner in which the three principals implemented the evaluative and supervisory mandates of *A Plus*. The current era of accountability in education has created an environment of concern for how teachers teach and how students learn.

The evaluation and supervision of teachers has become a high-stakes undertaking, and the responsibility ultimately is in the realm of the principalship. Principals can no longer sit in the ivory towers of their offices where they order and observe. Rural principals, in particular, and middle school principals, more specifically, must become involved, reflective, sensitive, creative, and highly informed instructional leaders if the integrity of rural middle schools is to be maintained. It is important in this environment that can be extremely stressful, that principals understand the supervision of teachers and how supervision intersects with evaluation and staff development. It would seem that the learning curve is high, but the goal is attainable.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **RESEARCHER'S PERSPECTIVE**

I have always said that I did not want to be an administrator—a principal. I felt that the job is an overwhelming, thankless job. Through the 28 years of my career in education, I have worked with and for very effective principals and those who were less effective. Of course, I learned from each of the principals I worked with and for. When offered my first administrative assignment, I accepted. It was an assignment (instructional lead teacher) that afforded me continued access to classroom teaching. I'd say I had "one foot in administration, and one still in the classroom, as a teacher." The perspectives are very different.

Even though I worked with a very democratic principal who was effective and efficient, I did not have the responsibility of the day-to-day operation of the school. Nor was I directly responsible for the implementation of local or state mandates and reforms. I did not get a full understanding of the ramifications and responsibilities of the principalship until I accepted the directorship of a small charter school. The scope of the responsibilities of the job gave me a new respect for principals—even the principals who tried, but failed to be effective.

The mandates that require implementation on the local level are sometimes overwhelming. As an administrator, I often find myself questioning the merit of many of the local mandates that require so much of my time. The addition of mandates from the state education establishment meet with the same reservations on my part. However, I believe my colleagues and I "get things done" and we also do those things that are best for our students and for teaching and learning. We are so often asked to do more with

less money and with less time and personnel. We experience conflict when the mandates we are required to implement conflict with our core beliefs about education in general and specifically with supervision. How can we be democratic, when we are mandated to be autocratic? How can we exercise instructional leadership, when we are required to perform so many managerial tasks? More importantly will we be able to provide teachers with an adequately supportive environment given the myriad new tasks we will undertake?

Additionally, I am a native Georgian, one who grew up in rural southeast Georgia. My first teaching assignment was in a rural school system in southwest Georgia. I have great respect for those rural principals who do much with little and who have significant relationships with both the students and parents of students at their schools. I believe that principals in rural communities are more often expected to protect their constituents, even while implementing mandates and directives. In my experience, teachers, students, and parents in rural schools rely on the principal to explain the positive and negative affects of mandates, while superintendents expect principals to “get the job done.” How do rural principals “get the job done?” Admittedly, I have a vested interest in the rural schools of Georgia.

I chose to situate this study in middle schools, as a majority of my teaching and administrative experience has been in that “peculiar institution.” There is a different set of skills reserved for working with transescents. Transescents possess characteristics not found in children of other ages, and I believe the best middle school teachers are able to recognize the special qualities of these students and work within the middle school concept to ensure authentic learning takes place in their classrooms. Middle school

teachers and principals are more often than not, bombarded with criticisms from communities which do not see the need for special “schools in the middle” or for the types of teaching that go on in middle schools. How do the new mandates affect the principal’s role in this blend? The principal must supervise, evaluate, empower, implement, and reward sometimes under less than optimum conditions. I am interested in how rural middle school principals implement the new mandates required by Georgia’s *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*. I want to learn how these principals perceive their evaluative and supervisory requirements and practices.

## APPENDIX B

### SAMPLE LETTER OF INVITATION

1466 Lee Street  
Small Town, GA 30000  
August 29, 2001

Mr. Mark Smith, Principal  
Heritage Middle School  
1201 Main Street  
Heritage, GA 31111

Dear Mr. Smith:

I am a doctoral student in the department of Educational Leadership at the University of Georgia. I am conducting research on the supervisory and evaluative perspectives of rural middle school principals. With this letter, I am asking whether you would consider working with me on my dissertation project. I would like to interview you, on at least three occasions during the present school term, and learn about how you supervise and evaluate teachers as you implement the new *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*. Each interview should take approximately one hour. I would like to conduct the first interview in October.

Anything you tell me will, of course, remain confidential. The information I gather will be written up into my dissertation. I have enclosed a sample authorization letter if you will need authorization from your supervisor to participate in the research. If you are willing to participate in my study, please notify me by return mail. If you have any questions about the research, please include them in your letter. If you'd like to call or e-mail me, you may do so at the following numbers and e-mail address.

770-555-5555      Residence  
770-444-4444      Office  
researcher@hotmail.com

I appreciate your consideration of my request.

Yours truly,

Charlotte King Eady  
Enclosure



## **APPENDIX C**

### **SAMPLE SUPERVISOR'S AUTHORIZATION LETTER**

Mrs. Charlotte King Eady  
1466 Lee Street  
Small Town, GA 30000

Dear Charlotte:

I am in receipt of your letter requesting NAME OF PARTICIPANT participation in your research project as part of your doctoral studies with the University of Georgia. I am always happy to assist students who are pursuing advanced degrees in education. Our profession is continually in need of those who are willing to work toward improving services to students.

I approve of NAME OF PARTICIPANT cooperation with you in this project.

Sincerely,

SUPERVISOR

## APPENDIX D

### PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in the research entitled “Rural Middle School Principals’ Perspectives of Supervision and Evaluation as They Implement Georgia’s *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*: A Case Study” which is being conducted by Charlotte King Eady, a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Georgia, 706-369-7844. I understand that this participation is entirely voluntary; I can withdraw my consent at any time without penalty and have the results of my participation, to the extent that it can be identified as mine, returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The following points have been explained to me:

1. The reason for the research is to examine the perspectives of three rural middle school principals who, by state statute, were mandated to implement the teacher evaluation provisions of Georgia’s *A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000*.
2. The researcher and I will agree on a time and place that is convenient for an interview lasting from one hour to ninety minutes.
3. No discomforts or stresses are foreseen.
4. No risks are foreseen.
5. Any information the researcher obtains about me as a participant in this study, including my identity will be held confidential.
6. My identity will be coded, and all data will be kept in a secured, limited access location.

Dr. Sally J. Zepeda, assistant professor of educational leadership is directing this research project and can be reached at 706-613-5245.

My signature below indicates that the researcher has answered all of my questions to my satisfaction and that I consent to volunteer for this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Signature of Researcher	Date
Signature of Participant	Date

Please sign both copies of this form. Keep one and return the other to the researcher.

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Note: Research at the University of Georgia that involves human participants is overseen by the Institutional Review Board. For questions or problems about your rights, please call or write: Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D., Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia, 30602-7411. Telephone (706) 542-6514. E-mail Address: [IRB@uga.edu](mailto:IRB@uga.edu)

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## APPENDIX E

### DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for consenting to participating in my study. Please answer the following questions before the interview.

1. What is the highest college degree you have earned? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How long have you been an educator? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How long have you been an administrator? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What did you teach \_\_\_\_\_ and at what grade level \_\_\_\_\_ before you entered administration?
5. Were you ever an assistant principal? If so for how long? \_\_\_\_\_
6. How long have you been a principal? \_\_\_\_\_
7. How long have you been a middle school principal? \_\_\_\_\_
8. How long have you been employed in this district? \_\_\_\_\_
9. How long have you been principal of this school? \_\_\_\_\_
10. How would you describe the geographical area(s) in which you have spent most of your career? (i.e., urban, rural, suburban) \_\_\_\_\_
11. Approximately how many students are enrolled in this school district? \_\_\_\_\_
12. How many students are enrolled in this school? \_\_\_\_\_
13. What grade levels are included in this school? \_\_\_\_\_
14. Do you utilize interdisciplinary teams? If so, how many teams \_\_\_\_\_ and how many members are on each team? \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX F**  
**SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

Interview 1

1. Tell me what you know about the evaluative mandates of *A Plus*.
2. What types of test scores do you use?
3. Could you give me an example of other types of assessments you use for the addendum?
4. How do you evaluate the Connections teachers?
5. What test scores are you planning to use to add to their evaluation reports?
6. What do you think about the *A Plus* Education reform act of 2000?
7. How has implementation of *A Plus* affected the day-to-day operation of your school?
8. What challenges, if any, have you experienced in implementing *A Plus*?

Interview 2

1. In the last interview, you mentioned geographical differences and how they affect test scores. Would you explain that?
2. What do you think supervision is?
3. How has implementation of *A Plus* affected your role as supervisor?
4. How do you evaluate teachers?
5. How has the increase in your time in the classroom affected your supervisory effectiveness?
6. Who conducts evaluations in your school?
7. How do you assure that you evaluate each teacher?

8. How has implementation of *A Plus* affected your role as evaluator?

### Interview 3

1. In our last interview, you mentioned that you believe in local and on-site staff development. How are staff development needs determined in your school?
2. What opportunities do teachers have to request specific training or staff development? Can you give an example?
3. How aware are teachers that staff development is a component of their evaluations?
4. How has their level of awareness made a difference in the number of staff development activities that are offered?
5. What is your role in staff development?
6. How supportive is your district of staff development?

**APPENDIX G**

**MATRIX OF RUDIMENTARY CODES**

<b>Codes</b>	<b>Betty</b>	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Jasmine</b>
<b>ACCT</b>			<b>X</b>
<b>ACT</b>			<b>X</b>
<b>APLUS</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	
<b>ARES</b>			<b>X</b>
<b>CHG</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>
<b>COM</b>		<b>X</b>	
<b>CTEA</b>		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>EDASST</b>			<b>X</b>
<b>EMP</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>EVAL</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>GEO</b>		<b>X</b>	
<b>GOAL</b>			<b>X</b>
<b>GR</b>	<b>X</b>		
<b>IHSD</b>			<b>X</b>
<b>INS</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>INS-f</b>	<b>X</b>		
<b>INS-s</b>	<b>X</b>		
<b>INTER</b>			<b>X</b>
<b>LSD</b>		<b>X</b>	
<b>MAN</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>MON</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>NEED</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>OBS</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	
<b>POS</b>		<b>X</b>	
<b>PPW</b>	<b>X</b>		
<b>RDSD</b>			<b>X</b>
<b>RUR</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>
<b>SCH</b>			<b>X</b>
<b>SD</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>SD-prin ini</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	
<b>SEN</b>			<b>X</b>
<b>SPED</b>		<b>X</b>	
<b>SRSS</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>SUP</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>T</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>TEA</b>	<b>X</b>		
<b>TEA ROLE</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	
<b>TIME</b>		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>TR</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	

## APPENDIX H

### EXPLANATION OF CODES:

ACCT .....	Accountability
ACT .....	Action Plans
APLUS .....	<i>A Plus Education Reform</i>
ARES .....	Action Research
CHG .....	Change
COM .....	Compliance
CTEA .....	Connections Teachers
EDASST .....	Educational Assistants
EMP .....	Empowerment
EVAL .....	Evaluation
GEO .....	Geographical Differences
GOAL .....	Goals
GR .....	Grades
IHSD .....	In-House Staff Development
INS .....	Instruments
INS-f .....	Formative Eval. Instrument
INS-s .....	Standard Eval. Instrument
INTER .....	Interpretation of the Law
LSD .....	Local Staff Development
MAN .....	Mandates
MON .....	Funding
NEED .....	Needs
OBS .....	Observation
POS .....	Positive Corrections
PPW .....	Increased Paperwork
RDSD .....	Re-delivered Staff Dev.
RUR .....	Ruralness
SCH .....	Scheduling
SD .....	Staff Development
SD-prin ini .....	Principal Initiated Staff Dev.
SEN .....	Consensus
SPED .....	Special Education Teachers
SRSS .....	Stress
SUP .....	Supervision
T .....	Standardized Tests
TEA .....	Teachers
TEA ROLE .....	Teachers' Roles
TIME .....	Time Constraints
TR .....	Test Results