This is to certify that the

dissertation entitled

Accreditation, School Effectiveness, and Excellence:

A Case Study of Two Schools

presented by

Ross J. Gillespie

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

Ph.D. degree in Philosophy

Janet Elaine Allen
Major professor

Date September 20, 1990

# ACCREDITATION, SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS, AND EXCELLENCE: A CASE STUDY OF TWO SCHOOLS

By

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A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Teacher Education

1990

## ABSTRACT

ACCREDITATION, SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS, AND EXCELLENCE:
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This research was a case study of two elementary schools, both of which had been involved in the school accreditation process through the North Central Association and the Michigan Accreditation Program. Although both schools were accredited, a major distinction between them was that, based on the disaggregation of student standardized test data, one school could be considered effective, whereas the other could be considered ineffective. One school showed a pattern of declining standardized test scores, whereas the other school continued to show a trend of stable to rising test scores. My primary purpose in this study was to answer the question: In what ways are the two schools similar and different?

The study was conducted using the educational ethnography method, a form of descriptive, on-site research that is used to investigate school operations and the forces that lie behind them. My goal was to study both schools during the course of one school year, using participant observation, collection of artifacts, and interviews with school staff and community members to gather the necessary data.

Because my focus was on discovering as much as I could about each school's culture, I concentrated on being a part of as many different situations as possible. As a result, I formulated conclusions and made recommendations that I believe are the key outcomes of this study. Main conclusions were that school effectiveness goes beyond the establishment of accreditation status and that additional information, beyond that obtained through the disaggregation of test data, should be considered in determining whether a school is effective.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have spent close to three years developing "A Case Study of Two Schools," conducting the research through participation and then reporting my findings through written documentation. Without question, the most rewarding aspect of the entire process has been that it has allowed me to grow professionally. From researching through hundreds of pages of literature, to spending an entire year visiting Lincoln and Kennedy Elementary Schools, to the hours meeting with Drs. Janet Alleman and Douglas Campbell and other members of my doctoral committee, I have gained much greater knowledge of ethnographic research and research in general.

I owe a great deal to Drs. James Gallagher and Gretchen Barbatsis for serving on my doctoral committee. I can't say or do enough to thank Drs. Janet Alleman and Douglas Campbell for their sincere interest in meeting with me chapter by chapter from the beginning to the completion of this dissertation. Both are outstanding researchers, but, more important, both have been invaluable in their support of my efforts.

My parents, Bea and George Gillespie, also deserve my sincere thanks for their support, not only throughout the six years of my doctoral program and dissertation, but also for their encouragement and support in my career as a professional educator. I have been

fortunate to have parents who have taken a never-ending interest in me, my wife, Sue, and our daughters, Erin and Brooke.

Last but not least, my wife, Sue, has been extremely supportive in my career, as well as through the completion of my Master of Arts, Education Specialist, and Ph.D. programs. Sue has been my editor and typist through the numerous papers, projects, research studies, and this final document, the dissertation. As many hours as I have spent studying, documenting, and writing, Sue has spent close to the same amount of time refining, editing, and typing my work. She has been invaluable to me during the more than 25 years we have been together.

Although I do not expect that I am finished researching and writing, the doctoral dissertation will undoubtedly be the most extensive project I will ever undertake. It has been an unforgettable experience and one I am very thankful to have had. I could not have made it without the help and support of the key people mentioned here. Thanks once again to all of you.

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# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

## Background

In recent years there has been a national movement toward improving the educational climate in America's schools. In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education published a report on the need for educational reform at the local, state, and national levels. The Michigan State Board of Education approved a set of recommendations intended to improve the educational standards in the state. In 1984, these recommendations were published in a document entitled Better Education for Michigan Citizens: A Blueprint for Action (Michigan State Board of Education, 1984).

The effective schools movement began in 1978 in New York City, when Ron Edmonds, Director of Curriculum for the New York Public Schools, initiated the Student Improvement Project (SIP) in several elementary schools in the district. The project was based on two major tenets or principles, in addition to the five correlates of school effectiveness that Edmonds had developed. The first premise of the SIP was the contention that "almost all students can learn." The second premise was: "In order to be effective, a school must demonstrate a uniform percentage of high achieving students and low achieving students demonstrating skills at or beyond minimum levels

of mastery" (Edmonds, 1978, p. 1). The final element in the determination of an effective school has to do with Edmonds's five correlates of effective schools. They are: (a) administrative style, (b) instructional emphasis, (c) school climate, (d) teacher expectations of students, and (e) assessment criteria of student achievement (Edmonds, 1982).

Accreditation has been an issue in Michigan throughout the past 15 years. During the same period, a great deal of research has been done in Michigan and nationwide on the question of what constitutes an effective school. Accreditation, school effectiveness, and their translation into school excellence are prominent issues facing Michigan schools today, as identified in the recent findings of the Michigan State Superintendent's Committee on Accreditation ("Accreditation of Schools," 1985).

## Purposes of the Study

My purpose in this case study was to investigate the questions posed above as they apply to accreditation, effectiveness, and excellence in the elementary school. The study was based on a method of research called educational ethnography, a form of descriptive, on-site research that is being used to investigate school operations. Educational ethnographers involve themselves in the school community to be studied, using a variety of data-gathering tools, including participant observation, videotape recording, photographing, interviewing, and administering surveys and questionnaires. Unlike experimental researchers, ethnographers

perceive the members of the community under investigation as informants rather than subjects.

The focus of this study was two elementary schools in two suburban communities in Michigan. Both schools were accredited by the same accrediting body, the Michigan Accreditation Program (MAP). Both schools were K-5 elementary schools and were similar in size--approximately 350 students. Both schools served communities representing similar socioeconomic backgrounds. The administrators of both schools had 14 years of experience, and the staffs in the two schools were similar in the number of years they had taught. Both schools represented school districts with similar financial backing for each student, approximately $4,200.

As mentioned, both elementary schools were accredited. However, based on the disaggregation of Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) test scores (grade 4) and California Achievement Test (CAT) scores, one school was considered effective, whereas the other school was not considered effective because of its higher percentage of low-achieving students (Edmonds & Lezotte, 1982).

## Research Questions

Questions regarding the relationship between educational need and instructional adequacy, between school services and school outcomes, and between teaching effort and educational excellence are of central concern to educators today. My purpose in this research was to study two schools during the course of one school year, using

the ethnographic techniques of participant observation, collection of artifacts, and interviewing of staff and community members to gather the necessary data. Because both schools had achieved accreditation status, and one school was considered to be effective whereas the other was not, I intended to make first-hand comparisons of the two schools.

Using the Michigan Accreditation Program (MAP) as the standard for school accreditation and the school effectiveness research conducted by Edmonds and Lezotte as the measure of an effective school, the following questions were addressed in this study:

1. In what ways are the two accredited elementary schools similar to one another?

2. In what ways are the two accredited elementary schools different from one another?

3. Does the identification "effective school" reflect the quality of the school's educational program and services?

4. Does the declaration "ineffective school" reflect the quality of the school's program and services?

5. Can a school's effectiveness be determined by disaggregating students' standardized test scores?

To address the preceding questions, primarily through observation and interview I sought to answer questions about each school regarding administrator style, instructional emphasis, school climate, teacher expectations and behaviors, pupil evaluation, and community relations.

In this study, as in the effective schools research conducted by Edmonds and Lezotte, a school was considered effective if it had uniform percentages of high-achieving students from high and low socioeconomic groups, as determined through the disaggregation of test scores (Edmonds, 1979).

## Limitations

All types of research have certain limitations; this study is no exception. Probably the greatest limitation was the small sample that was used, which could affect the global conclusions that might be drawn. Caution must be used in generalizing the findings beyond the two schools represented in the study.

Another limitation concerns the accuracy of certain types of information. Even though each person interviewed and observed was guaranteed complete anonymity, the fact remains that I was an administrator in another school district, and that might have influenced people's willingness to reveal certain information, particularly about the administration of the schools. However, such obstacles are typical in ethnographic research; thus, I relied more heavily on observations than on interviews in drawing conclusions.

## Organization of the Dissertation

This study is presented from an ethnographic, participant-observer point of view. The background of the study, purposes of the study, research questions, and limitations were set forth in Chapter I. Chapter II contains a review of selected literature pertaining to accreditation, effectiveness, and excellence. The

methodology used in the study is described in Chapter III. Chapter IV consists primarily of background information on the school communities, the sites involved in the study, and the key performers at each of the schools. Chapters V and VI contain the details of my visits to the two schools throughout the 1988-89 school year. Information for these chapters was extracted from my personal observations, interviews, and collection of various artifacts. The two schools are compared in Chapter VII. The findings of the study and their implications for the future are discussed in Chapter VIII.

# CHAPTER II

# REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

## Introduction

For the past 15 years, the issues of accreditation, effectiveness, and their translation into educational excellence have been of continuing concern to the Michigan State Board of Education. Accreditation is a process that involves a school staff in completing a self-analysis of its total operation, then allowing an external visitation team to complete a similar analysis and report its findings.

It might be argued that increased understanding and greater knowledge of a school's quality and effectiveness in meeting its stated goals are attained through the school accreditation process. Legislators, school board members, administrators, teachers, parents, and students want good schools. But what characteristics make schools good? Accreditation may furnish part of the answer. In addition, effective schools research has provided a large part of the answer because many systems, schools, and students are studied; objective and accurate measures are taken; and the results usually are scrutinized to sharpen the validity of the conclusions.

The review of literature and the findings of this study should provide broadly based, objective information that can be used to

help educators obtain information relative to accreditation and school effectiveness. Education in America is complex. I cannot cover all of the crucial issues facing education in this literature review, nor can I prescribe how to implement principles that would be equally effective in every school or system. However, what I have done is report educators' and researchers' current knowledge pertaining to **accreditation, effectiveness,** and **excellence.** Each of these topics is reviewed separately in the following pages.

## Accreditation

### Introduction

Because both schools involved in "A Case Study of Two Schools" have been involved in accreditation programs, and because accreditation provides one of the common links between the schools, information regarding the process of accreditation, its background, and its relevance to school effectiveness is provided in this chapter. When educators and others are asked whether they are interested in learning about school accreditation, the response is usually a yawn. However, if they are asked whether they want to know more about such subjects as evaluating educational quality, assuring institutional accountability, achieving and maintaining high standards, making education more responsive to students' needs, achieving overall school and teacher effectiveness, and offsetting the dangers of governmental control of education, the interest level suddenly soars.

In view of its long history, accreditation should be simple to define. According to the Council on Accreditation Policy (cited in

Young, Chanbus, & Kells, 1983), "the public has come to expect accreditation to be a prime indicator of educational quality" (p. 1). Accreditation is the ongoing process that confirms that a school, institution, or organization has met a set of standards for quality education. In education, accreditation has generally been performed by a private organization. Most recently, state and federal governmental agencies have also been entering the accreditation process.

In arriving at the decision to accredit an institution, the accrediting agency must recognize the right of institutions to be evaluated in light of their own stated purposes, as long as those purposes correspond to and adequately reflect the definitions of general educational purpose or programs established by the accrediting body. As a result, the criteria for accreditation are twofold: Although the institution does establish and control its own objectives, and the status of the institution is to be evaluated on the basis of its progress in realizing these objectives, the institution must also meet minimum educational standards. In any profession, the purposes of accreditation fall into three major categories: (a) protection of the public, (b) stimulation and improvement, and (c) advancement of the profession (Young et al., 1983).

The United States Office of Education recognized the purpose of accreditation as "the development and maintenance of educational standards" (Young et al., 1983, p. 14). That agency listed the following functions of accreditation:

1. Certify that an institution has met established standards.

2. Assist the public in identifying acceptable institutions.

3. Protect an institution against harmful internal and external pressures.

4. Create goals for self-improvement of weaker programs.

5. Stimulate a general raising of standards among educational institutions.

6. Involve the faculty and staff comprehensively in institutional evaluation and planning.

7. Establish criteria for professional certification and licensure, and for upgrading curriculum and course offerings.

8. Provide one basis for determining federal assistance (Young et al., 1983).

Historically, accrediting agencies have agreed that their function is to assist institutions and improve their standards, and that the whole system is designed for self-regulation and self-improvement. However, accrediting bodies have not agreed that their functions are necessarily those listed by the Office of Education. In a number of congressional hearings, representatives of accrediting agencies have spent considerable time testifying as to what accreditation "is not." According to Kirkwood (1976) in Myths of Accreditation, what accrediting agencies seem to oppose most are the notions that they have a responsibility through accreditation to protect students as consumers or to ensure the financial stability of the institutions they accredit. However, the public is protected if accreditation screens out inadequate schools and incompetent

practitioners, or forces them to improve to a point beyond the minimum standards. Individuals who already meet minimum standards may be stimulated by accrediting procedures to improve. Through accreditation, a profession may gain status and other benefits by raising the overall quality of its members and by advertising responsible intraprofessional quality control (Kirkwood, 1976).

## What Is Accreditation?

Accreditation began as a relatively simple idea, a voluntary effort by a small group of educational institutions to agree on standards for distinguishing a college from a secondary school. Whatever else the term "accredited" has come to mean, two points stand out in both its lay and technical uses: (a) to be accredited is good because it represents prestige and meritorious status, and (b) the status is assigned by some other party or parties; it is not self-assumed.

Definitions of accreditation have repeatedly emphasized the role of accrediting bodies in recognizing schools, programs, and postsecondary institutions that meet established standards. Common definitions of accreditation include the following (Heilbron, 1976):

> The recognition afforded an educational institution in the United States by means of inclusion in a list of institutions issued by some agency or organization which sets up standards or requirements that must be complied with in order to secure approval. (p. 7)

> The voluntary process whereby an agency or association grants public recognition to a school, institution or program of study as having met certain predetermined qualifications or standards. (p. 8)

> The process whereby an organization or agency recognizes an institution that meets certain established qualifications and educational standards, as determined through initial and periodic evaluations. (p. 9)
>
> [The recognition] that certain accepted standards have been satisfactorily met, as judged by some group of competent experts. (p. 10)

All of these definitions fall short of capturing the real purpose of accreditation as it has functioned in recent years. Although the definitions are essentially accurate, they are severely limited. Accreditation is a process through which an educational institution evaluates its activities, in whole or in part, and seeks an independent judgment to confirm that it is substantially achieving its objectives and is generally equal in quality to comparable institutions or specialized units.

Over the years, the typical model of accreditation depicted by those who have sought to standardize and professionalize the process has included the following aspects (Heilbron, 1976):

1. A voluntary application for accreditation, which signifies a wish to meet the accrediting agency's published standards.

2. A searching self-study by the applicant institution, which is conducted in accordance with general guidelines provided by the accrediting agency.

3. An intensive inspection visit, which is carried out by a team of volunteers dispatched by the accrediting agency.

4. A subsequent decision by the accrediting agency's accrediting commission, which is based on the self-study, the team report, and any other information available to grant, deny, or renew

accreditation for a given period, and which indicates whether the applicant has met the agency's standards.

Accreditation is focused on two primary concerns: (a) educational quality, defined and interpreted in the context of the institution's own statement of scope and purpose as compared with similar institutions; and (b) institutional integrity, meaning that the institution or program is what it says it is and does what it purports to do. The accreditation process is designed primarily to encourage and assist the institution to evaluate itself objectively and then for the accrediting body to validate what the institution has said about itself.

More than 70 years after the adoption of school accreditation on a national level, the following questions remain:

1. Is accreditation really necessary? Does it meet an important social need? Can that need be met as well or better in some other way? Is accreditation cost effective?

2. What should be the primary purpose of accreditation--quality improvement or quality assurance? Can the same process serve both purposes effectively?

3. Should accreditation be a governmental or a nongovernmental process?

4. Can accreditation respond meaningfully to public concerns about educational quality and institutional integrity?

Ideally, institutions should recognize that accreditation is perhaps most valuable as an evaluative tool and that they should use

the accreditation process as an unequaled opportunity for improving their educational quality (Heilbron, 1976).

The Development of Accreditation Nationally

By most standards, accreditation is still a fairly recent phenomenon. To understand accreditation, one must know how and why it began, the ways it has been modified over the years in response to changing conditions, and its basic characteristics.

Accreditation emerged as a national phenomenon in August 1906. In response to a proposal from George E. MacLean, president of the State University of Iowa, the National Association of State Universities convened a meeting in Williamstown, Massachusetts, of a joint committee to present a plan for establishing, preserving, and interpreting in common terms the standards of admission to college in order to accommodate migrating students. Attending the meeting were representatives of the four existing regional associations of state universities, as well as members of the six-year-old College Entrance Examination Board (Heilbron, 1976).

During this same period, two other developments important to accreditation occurred in the Midwest. First, the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, which had started accrediting high schools in 1905, decided to accredit colleges as well. Standards were drawn up in 1909, and the first list of accredited postsecondary institutions appeared in 1913. This activity was the first accreditation of institutions of higher education on a national scale. Meanwhile, in Chicago, the American

Medical Association established its Council on Medical Education in 1904, developed a rating system of medical schools in 1905, initiated inspections in 1906, and prepared the first classifications of institutions in 1907 (Floden, 1978a).

At its inception, accreditation began with a problem of definition (What is a high school? A college? A medical school?) and a problem of articulation between high schools and colleges and among institutions of higher education. In 1929, the Higher Commission of the North Central Association appointed the Committee on Revision of Standards, which set forth a newly developed policy that serves as the basis for regional and professional accrediting to this day. The principle that an institution would be evaluated in terms of its own purposes and not by arbitrary standards was adopted by the North Central Association and gradually by other regional associations. This principle, in turn, led to the establishment of the self-study process.

During the past 70 years, accreditation has changed (a) from a quantitative approach expressed in terms of specific requirements to a qualitative approach based on more general standards, (b) from an emphasis on making institutions more alike to recognition and encouragement of institutional individuality, (c) from a system heavily dependent on external review to one based more on self-evaluation and self-regulation, and (d) from an initial focus on judging an institution to a primary goal of encouraging and assisting an institution to improve its educational quality.

Accreditation has served important social needs from its inception, although the general public has not generally known or understood its role. Accreditation has served society remarkably well by establishing consensus on the meaning of a high school, a college, and professional schools by promoting effective articulation among institutions and improving educational standards and practices. Over time, however, accreditation has taken on a broader social purpose. Federal and state governmental agencies now use accreditation as a consideration in determining eligibility for certain funds, in defining licensing requirements, and in other ways.

Although those involved in accreditation have attempted to maintain its traditional voluntary nature, government is now playing a growing role in the process. Some authors writing about accreditation have been overly preoccupied with and have tended to exaggerate the role of government and to overlook or minimize the strong, underlying commitment to accreditation as a voluntary, nongovernmental activity. Accreditation was also founded on the concept of academic freedom for faculties, which are traditionally collegial groups of independent scholars and educators. Accreditation functions as an evaluatory process much more than as a regulatory one. Institutions and programs evaluate themselves, and peers from other institutions assess those evaluations. During the past 25 years an important shift has taken place in educational evaluation, from an emphasis on process to a focus on product

(outcomes). Now accreditation, somewhat belatedly, is reflecting that changing emphasis (Heilbron, 1976).

Most criticisms of accreditation have been based on erroneous expectations of the process or have been directed at persons and organizations that were conducting inappropriate activities in the name of accreditation. Fred O. Pinkham, first executive director of the National Commission on Accrediting, described accreditation as an "elusive, nebulous, jellyfish term that means different things to the same people" (cited in Young, 1983, p. 17). Henry M. Winston, a former president of the North Central Association, wrote in 1960 that "the accreditation process is driven by judgments which are essentially superficial, transient in their validity, and a drain upon time, energy, and resources" (cited in Young, 1983, p. 17). In 1970, James D. Koerner, an official with the Sloan Foundation, delivered a paper entitled "Who Benefits From Accreditation: Special Interests or the Public?" in which he strongly suggested that there were more benefits to the former than the latter. Finally, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching issued a report that was critical of both regional and specialized accreditation (Young, 1983).

Accreditation has never been well understood by the general public or, in many cases, by the institutions it primarily serves. Furthermore, accreditation by its very nature represents a "struggle over standards." Various interest groups within the institutions contend with one another, and external organizations try to exert their influence on institutional priorities. Inevitably,

accreditation is influenced by these pressures and is also criticized by those whose interests are not served (Orlans, 1975).

Accreditation in Michigan

For the past 15 years, the Michigan State Board of Education has been concerned with the issue of accreditation. Relationships between educational needs and instructional adequacy, between school services and school outcomes, and between teaching effort and educational effectiveness are of central concern to those who must determine and evaluate Michigan's educational policies. It has been argued that greater knowledge and increased understanding of a school's quality and effectiveness in meeting its stated goals are attained through the school accreditation process.

The history of accreditation in Michigan is identical to the development of secondary school accreditation in the United States. The concept of accrediting schools originated at the University of Michigan in 1871, when this small but growing state university decided to try a new plan for admission of freshmen. This was accomplished through a "diploma" relationship between high schools and the University of Michigan. A commission of examiners from the academic faculty was appointed to visit high schools and place on a diploma list those students who were considered to be doing satisfactory preparatory work. Any graduate of a diploma school, recommended by the principal of the school, was permitted to enter the University without further examination; thus, high school accreditation in this country was under way. In 1871, the

University of Michigan accredited five high schools. That number increased to 16 by 1880, 200 by 1910, 347 by 1920, and to 611 by 1951; about 630 public and private schools are now accredited by the University of Michigan's Bureau of School Services.

Beginning in 1895, and growing concurrently with the University of Michigan's accreditation system, was the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The beginnings of the organization can be attributed directly to the administrative foresight and personal efforts of William H. Butts, who was principal of the Michigan Military Academy of Orchard Lake at the time. He became acquainted with the activities of the recently created New England Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools and was impressed by that organization's work ("Accreditation of Schools," 1985).

In 1901, the College Entrance Examination Board was established to address the problem of college entrance requirements. The North Central Association and other regional associations of colleges and schools assumed the task of raising educational standards. The first step was to establish a process of accreditation. A set of minimum standards was developed, and schools were inspected to verify that they met those standards; approved institutions were put on an accreditation list. Thus the North Central Association had become an accrediting agency.

In 1904, the North Central Association accredited 28 high schools in Michigan. In 1984, the Association accredited 352

standard high schools, as well as 16 elementary schools, 20 junior high/middle schools, 1 college-preparatory school, 1 adult school, and 13 optional/special-function schools in Michigan. Thus, in 1984, 403 Michigan schools enjoyed the benefits of regional accreditation.

An important point is that both of these accrediting agencies, the University of Michigan and the North Central Association, grew as voluntary-membership organizations. Both accredit public as well as nonpublic schools. Schools that want to be accredited must request an evaluation for such accreditation.

Both the University of Michigan's Bureau of School Services and the North Central Association require member schools to complete relevant reports. A University of Michigan representative visits accredited schools once every five years to ensure that the schools are continuing to comply with the University's accreditation standards. Once every seven years, the staff of schools accredited by the North Central Association are required to conduct an in-depth self-study, which is generally considered to be a six- to nine-month activity. This is followed by a two-and-one-half-day on-site evaluation by representatives of the North Central Association. The Association expects that the identification of the school's strengths and limitations and the resulting evaluation will be shaped into a school-improvement plan. In their evaluations, both The University of Michigan and the North Central Association gather mainly quantifiable and categorical data, such as those pertaining to school enrollment, staff, curricula, expenditures, educational

level of school staff, certification of administrative and instructional staff, expenditures for library/media materials, and student activities.

Most schools evaluated by the North Central Association consider the visiting team's evaluation to be desirable, and it is favored by educators. Although the primary purpose of the on-site visit is to validate the school's self-study report, positive results are also achieved when the visitation team members and school staff interact and exchange ideas on issues related to programs and instruction (Michigan Accreditation Pilot Study [MAPS], 1987).

The accreditation process can be used to stimulate teachers, administrators, and boards of education to develop and operate school programs of the highest quality. The process can also help schools identify strengths and weaknesses and give them an opportunity to correct identified problems. Accreditation and self-evaluation can lead to school improvement. To meet or exceed the accreditation standards requires the involvement of the total school staff and a strong commitment to educational renewal. The requirement that the school or school district undertake a periodic self-evaluation is a proven stimulus for growth and improvement.

A school or school district should be evaluated in terms of what it is striving to accomplish, as stated in its goals and objectives, and the extent to which it is meeting students' needs. If the evaluation is to be meaningful, the goals and objectives must

meet or exceed criteria accepted by state boards of education. When schools are evaluated against a common set of standards by means of a process that includes self-study and results in recommendations that can be translated into programs at the local level, accreditation can be an extremely valuable tool (MAPS, 1987).

In recent years there has been a growing interest in improving the educational climate of American schools. In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education published A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform, which emphasized the need for educational reform at the local, state, and national levels. In Michigan, the State Board of Education approved a set of recommendations intended to improve educational standards in the state. In 1984, the State Board of Education published these recommendations in Better Education for Michigan Citizens: A Blueprint for Action.

In A Blueprint for Action, the State Board of Education recommended that every school or school district develop a long-range (three- to five-year) school improvement plan. In addition, the Board recommended that the school improvement plan not be limited to the criteria set forth in that document, but include the Common Goals of Michigan Education, the North Central Association Evaluative Criteria, the Michigan K-12 Program Standards of Quality, and other educational documents approved by the State Board of Education. As schools are being encouraged to reexamine their procedures, structures, offerings, and their very purposes, current

accreditation systems are reappraising their own contribution to school improvement.

According to A Blueprint for Action, "the State Board of Education shall develop a system, implementation plan, and timeline for accreditation of elementary and secondary schools" (Michigan State Board of Education, 1984, p. 4). To achieve this objective, the Superintendent of Public Instruction approved the establishment of a study committee to work with the staff of the Department of Education to develop and make recommendations to the State Board of Education regarding an accreditation system.

The Superintendent's Study Committee on Accreditation, organized in spring 1984, is broadly based and includes representatives of the major educational organizations and members of the two Michigan accreditation agencies: the North Central Association and the University of Michigan's Bureau of Accreditation and School Improvement Studies, formerly the Bureau of School Services. The Study Committee was charged with making recommendations to the State Board concerning the feasibility of implementing a statewide outcome-based accreditation program. In addressing its charge, the Study Committee determined that the development, testing, and possible implementation of a statewide accreditation program would be a two-part effort.

Part one of this effort was directed toward building on the successful history of the existing accreditation programs of the University of Michigan and the North Central Association. Although the Study Committee understood that secondary school accreditation

must be addressed in designing a comprehensive system, the existing University of Michigan and North Central Association programs were considered sufficient to serve Michigan high schools while a comprehensive state system was being developed.

Part two of the effort entailed developing and pilot testing a statewide voluntary, outcome-based accreditation system for Michigan elementary, middle, and junior high schools. The Study Committee decided to proceed in that fashion primarily because, in Michigan, only the North Central Association offers accreditation of elementary, middle, and junior high schools, yet fewer than 40 of the approximately 2,500 such schools have sought accreditation. Following its decision to pursue a two-part approach, the Study Committee developed a detailed action plan.

In 1985, at the request of the Superintendent, the Study Committee undertook an extensive review of accreditation standards, criteria, and processes used in all 50 states ("Accreditation of Schools," 1985). In his request, the Superintendent defined accreditation as a state-level procedure that confirms that school staff have gone through some process to validate that certain standards are in place within the schools. All 50 state educational departments responded to the survey. Major findings were as follows: (a) 33 states had accreditation or similar programs in place; (b) 8 of the 33 state systems were strictly voluntary, with no statutory requirements; (c) 2 state systems were voluntary, but had statutory requirements; (d) 23 of the state systems required

schools to participate by statute; and (e) 10 systems were to some degree tied to state funding.

After completing the field study, the Study Committee designed a pilot study, the Michigan Accreditation Pilot Study (MAPS, 1987), whose primary objectives were to develop and test an accreditation model and to gather data on which recommendations to the State Board of Education concerning the feasibility of implementing a statewide outcome-based accreditation program could be founded. As a first step, the Study Committee developed a tentative set of standards, criteria, and processes based on the Common Goals of Michigan Education, the North Central Association Evaluative Criteria, the Michigan K-12 Program Standards of Quality, suggestions from the State Board of Education, and criteria developed to address additional specific needs.

Early in 1986, Superintendent of Public Instruction Philip Runkel sent notices to all Michigan public schools inviting their representatives to attend one of five informational meetings at which the pilot study would be described in detail. Representatives of more than 650 schools and school districts attended those sessions, and after having received the details of the MAPS project, more than 350 schools volunteered to participate in the study. The schools selected to participate were chosen on the basis of their community stratum and several additional criteria. The limited but representative sample of 25 participant schools included 13 elementary and 12 middle/junior high schools. Four of the 25 schools had already been accredited by the North Central

Association, and 21 had not previously sought accreditation. Three of the pilot study schools were not public schools (MAPS, 1987).

As the pilot study continued during the 1986-87 school year, a three-day content and process review was conducted in Traverse City in June 1987 so that the MAPS project staff could obtain the input of the participating principals, steering committee staff, facilitators, and visitation team chairs. The topics they reviewed included the tentative accreditation standards; the staff self-study data collection; training and materials; costs; and the selection of steering committee staff, facilitators, and visitation team members. The information obtained from the participants in these review sessions was particularly useful (MAPS, 1987).

The final pilot study report and revised materials were presented to the Superintendent's Study Committee on Accreditation in November 1987. The report contained recommendations concerning the feasibility of implementing an accreditation program for Michigan elementary, middle, and junior high schools. These recommendations included the newly proposed accreditation standards, data-collection instruments and processes, training materials, and various school improvement plans. Following approval by the Study Committee, the final project report and accreditation model were approved by the State Board of Education in January 1988.

## Research on Effective Schools

### Introduction to Effective Schools

Over the past 15 years, concern about schooling and its consequences has reached major proportions. Through the 1960s and into the 1970s, traditional faith in schooling was subjected to severe assault. A major source of this concern was the federally sponsored Coleman Report, entitled Equality of Educational Opportunity (Coleman, Campbell, & Hobson, 1966), which raised serious doubts about the contributions of schools to student achievement. At higher educational levels, employers, college teachers, and newscasters voiced anguish at the inability of high school graduates to perform basic reading, writing, and computation tasks, and declines in Scholastic Aptitude Test scores were interpreted to mean that not even the more able students were performing as satisfactorily as they once had done.

It is an understatement to say that in recent years the effectiveness of schools has been a matter of controversy. Controversy about schools and school practices is probably as old as formal education itself; however, in recent years the debate has reached new levels of intensity and seriousness. Part of the reason for the recent growth in concern about schooling is the fact that, in the mid-1960s, the United States Congress made a substantial commitment to education as a policy area in which significant efforts were undertaken to rectify perceived inequalities in American society. The congressional commitment was both financial and moral--financial in terms of the vast sums of money allocated to

interventions such as Head Start and Title I programs, and moral in the sense that the aim of legislation was to eliminate educational, social, and economic imbalances due to race, color, and national origin.

As mentioned, the main focus of the controversy in the United States has been the findings of the Coleman Report of 1966, as well as the problems of low-achieving students, particularly those in disadvantaged inner-city areas. Other issues have also been brought into the debate, such as a purported decline in schools' scholastic standards and students' lack of social responsibility. However, the main empirical data on which the controversy rests have been the findings of the Coleman Report and the evaluations of compensatory programs for disadvantaged children.

Prevalent among the national and state reports dealing with the question "What's wrong with our schools today?" has been the literature on effective schools. Effective schools research has been conducted since the late 1960s. Such research has indicated that, when schools were matched on student background characteristics, the levels of student achievement varied greatly. These differences in school achievement corresponded to differences in school management, processes, instruction, and climate. Thus, the effective schools research has shown that important determinants of student achievement are within the schools' control. Effective schools research and related studies on teaching and learning constitute the most important body of educational information that

has been compiled in the last two decades. This research is important because it has identified and described the school climates that are most conducive to the teaching and learning process. In doing so, a body of objective research has been developed, supporting the traditional American belief that good schools can and do enhance learning (Robinson, 1985).

This traditional belief was severely challenged in the mid-1960s by the conclusions of Coleman's massive national study on equality of educational opportunity (Coleman et al., 1966); such equality had been mandated by Congress in the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The authors of the Coleman Report specifically stated:

> . . . This fact alone is important: Differences in school facilities and curriculum, which are the major variables by which attempts are made to improve schools, are so little related to differences in achievement levels of students that, with few exceptions, their effects fail to appear even in a study of this magnitude. Taking all results together one implication stands out above all: that schools bring little influence to bear on a child's achievement that is independent of his background and general social context. (p. 2)

These widely disseminated conclusions had a devastating effect on education. They lowered expectations for and decreased confidence in the importance of public education. Educators seriously doubted the claim that there was little the schools could do to compensate for the effects of nonschool factors on student achievement; however, at the time, little or no information was available to refute that claim.

Researchers conducted studies to identify or confirm the factors related to higher achievement in basic skills among students in certain schools. Wilbur Brookover, George Weber, Jere Brophy,

Lawrence Lezotte, Ron Edmonds, Benjamin Bloom, Fenwick English, and others identified a common set of characteristics that tended to be present in schools with high-achieving students. The researchers found that, when schools were matched on student background and socioeconomic characteristics, differences in the achievement levels of students in these schools corresponded with differences in school management, instructional processes, and learning climate (Robinson, 1985).

Specifically, Edmonds and Lezotte (1982) found that high-achieving schools were characterized by the following factors:

1. Strong administrative leadership by the school principal, especially in regard to instructional matters.

2. A school climate conducive to learning, i.e., a safe and orderly school free of discipline and vandalism problems.

3. Schoolwide emphasis on basic skills instruction, which entails agreement among the professional staff that instruction in the basic skills is the primary goal of the school.

4. Teacher expectations that students can reach high levels of achievement regardless of pupil background.

5. A system for monitoring and assessing pupil performance that is tied to instructional objectives. (p. 24)

In 1981, Coleman conducted another large study for the National Center for Educational Statistics, U.S. Department of Education. This time he found that schools did make a difference in student learning, even when students' background and socioeconomic status were taken into account (Robinson, 1985).

Elements Common to Effective Schools

The effective schools research has had a profound influence on the quality of teaching and learning in the United States. Because of this research, the basic differences between effective and ineffective schools can now be understood and documented. As a result of research completed over the past 15 years, an effective school can be defined as follows:

> An effective school is a school whereby all students have opportunities to learn regardless of their background. Such learning is the result of systematic efforts to promote learning based on strategies supported on research data and success experienced by staff members. (Edmonds, 1979, p. 5)

The effective schools research is so important to the improvement of education that a knowledge and understanding of this research has become an essential part of the professional literacy of school administrators and teachers. The research is especially important because it not only shows that important determinants of student achievement are within the control and management of the schools, but it also provides a basis for assessing and altering the learning climates of specific schools. There is no question that the formula for success in effective schools differs from school to school and from study to study; however, it is clear that instructionally effective schools have many similarities. Three fundamental factors common to effective schools are that (a) they operate in a climate in which the professional staff believe their students can achieve, and they hold high expectations for student accomplishment; (b) they possess a greater sense of control over the learning environment; and (c) they have action plans that involve

setting clear goals, devise specific ways to reach those goals, and create a school environment conducive to supporting the attainment of their goals (Lezotte & Bancroft, 1985).

Researchers have identified specific elements common to effective schools. They have found that, when these elements were present to an appreciable degree in a school, student achievement was above expected levels. The elements common to effective schools constitute a framework for examining the strengths and weaknesses of a specific school, assessing overall effectiveness, and developing a program of action to improve the learning climate of the school. Key elements found to be common to effective schools are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Leadership. In general, effective schools have principals who are assertive in their instructional role. These principals are heavily involved in assessing program needs, coordinating school programs, and selecting and evaluating teaching staff, using program needs as guidelines. Principals in less effective schools are often overburdened by administrative details, whereas principals in effective schools are proactive and oriented to goals, tasks, and action; they use creative approaches in developing school programs (Robinson, 1985).

Principals in effective schools are well organized, delegate responsibilities to staff members reasonably and well, convey high expectations to students and staff, and define and communicate policies well. Effective principals spend a significant amount of

time observing classes, as well as working on and discussing instructional matters with teachers. In contrast, ineffective administrators tend to spend most of their time in their offices, dealing with administrative details.

Both high visibility and availability to students and staff, and responsiveness to student and staff input regarding school policies and procedures, are important characteristics of the effective principal. Researchers have found that successful principals work to maintain an environment that supports teachers' efforts in the classroom and minimize outside factors that would disrupt the learning process (Lezotte & Bancroft, 1985).

Effective principals have good public-relations skills, such as fluency in communicating with parents and community members; they exhibit a sense of ease and seldom use educational jargon. They tend toward informality in their exchanges and use a wide variety of communication devices.

Instructional personnel. Learning takes place primarily in the classroom. All other elements of effective schools are ultimately directed at making the basic learning system as efficacious as possible. Researchers have found the quality of instructional personnel to be much more important to student learning than the quality or availability of facilities, equipment, or supplies (Lezotte & Bancroft, 1985).

The importance of classroom teachers has been the focus of much research, and investigators have identified teacher characteristics, behaviors, and understandings that are important to effective

teaching. Researchers have emphasized the importance of quality teachers and have found that effective schools have teachers with high verbal and conceptual abilities (Robinson, 1985). Research has also tended to show that, in general, effective schools are staffed by teachers with greater educational training and experience; however, some researchers have found low correlations between teacher training/experience and student achievement.

Teachers in effective schools demonstrate that they understand the principles of learning. They teach objectives at appropriate levels of difficulty, assess mastery before proceeding to new levels of learning, provide prompt feedback to students, use motivational techniques, and pay attention to the length and spacing of practice. Teachers in effective schools also understand the special learning characteristics of the students they teach. They frequently adapt instruction to students' ability levels and promote opportunities for learner success (Robinson, 1985).

In effective schools, teachers tend to spend proportionately more of their time actively teaching and encourage more student-teacher interaction. Pupils have been observed to be on task more often. In ineffective schools, students often are given more time to study, while teachers grade papers or perform administrative tasks. In these schools, students are given more individual study time than is necessary to complete assignments.

Environment. A third element found to be common to effective schools is the environment. Researchers have found that, in

general, effective schools have climates that are purposeful and orderly; discipline is clear, firm, and consistent. In these schools, students are given copies of the rules, regulations, and policies.

Researchers have found an atmosphere of cooperation and caring in effective schools. Staff members focus on student needs, working cooperatively within the framework of a well-managed organization. Principals in effective schools support teachers' efforts in the classroom and minimize outside factors that could disrupt the learning process (Robinson, 1985).

Effective schools involve parents in activities that relate directly to improving student performance. Teachers communicate with parents in a positive manner. Surprisingly, researchers have found some evidence of a negative relationship between the total amount of parent involvement in schools and student achievement (Robinson, 1985). These findings suggest the need for a closer look at the nature and type of parental involvement that might enhance student achievement.

Maintaining adequate facilities and materials has been found to be important to effective school programs; however, the answer to how well material resources and facilities relate to student achievement depends on their quality and use. The critical factor in achievement is not the quantity of resources available, but rather the way resources are used to support the instructional program. Many ineffective schools have better-equipped school plants than high-achieving schools. The important element is that

even though some effective schools are old, they are clean and well maintained, showing a sense of caring and pride in the school.

Program. Researchers have contributed to the knowledge regarding school program effectiveness and how teaching techniques and strategies can be effectively applied to meet all students' needs. In general, effective schools have instructional programs that are goal oriented; school resources are directed toward achieving specific instructional goals. Teachers in effective schools have access to efficient diagnostic techniques for assessing and monitoring students' progress toward specific learning objectives. Such information allows for better planning of lessons, more purposeful grouping of students for instruction, and deployment of school resources where they are most needed to assist students who are having difficulty.

Teachers in effective schools provide prompt feedback to students regarding their progress toward specific learning objectives. Incorrect responses are immediately corrected, and the students are reinstructed. Correct student responses are met with immediate positive reinforcement. The instructional program in effective schools stresses students' acquisition of basic skills. Teachers frequently assess students' mastery of instructional material, proceeding to new material only after acceptable levels of learning have been demonstrated.

Much of the research relating to effective schools has concerned class size, grouping within classes, and individualization

of instruction, as well as the effects of those factors on student achievement. To date, researchers have not agreed on an optimum class size. Existing research has not supported the contention that smaller classes per se lead to greater academic achievement; however, researchers have found that, in the primary grades, smaller classes can be beneficial in improving pupils' learning (Robinson, 1985).

Researchers have found that teachers in effective schools tend to divide their classes into three or fewer instructional groups. Individualization of instruction has been found to be inconsistently related to school effectiveness. The extent to which teachers are successful in tailoring the instructional program to help students progress at their own rate has been attributed to the instructors' proficiency and skill. In "Tri-dimensional Approach to Individualization," Hunter (1985) stated:

> Individualization is dependent on professional decision making in terms of: (1) the correct level of difficulty for every student, rather than a different task for every student; (2) the appropriate learning behavior of that student in a deliberately arranged environment; and (3) the appropriate behavior of the teacher to facilitate achievement. (p. 12)

Much attention has been given to the relationship of time-on-task to student learning. Researchers have indicated that the way teachers manage available classroom time is more important in student learning than is the actual time allocated for instruction. In effective schools, pupils are observed to be on task at the correct level of difficulty more often than in ineffective schools.

Classrooms in effective schools experience fewer disruptions, and there are fewer delays or gaps in instructional activities.

Assessment and revision. Assessment and revision have been found to be important elements common to effective schools. In general, effective schools have systematic programs for assessing and monitoring student progress, as well as for communicating to students, parents, and community members in meaningful and understandable ways. In addition, the staffs of effective schools have been found to evaluate and assess their own effectiveness periodically. They accept the concept of accountability and are likely to believe that student test scores are a valid index of their own teaching effectiveness.

In general, the evolution of the instructional program and planning for improvement are considered a shared responsibility in effective schools. The focus of decision making is primarily on problem solving. An important characteristic of effective schools is that they maintain the atmosphere of a successful, well-planned, dynamic program that is open to further improvement (Robinson, 1985).

## Overview of School Improvement Programs

In the equal educational opportunity survey, Coleman et al. (1966) concluded that family background was the principal determinant of pupils' acquisition of basic school skills. Since then, American educators have cited this report to justify the view that how well children do in school depends primarily on their

family background. Social scientists in the 1960s and 1970s concluded that family background was not only a correlate of pupil performance, but the major determinant of achievement (Lezotte & Bancroft, 1985).

As a result, compensatory education dominated school improvement programs throughout the 1960s and 1970s, chiefly through Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Through Title I, students from low-income families were taught to learn in ways that conformed to established ways of teaching. Students were thus taught behaviors that would compensate for their disadvantages, whereas no effort was made to change the schools (Lezotte & Bancroft, 1985).

In the last ten years, another group of social scientists, led by Brookover, Lezotte, Rutter, Maugham, Mortimore, Ouston, and Edmonds, published alternative interpretations of the interaction between student achievement and family background. These educational researchers concluded that school is the major determinant of student achievement but did not reject entirely the role of family background in determining achievement. Although schools may be primarily responsible for whether students function adequately in school, the family is considered the most critical factor in determining whether students flourish in school.

Since 1978, an extraordinary number and variety of school improvement programs based on effective schools research have been established. Such programs represent the major educational reform initiatives based on a common body of knowledge now under way in the

United States. Research on school effectiveness has been supported by studies of teacher effectiveness. Brophy, Good, Grouws, Rosenshine, and Lezotte are the foremost researchers who have focused on the teacher behaviors and classroom characteristics evidenced in instructionally effective classrooms.

According to Edmonds and Lezotte (1982), a school need not bring all students to identical levels of mastery, but it must bring equal proportions of students in its highest and lowest social classes to minimum mastery. School improvement programs should be evaluated on at least two distinct measures. Change in student achievement is the most obvious and is certainly an important measure. Everything a school does should be related to student outcomes. Also of great importance is an observable change in the institution and the organizational nature of a school as a function of change in principal and teacher behavior (Brophy & Good, 1985).

## Correlates of School Effectiveness

In 1981, Ron Edmonds left New York and went to Michigan State University as a professor of education. At Michigan State, he teamed with Lawrence Lezotte, and together they expanded effective schools projects throughout the United States until Edmonds's death in 1983. Lezotte has continued the effective schools mission. Brookover, Bloom, English, Lezotte, and others have expanded the correlates of effective schools to the extent of identifying characteristics of high-achieving schools, outlining characteristics

of high-achieving principals, and designing correlates of effective teaching.

According to Edmonds and Lezotte (1982), the most notable characteristics of effective schools seem to be:

1. The schools have vigorous instructional leadership.

2. The more time is spent on instruction, the greater the student achievement.

3. There is considerable parent involvement in schools, including work at home with children.

4. The principal maintains high expectations for staff and students.

5. The principal makes clear, consistent, and fair decisions.

6. The teachers maintain high expectations that all students can and will learn.

7. Personnel monitor and assess student achievement by frequently reviewing student progress.

8. Instructional practices are focused on basic skills and academic achievement.

9. There is a strong emphasis on discipline and a safe and orderly environment.

Probably the most important conclusion drawn by the effective schools researchers is that important determinants of student achievement are within the control of schools. The research by Edmonds and Lezotte contains five correlates that the two researchers concluded were integral to the effectiveness of any school. The correlates of school effectiveness identified by these

researchers, which are controlled primarily by the local school, are discussed in the following paragraphs.

The first correlate of school effectiveness is administrative style. Principals of effective schools behave differently from those of less effective schools. For example, principals of ineffective schools tend to spend most of their time in their offices and are primarily concerned with issues other than instruction. Conversely, principals of effective schools spend most of their time in classrooms and other teaching stations and are primarily concerned with instructional matters. This administrative style is most easily denoted as instructional leadership and is considered further in the next section. Teachers in effective schools tend to look first to the principal as the colleague who is most able and likely to help them solve instructional problems in the classroom. This collegial relationship between principal and teacher develops primarily because principals of effective schools rarely criticize the quality of a teacher's instruction without accompanying that criticism with a set of alternative, attainable teacher behaviors designed to solve the instructional problem (Edmonds & Lezotte, 1982).

The second correlate of school effectiveness is instructional focus. First, the principal or other evaluator must answer the question: What is the major focus and purpose of the school? Next, he/she must see to it that parents, teachers, and other members of the school community know the answer to that question. Some

principals manage this task alone, whereas others share it with staff members. Of utmost importance is a formal dissemination program designed to insure that community members understand the major purposes for the school's activities (Edmonds & Lezotte, 1982).

The third correlate of school effectiveness is school climate. To be effective, a school must be relatively orderly, safe, clean, and otherwise suitable for its major purposes. School age and size seem to matter less than the overall impression one gets of institutional cleanliness, care, and adequacy. In effective schools, the school climate puts academics first. Principals and teachers believe they can make a difference in what students learn, and students understand and agree that their first priority is to learn. School activities reinforce these attitudes. Routines discourage disorder and disruptions, and teachers and principals protect classrooms from interruptions. Incoming students know the school's reputation, and experienced students affirm the value placed on learning (Edmonds & Lezotte, 1982).

The fourth correlate of school effectiveness is teacher conveyance of academic expectations. First, teachers should know the skills that must be mastered by students at every grade level. In addition, teachers should convey the expectation that all students must obtain at least minimum mastery of these skills. The teacher behaviors that are important include teacher recitation, quality of teacher response to student recitation and written work,

uniform imposition of discipline, and other actions that convey the expectation that students should obtain mastery.

The fifth correlate of school effectiveness is schools' use of achievement data as the basis for program evaluation. One of the characteristics of effective schools is that no program or activity is continued that does not advance pupil performance on standardized measures of achievement. Three steps are recommended in assessing student achievement. First, the school or district should have a description of the level of mastery required for satisfactory progress. Second, the pupil population should be disaggregated by social class to know what proportion of the lowest social class is making satisfactory progress. Third, the school should annually reconsider any program or instructional strategy that fails to increase the proportion of student mastery (Edmonds & Lezotte, 1982).

These correlates, developed primarily by Edmonds and Lezotte, do not include some of the correlates developed by other researchers. However, the correlates of school effectiveness on which Edmonds and Lezotte focused are ones that are controlled primarily by the local school. For example, some educational researchers have reported that parent-community participation is an important element of effective schools. Edmonds and Lezotte (1982) recommended parent-community participation as a desirable part of school improvement plans. However, they did not see such participation as being totally within the school's control and therefore did not include it as a correlate of school effectiveness.

In addition, class size, financial resources, and district programs and policies are important aspects of school effectiveness, but they, too, are not controlled by the local school. However, using the correlates discussed here, as well as the body of effective schools research, one can characterize effective schools as ones in which principals, teachers, students, and parents agree on the goals, methods, and content of schooling. They are united in acknowledging the importance of a coherent curriculum, publicly recognizing students who succeed, promoting a sense of school pride, and protecting school time for learning (Edmonds & Lezotte, 1982).

## Effective School Leadership

Whereas schools make a difference in what students learn, principal make a difference in schools. Scholars, researchers, journalists, practitioners, parents, citizens, and even politicians recognize this fact. They have all found that the local school is the key to educational improvement and that the principal's leadership is crucial to the school's success or failure in the instruction of students.

The focus on leadership in recent research suggests that the very foundation of productive and effective schools is the principal's leadership ability. The most effective leaders are those who are capable of uniting their faculties to accept common goals, thus building more cohesive organizations that maintain a positive learning environment. Principals probably cannot provide instructional leadership unless they also possess organizational

leadership skills. What can principals do? According to Lipham (1981):

1. Effective principals provide assertive, achievement-oriented leadership.

2. Effective principals create an orderly, purposeful, and peaceful school climate.

3. Effective principals have high expectations for staff and pupils.

4. Effective principals demand well-designed instructional objectives and evaluation systems.

The distinguishing features of successful, assertive, achievement-oriented leadership lie not in the day-to-day tasks of the principal, but rather in the principal's overall performance and the direction to which he/she is committed. Assertive leadership includes both what the principal does and what he/she allows to happen. Researchers have shown that, in providing leadership, principals make decisions concerning a number of critical issues related to their schools' effectiveness. Those issues are discussed in the following paragraphs.

The principal and the goals of the school. When the goals of the school are clear, reasonably uniform, and perceived as important, and when the staff is committed to them, successful schools are the result. Effective schools researchers have concluded that teachers and principals in higher achieving schools express the belief that students can master their academic work, and

that they are expected to do so. These teacher and principal expectations are expressed in such a way that students perceive that they are expected to learn, and the schools' academic norms are recognized as setting a standard of high achievement (Lipham, 1981).

The principal provides leadership in working with the staff and community to translate the generally agreed on goals into specific objectives and programs in reading, writing, mathematics, and so on. Effective principals work closely with school personnel to select a reasonable number of goals and objectives to be implemented and evaluated each year.

The principal and educational values. Researchers have shown that most of the major conflicts in a school do not derive from value differences that are "out in the open" and understood, but rather from those that are "under the table" and misunderstood. As analysts, principals determine the value orientations and perceptions of others; as modifiers, they plan and implement activities to clarify and develop the values of others; and as leaders, they model and mirror in their behavior a consistent set of values to be emulated. Effective principals analyze their own and others' value orientations and work to establish open lines of communication for all school personnel and for the community (Adkisson & Shoemaker, 1981).

The principal and organizational relationships. The issue of centralization versus decentralization in organizational relationships is a crucial concern to schools and school districts. Effective principals recognize and accept the fact that a

substantial amount of their time and energy must be expended in dealing with external as well as internal school issues and concerns. The complaint that the principal is never in the building must be weighed against the reality that "time spent downtown" can be a wise investment. As head of the school, the principal performs a key linkage function, reaching out to district and other resources to improve the school. Successful principals monitor and, if warranted, move to alter the degree to which basic functions of the school are unnecessarily centralized.

The principal and decision making. In making educational decisions, the effective principal must pay attention to what a decision concerns, who should be involved in making it, and how the decision is to be made. Principals are often called on to make decisions that are routine, ones that are negotiated, and ones that are original or heuristic and depend on the principal's creativity and decision-making ability. To involve others in decision making, the principal must consider both frequency and extent of involvement. Excessive involvement causes frustration, whereas underinvolvement causes hard feelings. The sensitive principal strives for a condition of equilibrium. There is considerable evidence that, in effective schools, the principal defines clearly the boundaries of others' involvement in the decision-making process (Shoemaker, 1981).

The principal and instruction. The principal's foremost function is the improvement of teaching and learning. The most

important factor in determining the success or failure of a school is the principal's ability to lead the staff in planning, implementing, and evaluating improvements in school programs. The amount of time, effort, and energy devoted to instructional as opposed to managerial responsibilities is crucial. The management functions of the principal are important only as they facilitate and foster improvement in the school's instructional program. There is a vast difference between "knowing about" the instructional program and being intimately involved in its development, implementation, evaluation, and refinement. With regard to instruction, studies have shown that principals of effective schools:

1. Are committed to instructional improvement.
2. Show strong knowledge of and participation in classroom instructional activities.
3. Monitor the effective use of classroom time.
4. Engage in effective instructional improvement processes.
5. Have positive attitudes toward their staff and students.

Several studies of the principal's use of time have shown that principals have considerable opportunities to become involved in instruction. Effective principals are skilled in time management and find opportunities to plan cooperatively with teachers, to visit and observe classrooms, to provide teachers with helpful feedback, and to evaluate the progress of both staff and students (Kersten & Sloan, 1985).

The principal and educational change. Because principals are the key internal change agents in schools, no change of any

magnitude can occur in a school without the principal's understanding and support. Regardless of whether the programmed or adaptive approach to change is used, implementing educational change in the local school encompasses five phases: (a) perception of the need for change, (b) commitment to adopt a change, (c) transition to the new program, (d) evaluation of refinement of implementation, and (e) renewal of the program and the personnel implementing it.

Successful principals recognize that bringing about essential educational change is time consuming. They must take the time to help their staff understand the magnitude and complexity of the change being attempted. Most major innovations in education fail because their implementation was too "rushed." Unsuccessful schools or school systems do not seem to implement and fully evaluate any innovation, much less refine and renew it, before jumping onto the next educational bandwagon (Kersten & Sloan, 1985).

The principal and the external environment. Another issue facing effective principals is determining the degree of interaction and involvement with the external environment; this primarily includes relations with parents, citizens, and other community groups. Principals of successful schools strike an appropriate balance in both formal and informal relations with the supportive external environment. In effective schools, principals know the following functions of home-school-community relations:

1. Analysis requires the identification of issues and the participating publics of the school.

2. Communication implies the use of formal and informal mechanisms for a viable two-way flow of information between the school and its relevant publics.

3. Involvement includes the active participation of parents and citizens in school activities and of students in community learning experiences.

4. Resolution means conflict management--working with dissenting individuals and groups to reach a working consensus.

The principal's attention to these four functions usually results in strong community support for school programs and personnel.

Until recently, the tendency has been to underestimate the importance of the principalship, focusing more on its intermediary status than on its leadership potential. To change this focus, principals need to increase their effectiveness in the areas discussed above; they also need to develop long-range plans to sustain and strengthen their leadership role. The principalship is a demanding position; to be successful, principals must be assertive and see to it that their convictions and philosophies of education are carried out.

Cohn (cited in Shoemaker, 1981) suggested that "effective schools are different from most schools, and what accounts for their effectiveness is precisely the fact that they are more tightly managed and more collectively committed to basic skills instruction" (p. 37). If this view is correct, and researchers have corroborated that it is, the principal must be willing to set the direction for

the school, hold him/herself and the staff accountable for that direction, and accept the responsibility for the successes or failures of that direction (Shoemaker, 1981).

Teacher Effectiveness

Historically, completing research on the link between teaching behavior and student learning has been a frustrating task. In 1963, Marsh, Wilder, Medley, and Mitzel found virtually no clear-cut link between student learning and teacher behavior. In the 1980s, the situation improved considerably. The National Institute of Education began funding expensive studies, and important modifications in research designs began to appear. Among these were rational sampling rather than random sampling of teachers, including enough teachers to allow for meaningful statistical analysis, collecting numerous hours of data per classroom, developing multifaceted and sophisticated coding instruments that accounted for context and sequence of interaction rather than just behavioral frequencies, and concentrating on the individual teacher and class as the unit of analysis.

In 1976, Rosenshine (cited in Brophy, 1987) summarized a number of the early correlational studies that had been completed to that time. He suggested that, for instruction to be effective, teachers must (a) focus on academic goals; (b) promote extensive content coverage and high levels of student involvement; (c) select instructional goals and materials and actively monitor student progress; (d) structure learning activities that include immediate,

academically oriented feedback; and (e) create an environment that is task oriented but relaxed.

As research findings have become better understood and integrated, they have formed the core of a small but well-established and growing knowledge base regarding appropriate teaching practices. Brophy and Good (1986) determined that the most consistently reported and replicated findings on effective teaching concern the amount of academic instruction that students receive from their teachers. The amount students learn is determined, in part, by the opportunity to learn. In turn, opportunity to learn is determined by the degree to which teachers (a) are businesslike and task oriented, emphasize instruction as basic to their role, expect students to master the curriculum, and allocate most classroom time to activities with academic objectives rather than to activities with other objectives or no clear objectives at all; (b) use classroom organization and management strategies that maximize the time students spend engaged in academic activities and minimize the time teachers spend getting organized, handling transitions, or dealing with misconduct; (c) pace the students briskly through the curriculum, but also see that they make continuous progress all along the way, moving through small steps with high or at least moderate rates of success and minimal confusion or frustration; and (d) spend most of their time actively instructing their students in group lessons or supervising their work on assignments rather than expecting them to learn primarily on their own through independent reading and seatwork (Brophy, 1979, 1987).

Moving Toward Excellence

In addition to research findings concerning quantity of instruction, results of research on quality of instruction have indicated that achievement gains are greater when teachers (a) not only make frequent presentations and demonstrations, but do so in ways that include enthusiastic delivery, clarity and specificity of language, logical sequencing of the content, and structuring of the content in ways that help students recognize it as an integrated whole and appreciate the relationships among its parts; (b) ask clear questions pitched at appropriate levels of difficulty and allow students sufficient time to process and begin to formulate answers before calling on one of them to respond; (c) provide clear and informative feedback to students' answers; (d) seek to elicit improved responses when students answer incorrectly or fail to answer at all; (e) answer or redirect relevant student comments into the lesson; (f) prepare students for follow-up assignments by reviewing the instructions and working through practice examples with them until they are clear about what to do and how to do it; and (g) circulate to provide supervision and help to students as they work on assignments ("Essential Elements," 1984).

In addition to the appropriate teaching practices just listed, several researchers have supported the importance of eight primary tasks that effective teachers work to accomplish in their classrooms and learning areas. They are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Planning instruction. Instructional planning helps teachers achieve several purposes: (a) to become aware of the important content and/or objectives, appropriate methods of assessing how well students have learned the content or mastered the objectives, and relevant instructional materials and teaching methods; (b) to insure the availability of needed instructional-support materials; (c) to estimate the amount of time to be allocated to various topics, objectives, book chapters, and activities; (d) to align curriculum content and objectives, tests and assessments, and instructional methods and strategies; (e) to align the content and objectives of individual lessons or units with larger course goals; and (f) to design or establish instructional and managerial rules and routines.

Instructional planning occurs at a variety of levels, and not all teachers plan at all levels. Some plan at the course level and the daily level. Others plan only at the weekly level, relegating course-level planning to a textbook and daily planning to "whatever happens" ("Essential Elements," 1984).

Assessing students. Teachers assess students to ascertain their knowledge, skills, attitudes, and/or values. Teachers can use assessment information to make various instructional decisions, among them (a) to decide when to move students to new content or objectives, (b) to assign grades to students or to decide which students should be moved to the next grade level and which should be retained, (c) to make decisions about appropriate content and objectives for students, and (d) to determine which students need extra assistance ("Essential Elements," 1984).

Clarifying behavioral rules and routines. Rules and routines are so closely related that they are often confused. Simply stated, rules are statements of what is not permitted; they are sanctions or constraints on students' behavior in the classroom. Routines, on the other hand, are shared patterns of appropriate behavior. Research has revealed at least three important characteristics of rules and routines that have become widely accepted: (a) rules should be few in number and consistently enforceable; (b) important routines should be established early in the school year, as situations arise; and (c) rules and routines must be reinforced and maintained throughout the school year if they are to continue to be effective (Brophy & Good, 1985).

Organizing the classroom. Appropriate classroom organization can lead to two related payoffs: (a) the vast majority of classroom time is spent on instruction and learning, and (b) the instructional format and grouping arrangements support the overall course or subject aims and students' level of sophistication. Within-class instructional grouping creates several problems for the classroom teacher. However, researchers have suggested some solutions to these difficulties. Teachers must:

1. Make clear assignments to those groups with whom they do not directly interact.

2. Create in these groups what Kounin and Sherman referred to as "holding power." Students tend to remain on-task even though the teacher is physically and psychologically removed from the group.

3. Be aware of what Barr termed the "size of the remainder." In general, the larger the size of the remainder, the more difficult the classroom-management problems.

4. Consider the feasibility of cooperative learning. In cooperative or team-assisted learning, a group of students work together to achieve a common task or goal (Brophy & Good, 1985).

Creating a learning set. Creating a learning set results in students who are ready to learn. Students are made aware of the specific content and/or objectives they are to learn, and they associate new content and/or objectives with past, present, and/or future learning (Hunter, 1983). Creating a learning set is particularly important for teachers who are faced with unprepared or reluctant learners. Recent research has shown that teachers can create a learning set by (a) providing students with the necessary cognitive prerequisites just before they teach new content and/or objectives; (b) clearly communicating their expectations about what students are to learn; and (c) using incentives, reinforcement, and other principles of behavioral psychology (Hunter, 1983).

Teaching to objectives. When this task is accomplished, students learn precisely what they are expected to learn. Teachers who teach to objectives have a definite instructional purpose in mind. Direct teaching and clarity of expression are the principal techniques of teaching to objectives. Rosenshine (cited in Brophy, 1987) offered several empirically derived suggestions for helping teach to objectives. Teachers should (a) model or demonstrate the desired learning for their students; (b) organize and present the

information logically, (c) focus on one major point at a time; (d) give detailed and redundant explanations for different points; (e) use many, varied, and specific examples to illustrate the major points; (f) check for student understanding before moving from one major point to another; and (g) stay with the major points until all or most students understand them.

Providing for student practice. Practice has two immediate payoffs. Students remember things more quickly and do them faster, and they remember what they have learned for longer periods of time. Two types of practice have been identified in the literature: (a) guided practice occurs under the supervision of the teacher, is typically of short duration, and is intended to help students succeed; (b) independent practice takes place away from the direct supervision of the teacher. Homework is a prime example of independent practice. The relationship between the two types of practice is clear. Students should be helped to achieve reasonable success in guided practice before they are permitted to practice on their own.

Maintaining student involvement in learning, and disciplining inappropriate behavior. The teacher's primary tasks are to maintain students' involvement in learning and to keep students engaged in learning or "on task." Teachers' secondary task, disciplining inappropriate behavior, becomes increasingly important when students are not involved in learning. Students tend to be more involved in learning and spend more of their time on task when (a) the assigned

tasks are of appropriate difficulty, (b) the assigned tasks are interesting, (c) performance on assigned tasks is frequently monitored, (d) the mechanical details of classroom behavior are reduced to a minimum, (e) the physical setting is conducive to learning, (f) teachers control the flow of activity in the classroom, (g) students' curiosity is aroused, (h) clear expectations are communicated to students, (i) new learning is related to previous learning; (j) attention is focused on the relevant aspects of the instructional materials and activities, (k) feedback is provided, and (l) task-oriented behavior is reinforced (Brophy & Good, 1985).

The research findings discussed here have special relevance to teachers' practical concerns. Unlike most other investigations, research on effective teachers and effective schools has linked teacher behaviors directly to student outcomes. If this knowledge is exploited properly through professional education practice, it has the potential to empower teachers by providing them with useful information to draw upon when making professional decisions. Teaching well demands a blend of energy, motivation, and knowledge of subject matter. If used appropriately, information about effective teaching practices can be much more empowering than limiting to teachers because it allows them to act confidently on the basis of well-established principles rather than having to rely on trial and error or on techniques they have seen modeled in other teachers' classrooms ("Moving Toward Excellence," 1985).

Research has shown that the more time a student is actively engaged in the academic process, the better the educational outcome. As a result, some people have called for longer school days and years. Effective schools can make the time now allocated to school more efficient than those schools exhibiting lower quality. However, the emphasis on teaching practices must be accompanied by classroom management designed to maintain students' attention to the academic task and to provide an orderly environment conducive to good teaching and learning. Lessons should begin and end on time, and students should be given clear, honest, and prompt feedback on their performance and what is expected of them. Emphasis should be on encouragement and praise for accomplishment, rather than on punishment or humiliation for failure (Rutter, 1984).

Because effective schools are measured partially in terms of student achievement, what mechanisms and strategies are available to move a school toward excellence? English (1980) asserted that one such mechanism is a planned and systematic congruence or match between what the teacher should teach--the ideal curriculum, what the teacher does teach--the real curriculum, and what the students actually learn--student assessment.

English suggested that an organization approaches optimality when these three elements are integrated into one coordinated activity. He described the ideal curriculum as the prescription of what the organization should accomplish, typically described in policies, curriculum guides, frameworks, and instructional materials. The second element, the real curriculum, is what

actually occurs in the classroom. In this instance, the contents of the curriculum guides and instructional materials must be transferred to the classroom itself, for students to learn the prescribed curriculum. The third element, the assessment of what students actually learn, comprises various methods that might be used to measure student achievement (i.e., standardized tests, criterion-referenced tests, and teacher-made tests).

The ideal curriculum should be designed with the understanding and expectation that students can reach high levels of achievement, regardless of their backgrounds. If the school staff have been involved in systematically examining the educational priorities within their school and if they have reached agreement about these priorities, the congruence between the ideal and real curriculum will be significantly enhanced (English, 1980).

Movement toward excellence can be accomplished as the administrator and staff increase the convergence of the ideal curriculum and the real curriculum, and the achievement or assessment of these expectations. Excellence results when the school administrator and teachers skillfully apply the various elements presented in this section. The convergence of leadership, curriculum, and basic skills instruction is the ultimate in providing excellence.

Everyone striving to assist schools in moving toward excellence should be sensitive to the research findings regarding effective schools. Viewing school improvement through nothing more than

attributes of effectiveness or accreditation alone is too limiting. School administrators who can promote excellence within their organization possess the fundamental characteristics that contribute to effective schools, as well as the ability to mesh these elements in leading the school toward excellence.

## Summary

Accreditation and school effectiveness are two of the most prominent issues facing Michigan schools today, as indicated by recent findings of the Michigan School Finance Committee (Accreditation of Schools, 1985).

A school is not an isolated institution; it is an integral part of the community it serves. Schools are not simply a collection of detached inputs that can be added up to predict achievement. They are complex environments comprising factors that interact to create an effective or an ineffective environment. For more than 100 years, accreditation has been the standard of excellence and prestige for high schools and colleges and, more recently, elementary and junior high/middle schools. As the American educational system has come under fire in recent years, so has accreditation. Schools are being encouraged to reexamine their procedures, their offerings, and their very purpose, while current accreditation organizations are reappraising their own contribution to school improvement.

Accreditation, school improvement, and effective schools all pertain to excellence in schools; thus, they all have the potential

to support one another. Accreditation has been characterized by its two major components, self-evaluation and evaluation by an external visitation team; it involves schools in evaluating what is written, what is taught, and what is offered to students. Effective schools research could add a logical and valuable third component to the process by helping schools analyze their delivery system, assessing what is learned, and working toward developing a plan for improvement that will lead to enhanced student outcomes.

# CHAPTER III

# METHODS AND PROCEDURES

## Introduction

This research was a case study of two elementary schools, both of which had achieved accreditation status through the Michigan Accreditation Program. Although both schools were accredited, a major distinction between them was that, based on the disaggregation of student achievement test data, one school could be considered effective whereas the other could be considered ineffective. My goal in this study was to answer the question: In what ways are the two schools similar and different?

It might be argued that increased understanding of a school's excellence and effectiveness in meeting its stated goals is attained through the accreditation process. For the past 15 years, the issue of accrediting Michigan schools has been of concern to the State Board of Education. Accreditation and effectiveness, and their relationship to excellence in schools, are prominent issues facing Michigan schools today, as evidenced by the recent findings of the Michigan School Finance Committee (MAPS, 1987). Major questions in this study have to do with accreditation, effectiveness, and excellence, and their relationship to the programs and services delivered by each school. Relationships between school services and

school outcomes, between educational need and instructional adequacy, and between teaching effort and excellence are of concern to educators today. Within the confines of the limited sample of two elementary schools, I examined the extent to which the determination of effectiveness through the disaggregation of test scores was related to the delivery of programs and services in each of the schools.

## Definition of Key Terms

The following terms are defined in the context in which they are used in this study.

Accreditation. An ongoing process that confirms, through self-evaluation and visitation by an external team, that a school has met a set of preconditions or standards that lead to quality education ("Accreditation of Schools," 1985).

Accrediting agency. A public or private organization that is in the business of certifying institutions.

A Blueprint for Action. A set of recommendations that the Michigan State Board of Education (1984) made for the purpose of upgrading schools throughout the state.

Climate. The total school environment.

Coleman Report (Coleman et al., 1966). A document discussing the problems of low-achieving students, particularly those in disadvantaged inner-city areas.

Correlates of school effectiveness. Five characteristics of high-achieving schools (administrative style, instructional focus,

school climate, academic expectations, and use of achievement data) determined by Edmonds and Lezotte in 1981 and expanded by Lezotte and others since then.

Curriculum. A specified course of study.

Effective school. A school in which all students have opportunities to achieve, regardless of their background; a school is considered effective if the achievement of students from low-income families is commensurate with that of students from higher-income families (Edmonds & Lezotte, 1982).

Excellence in education. Schooling that provides each child in an appropriate way with at least the basic intellectual skills needed to endure in a modern democracy.

Ineffective school. One in which the achievement levels of students from low-income families are below those of students from higher-income families (Edmonds & Lezotte, 1982).

Instructional focus. The major purposes of a school.

Objectives. Definite instructional purposes.

Program. A plan of intended practice.

School improvement plan. A two- to five-year plan outlining how a school hopes to improve its operation.

## Questions Addressed in This Study

Using the newly adopted Michigan Accreditation Program as the standard for school accreditation and the school effectiveness research conducted by Edmonds and Lezotte as the measure of

effective schools, I addressed the following questions in this study:

1. In what ways are the two accredited elementary schools similar to one another?

2. In what ways are the two accredited elementary schools different from one another?

3. Does the identification "effective school" reflect the quality of the school's educational program and services?

4. Does the declaration "ineffective school" reflect the quality of the school's program and services?

5. Can a school's effectiveness be determined by disaggregating students' standardized test scores?

Although Edmonds and Lezotte's correlates of effective schools focus on the disaggregation of cognitive test data as the determinant of whether a school is considered to be effective, I went beyond simply examining test data by completing a case study of two elementary schools. Using interviews, participant observation, and artifacts collected from each school, I focused my attention on the following aspects that researchers have indicated are central to effective schools. I sought to answer the following additional questions:

1. Administrative Style. Does the principal:

    a. Spend considerable time in classrooms and other teaching stations, rather than in the office?

    b. Provide strong leadership in instructional matters?

    c. Promote high student expectations?

d. Promote high staff expectations?

e. Provide leadership in student and program evaluation?

f. Reward excellent teaching?

2. Instructional Emphasis. Do the principal and staff:

a. Place a high priority on students' acquisition of basic skills?

b. Emphasize cognitive development?

c. Emphasize affective development?

d. Place a high priority on reading and math skills?

e. Communicate the instructional emphasis clearly and consistently to parents?

3. School Climate. Does the school demonstrate:

a. An orderly environment conducive to learning?

b. Safety and cleanliness?

4. Teacher Expectations. Do classroom teachers:

a. Expect from students mastery of specific grade-level skills and knowledge?

b. Set standards of mastery for all students?

c. Expect students to master certain skills that will insure success in the next grade?

d. Impose discipline uniformly?

5. Pupil Evaluation. Is pupils' progress closely monitored:

a. By frequent assessment of pupil performance?

b. With emphasis on standardized and criterion-referenced instruments?

c. With individualized analysis of pupil progress?

6. Community Relations. Does the school:

   a. Communicate with parents?

   b. Involve community members in the operations of the school?

   c. Promote involvement of parents and other community members?

Certain correlates of teacher behavior can be used to predict excellence in classroom instruction. Primarily through observation of classroom instruction, I considered teacher behavior in each of the schools to answer the following questions:

1. Accessibility to Students. Does the teacher actively and consistently monitor students throughout the learning process?

2. Daily Review and Maintenance. Does the teacher consistently check and review the previous day's work and reteach when necessary?

3. Presentation of New Material. Does the teacher first present an overview of a new concept or content material?

4. Provisions for Practice. Does the teacher provide for the repetition of basic skills, verbally or in writing, until they become an automatic reaction for students?

5. Student Feedback. Does the teacher recognize student signals of frustration and reteach material in smaller steps?

6. Guided and Independent Practice. Does the teacher assign seatwork and homework only after a concept has been taught?

7. Review. Does the teacher provide for weekly and monthly review, and reteach if necessary?

## The Sample Schools

The two schools involved in this study were Abraham Lincoln Elementary School, located in the large suburban community of Maplewood, Michigan, and John F. Kennedy Elementary School, located

in Hillside, Michigan. (To preserve anonymity, pseudonyms have been used to identify the schools, participants, and school locations.) Both schools were accredited by the North Central Association and had participated in the Michigan Accreditation Pilot Study. At the time of the study, they were involved in accreditation through the Michigan Accreditation Program.

In addition, both schools were K-5 elementary schools and had similar student enrollments--approximately 350 students. The schools served communities representing similar socioeconomic backgrounds, and the school districts had similar financial backing. The principals of both schools had similar school experience, and the teaching staffs were similar in the number of years they had taught.

Through the use of standard criteria in disaggregating test results over a three-year period, one school was considered to be effective whereas the other school was considered to be ineffective. In addition, one school showed a trend of stable to rising standardized test scores, whereas the other school demonstrated a pattern of declining test scores.

## Data Collection

The primary methods of data collection were observation, interview, and collection of artifacts. Each method is summarized in the following paragraphs.

Observation

By being a quiet observer in each school, I focused particularly on the organizational style of the principal, especially as it related to his decision-making skills, his involvement with the instructional program, his ability to bring about change in program offerings and/or teacher or student behavior, his relationship to parents and other members of the community, his emphasis on discipline, his expectations of students and staff, and his ability to maintain a safe and orderly environment that is conducive to learning.

In observing teachers, I paid particular attention to practices they used during times that were considered to be instructional in nature. In general, I analyzed the time teachers spent on instruction and related activities versus the time they devoted to clerical, organizational, and noninstructional tasks. More specifically, I focused on the teachers' ability to maintain high expectations, to clarify expected student behavior and routines and to maintain them, to create a successful learning set from the beginning of a lesson to its conclusion, to involve students in the learning process, to communicate effectively with parents, and to demonstrate sensitivity to students in both instructional and noninstructional matters.

In observing students, I paid close attention to school climate. The issues of safe and orderly environment, discipline, and students' apparent interest in and enjoyment of school were given particular attention.

Observing parents in the school setting was the most challenging task in terms of uncovering answers to their relationship with the school. Visits to each school during the day did not provide a complete enough picture concerning parents' relationships with principal and staff. Thus, I attended extracurricular activities such as open houses, curriculum nights, education fairs, programs, parent-teacher association meetings, and so on, in which the entire school community or a major portion of it was involved.

During observation periods, I spent most of my time concentrating on the activities that were taking place and took very few notes during the actual observation. After each observation, I reflected on the activity and made notations within 24 hours.

Interviews

To gather additional data, I interviewed key players involved with the function of the school, primarily the principals and members of the instructional staff. Personal interviews were conducted to determine the overall goals of the school, the educational values of the administrators and teaching staff, the organizational structure, the emphasis on instruction and related activities, the instructional practices that were used, and the degree of parent communication and involvement. I took extensive notes during each interview session rather than tape recording the conversation.

## Collection of Artifacts

Artifacts were collected from the schools for two distinct purposes. First, I used the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) data from both schools, as well as Iowa Achievement Test scores from Lincoln Elementary School and California Achievement Test scores from Kennedy Elementary School to determine whether the schools could be classified as effective or ineffective (Edmonds & Lezotte, 1982). In addition, such artifacts as student records, community surveys, school handbooks, and communications provided additional information about each school and community.

## Data-Analysis Procedures

Before the 1988-89 school year began, I analyzed MEAP test, California Achievement Test, and Iowa Achievement Test data for the two schools over a three-year period. These data were disaggregated according to low-income and higher-income students, based on whether those youngsters received free or reduced-price lunches through the school lunch program. Then the number and percentage of low-income students (those receiving free or reduced-price lunches) and their achievement test data were compared with corresponding figures for higher-income students (those not receiving free or reduced-price lunches.

I analyzed the notes from observations and interviews after the 1988-89 school year had been completed. The notes were categorized according to Edmonds and Lezotte's correlates of school effectiveness as follows: the school administrator, the teaching

staff and their expectations, the curriculum, school climate, and community involvement in the schools. The notes were then developed into descriptive analyses of the two schools, and that information was used in comparing the schools.

## Summary

This chapter contained a discussion of the methods used in carrying out this study. Key terms were defined, and the questions addressed in the study were listed. Similarities of the two schools in which the observations took place were described. The techniques used in collecting the data for the study were explained.

The researcher, the schools, and their communities are described more fully in Chapter IV.

# CHAPTER IV

## THE RESEARCHER, THE SCHOOLS, AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

### The Researcher

Since 1974, I have served as principal of three elementary schools located in a large suburban community slightly north of the northernmost boundary of Detroit, Michigan. In 1974, I was appointed administrative intern of Lederle Elementary School, after having been a classroom teacher at Leonhard Elementary School for the previous seven years. In 1974, the school system was beginning to feel the effects of declining enrollment; in particular, Lederle's student population had dwindled to fewer than 200 students. Consequently, in 1976, Lederle was closed and I was transferred to Vandenberg Elementary School, located in the northeast corner of the city. I remained at Vandenberg until 1982, when I was transferred as principal back to Leonhard Elementary School, where I had begun my teaching career.

At each of these schools, all of which served very diverse communities, I was responsible for educating not only many general education students, but a number of special education students as well, including learning disabled, emotionally impaired, mentally retarded, and emotionally/mentally impaired youngsters. In 1985, I became interested in the Michigan Accreditation Pilot Study as a

means of continuing Leonhard Elementary School's accreditation status, which had originally begun with receipt of accreditation by the North Central Association in March 1976.

As I reflect on the evolution of this case study of two elementary schools, my thoughts go back to September 1985, when I enrolled in TE 921 at Michigan State University; this course was the first one in the ethnographic research sequence. I took the course purely to broaden my research horizons and was not sure whether I would continue with the remaining two terms. The idea of observing, collecting notes and field data, and then writing about those experiences seemed like a questionable means of conducting research; however, I was intrigued by the possibility.

Following the first assignments in TE 921, I still was not convinced of the merits of ethnographic research, but as I became more involved in planning and formulating my proposal for TE 922, my interest grew and my thinking began to change. I now had the opportunity to consider a topic that greatly interested me: "A Study of Emotionally Impaired Children in the Elementary School." The study was rewarding because it gave me an opportunity to complete an in-depth study of emotionally impaired students other than those I had worked with in my own school settings.

Thus, two important events that began almost four years ago led to the current case study, in which I compared two suburban schools, both of which had been involved in the accreditation process, were interested in improving themselves, and were willing to let me observe their environment, conduct interviews, collect data, draw

conclusions, and report them as part of a research study. The schools and their communities are described in detail in the remainder of this chapter.

## The Schools and Their Communities

### John F. Kennedy Elementary School

John F. Kennedy Elementary School was a K-5 school with an enrollment of 366 students, according to the official 1988-89 Fourth Friday count reported to the Michigan Department of Education. The staff included 15.5 classroom teachers, as well as 18.5 special education teachers and other full- and part-time support personnel.

The school was 18 years old and was located along the southeast boundary of Hillside, an integral part of the Greater Detroit metropolitan area. Over the years, the school community, which was predominantly Jewish, had had a reputation for demanding a highly academic, highly competitive educational program. Members of the Kennedy Elementary School community were primarily professional people. At the time of the study, the community was in transition because in recent years its black student population had increased from 4% to 20%. Thus, Kennedy Elementary and its surrounding community were experiencing rapid change amid projections that, within the next few years, the black population would exceed 50%.

Kennedy Elementary School was extremely clean and well-kept. All of the classrooms were housed on one level of the L-shaped building. The physical appearance of the school gave the impression that the entire staff took great pride in the school. The hallways,

classrooms, and offices were exceptionally clean, and bulletin boards and showcases inside and outside the classrooms were covered with displays of students' work. In examining the arrangements of this work, I could not help but notice the numerous samples of student writing that were prominently displayed in all areas of the building. Obviously, writing was a high priority of Kennedy's principal and staff. The school has long enjoyed a fine reputation in the district, and its principal, Gene Snowden, was reputed to be an excellent administrator.

In the years immediately preceding this study, standardized test scores at Kennedy had been declining. Because a number of minority students had entered the school, primarily from Detroit and other large urban areas, some people speculated that the school's results on the MEAP and the California Achievement Test would continue to decline. Even though the school district had statistics showing that the longer minority students remained in the district and the school, the higher their test scores, the principal and the staff were still concerned that they should have been doing more to help students reach their full potential. Hence, Gene Snowden and the Kennedy staff agreed during the 1986-87 school year to investigate ways to help improve the school's total operation and, more specifically, the delivery of its educational program. These methods included self-analysis and analysis by an outside party.

The accreditation process was the answer they came up with, and during the course of the 1987-88 school year, the staff conducted a

self-evaluation and the school underwent a visitation by a seven-member team of professionals representing several Michigan school districts. Those components having been completed, the school received accreditation from the North Central Association and the Michigan Accreditation Program. In 1988-89, the school embarked on the third phase of each accrediting program, a two- to five-year action plan for school improvement. I believe it was this overall concern for self-improvement that motivated the Kennedy staff to allow me to complete still another view of how the school was meeting the needs of its students. Conversely, it was the school's declining test scores and the designation "ineffective school" through the analysis of standard criteria that prompted me to use Kennedy Elementary in this study because I wanted to include a school that was dissatisfied with some aspect of its operation and was seeking solutions that would result in its overall improvement.

Abraham Lincoln Elementary School

Abraham Lincoln Elementary School was a K-5 school with an enrollment of 387 students at the time of this study; it was located in the community of Maplewood, Michigan. Like Hillside, Maplewood was situated in the northern Detroit Metropolitan Area. This progressive community was still growing and had become a popular area for young professionals. The community was convenient to the most common work areas in Detroit. Many corporations were also choosing to locate their world headquarters in Maplewood. The community was expanding rapidly, and its population was approaching

100,000. Although Maplewood was attracting a considerable number of minorities, its black population was lower than that of Hillside, between 10% and 12%. However, that percentage was increasing as more corporations were locating in Maplewood and as black and Oriental professionals chose to live there.

The Maplewood Public School System was one of the few Detroit metropolitan school districts that was expanding and had needed to build new schools. The community had just recently passed a bond issue to build a new high school, which was most unusual for school districts in this area over the past 10 to 15 years. The school district was composed of ten elementary schools; four middle schools, two of which were less than five years old; and soon to be two high schools.

Lincoln Elementary School was located at the northernmost boundary of the community. Of its 387 students, approximately 20% were minorities; however, the black student population was slightly less than 10%. The remainder of the school's minority students were primarily Asians, along with a few East Indians, Arabs, and Chaldeans.

Lincoln Elementary enjoyed an excellent reputation among the Maplewood Public Schools. It had a fairly new building by today's standards--it was only 11 years old. Since its inception, Lincoln's students had performed well on the MEAP and other standardized tests such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, which were administered uniformly throughout the district. Lincoln students averaged in the

mid-90% range on both the MEAP Reading and Mathematics tests, occasionally scoring 100% on one or both tests.

Lincoln's principal, Jerry Doyle, had been the chief administrator of the school since its beginning in 1977. He had been instrumental in Lincoln's having established an outstanding reputation in the Maplewood community, and had initiated a number of short- and long-range projects for the school over the years.

One such project was the school's involvement in seeking North Central Association accreditation status. Jerry was the primary force in Lincoln's seeking accreditation in 1978. When that status was granted in 1979, Lincoln was 1 of 16 elementary schools in Michigan to have obtained North Central Association accreditation. At that time, to attain accreditation, a school staff went through the self-evaluation process, and then an external team came to visit the school to complete a separate analysis and to verify whether the claims made by the staff in the self-evaluation were accurate. In 1985, Jerry and the Lincoln staff had to make a difficult decision. Their seven-year North Central Association accreditation status was about to end, and did they want to go through the entire evaluation process again?

At that time also, the Michigan Accreditation Pilot Study, sponsored by the Michigan Department of Education, was just getting under way. The Department was seeking 25 schools in the state to participate in the accreditation process, which could eventually lead to the requirement that all schools in Michigan be accredited. Jerry saw this as a potential opportunity to accomplish two things

at once. Participating in the project could allow Lincoln Elementary to renew its North Central accreditation and to participate in a program that might have a tremendous effect on Michigan schools in the future.

There was a third appealing factor for Jerry and his staff to consider, as well. The Michigan Accreditation Pilot Study required that the usual self-evaluation take place, and that each school be evaluated by an external visitation team, but it also included a third component--the requirement that each school seeking accreditation develop its own long-range (two- to five-year) plan for school improvement.

Although Lincoln Elementary had enjoyed an excellent reputation for a number of years, Jerry and the staff thought the school improvement plan would give them an excellent opportunity to improve their operation even further, and would also provide them with another chance to introduce an innovative concept in the Maplewood School System. Although the attitude of the staff and community had been "We're already very good," it was this opportunity to seek improvement, further success, and once again to be innovators that led Jerry and the Lincoln staff to seek North Central and Michigan Accreditation Program status. From the more than 200 schools in Michigan that applied for the Michigan Assessment Pilot Study program, Lincoln Elementary was selected by the Department of Education to be one of the 25 participants, primarily because of its

previously established North Central Association accreditation status.

The entire staff of Lincoln Elementary completed the Michigan Accreditation Pilot Study in March 1987. Through this process they renewed their North Central accreditation status, as well. The outcome of the combination study, in their minds, was the development of a clear, concise, and consistent school improvement plan, which required the involvement of all members of the Lincoln staff and key members of the school community. The Lincoln School Improvement Committee hoped that the numerous policies and procedures that evolved from the process would initiate continuous evaluation and improvement of Lincoln's educational program.

Lincoln Elementary has had a rich history of high student achievement, and high expectations of students by the administration, staff, and community. Both the school and the community relish the idea of being at the forefront of innovations in the district. Unlike Kennedy Elementary, test scores from Lincoln, particularly on the MEAP, have continue to improve or, at the very worst, have stabilized over the past ten years. Each year, Lincoln's enrollment has continued to grow.

## Summary

This chapter contained an overview of the Hillside and Maplewood communities and the two schools that were the focus of this study: John F. Kennedy Elementary School and Abraham Lincoln Elementary School. The two schools were similar in a number of

ways: Both schools and their communities were approximately the same size; they were similar in terms of curriculum offerings and number of staff members; both schools had diverse student populations, with approximately 20% minority students; they were administered by male principals, both of whom had served approximately the same number of years as building administrators; the two school staffs were composed primarily of experienced members; and both schools had been or were currently involved in accreditation programs.

Although the schools and their communities were similar in many ways, they had some distinct differences that led to their being selected for this study. For example, one school had had declining scores on standardized tests administered in recent years, whereas the other school had not; one school, although believing it was a good school, was dissatisfied with students' performance on standardized tests, whereas the other school, believing it was a very good school as well, was basically satisfied with the direction it was going and had reason to be satisfied with students' performance on standardized tests.

Important characteristics of Kennedy and Lincoln Elementary Schools are as follows:

1. Both schools were similar demographically (size, population, community, and administrator/staff experience).

2. Both schools had been and were involved in accreditation programs.

3. Kennedy Elementary was experiencing a trend of declining scores on standardized tests.

4. Lincoln Elementary School was experiencing a trend of stable to improving scores on standardized tests.

5. Kennedy Elementary School was involved in the Michigan Accreditation Program.

6. Lincoln Elementary School was involved in the Michigan Accreditation, formerly the Michigan Accreditation Pilot Study, and the North Central Association accreditation program.

7. Primarily because of declining test scores, Kennedy's principal and staff were dissatisfied and were looking for ways to analyze and improve staff performance.

8. Lincoln's staff, although basically satisfied, were interested in looking for ways to improve staff performance so that successful student outcomes would continue or be increased.

9. Because of declining scores on standardized tests and the analysis of standard criteria, Kennedy Elementary was considered to be an ineffective school at the time of the study.

10. Because of consistently stable or increasing test scores and the analysis of standard criteria, Lincoln Elementary was considered to be an effective school at the time of the study.

Thus, the scene is set for making comparisons in this case study of two elementary schools. The most important similarity between the two schools was that each had met or exceeded a set of accepted standards through the accreditation process. The primary differences between the schools were that one school was satisfied

with its performance, whereas the other was not, and through the analysis of standard criteria one school was considered to be effective while the other was not. My purpose in the school visitations, observations, and interviews was to compare and contrast the two schools based on what I saw and heard. The results for each school are presented separately in Chapters V (John F. Kennedy Elementary School) and VI (Abraham Lincoln Elementary School); the two schools are compared in Chapter VII.

# CHAPTER V

# FINDINGS: JOHN F. KENNEDY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

## Introduction

Chapters V and VI include a discussion of my visitations to each of the schools throughout the 1988-89 school year. In this chapter, I discuss John F. Kennedy Elementary School, presenting assertions based on examples of student, staff, administrator, and community behavior, as well as those developed from principles of teacher and administrator behavior identified through the school effectiveness research and the standards developed by the North Central Association and the Michigan Accreditation Program. In Chapter VI, I will discuss Abraham Lincoln Elementary School in much the same way by providing similar assertions and then supplying illustrative vignettes, based primarily on observations and interviews, that support or refute the assertions.

Each assertion is discussed in the context of its relationship to one or more of Edmonds and Lezotte's correlates of effective schools and/or key accreditation standards of the North Central Association and the Michigan Accreditation Program. As the assertions are discussed in each chapter, the reader will see that each is based on some aspect of those elements that have been shown to be appropriate behaviors that lead to the determination of an

effective administrator and/or teacher, and ultimately are the cornerstone in the development of an effective school.

Edmonds and Lezotte's correlates of school effectiveness, as well as the accreditation standards, indicate that administrative style, teacher expectations, instructional emphasis, pupil evaluation, school climate, and community relations are key components in the overall effectiveness of any school. These elements served as the focus of discussion of the school visitations.

## Background on Kennedy Elementary School

For the three years preceding this study, Kennedy Elementary School had experienced a consistent decline in the number of students scoring in the upper quartile on the MEAP and other standardized tests. One of my first tasks at the school was to disaggregate students' test scores on the MEAP for that three-year period. To do so, I separated fourth graders into two groups: those who were receiving free or reduced-price lunches (low socioeconomic group) and those who were not receiving free or reduced-price lunches (middle and high socioeconomic groups). I then compared the MEAP test scores of these two groups of students to determine whether the results of the two groups were similar.

Disaggregation of the MEAP test scores showed that students from the low socioeconomic group were not achieving at levels commensurate with those from the middle and high socioeconomic groups. A considerably higher percentage of high socioeconomic

students scored in the upper quartile (75%-100%) of both the Reading and Mathematics portions of the MEAP than did students from the low socioeconomic group. Based on that analysis, as well as on Edmonds and Lezotte's (1982) recommended practice for determining school effectiveness, Kennedy Elementary School was considered to be ineffective for purposes of this study.

In the following sections, the correlates of school effectiveness are considered more closely as they relate to Kennedy Elementary School. Assertions are made about the school, based primarily on observations and interviews. Finally, further determinations related to the overall effectiveness of the school are made.

## Administrative Style

One correlate of effective schools is administrative style. As discussed in Chapter II, principals of effective schools behave quite differently from principals of ineffective schools. For example, principals of ineffective schools tend to spend most of their time in their offices and tend to be primarily concerned with issues other than instruction. In contrast, principals of effective schools tend to spend most of their time in classrooms and other teaching stations and are primarily concerned with instructional matters. Teachers in effective schools tend to look first to the principal as the colleague who is most able and likely to assist in solving instructional problems. In terms of administrative style, in effective schools the principal:

1. Establishes classroom instruction as a first priority and communicates this to the staff.

2. Spends considerable time in classrooms and other teaching stations.

3. Provides strong leadership.

4. Promotes high expectations for students and staff.

5. Has authority to administer building policy and practice.

6. Provides leadership in student and program evaluation.

7. Rewards excellent teaching.

8. Sets the tone for staff and student behavior.

Standard III of the Michigan Accreditation Program (1989) related to administrative style states:

> The principal of the elementary school is the administrative head of the school and maintains sufficient autonomy and authority to insure the successful functioning of all phases of the school's program. . . . The quality of leadership provided by the principal is a prime factor in the effectiveness of the school's program. (n.p.)

In my visitations to Kennedy School, I witnessed examples of the principal's authority to administer building policy and practice, as well as his ability to set the tone for staff and student behavior. I observed that the principal was instrumental in influencing and monitoring the behaviors and activities of students in social situations.

Because the principal is expected to assume a key leadership role in the total operation of any school, I decided to watch principal Gene Snowden operate in a number of situations at Kennedy School. The first day of school had given me some indications of

his leadership style; likewise, as early in the school year as September 14 and September 27, 1988, I began to observe Gene interact with others--in his office, in the hallways, in the lunchroom, and on the playground.

The first day of school in the Hillside School District is a half day for all students in grades 1 through 5. Kindergartners do not begin until the second day of school. That second day is also a half day, but it includes the morning kindergarten classes. Afternoon kindergartners do not begin until the third day, which is the first full day of school for all students. Teachers had told me the staggered start allowed bus-transportation problems to be worked out more smoothly.

At Kennedy Elementary School, students are told their grade placement and classroom and teacher assignments in June of the previous school year. Gene explained that there are advantages and disadvantages to that approach. A major advantage is that it lessens the pressure of making these decisions in the fall. The primary disadvantage of this approach is the large number of parent conferences it generates at the end of the school year, concerning parents' requests for particular teachers. Gene said:

> We hang tough on most parent or student requests for a change of class. The staff and I spend a great deal of time planning class lists so that we can create the best teacher/student combinations as well as student/student combinations. We want classes to be balanced in terms of achievement levels of students, gender, and most importantly we want students grouped in such ways that they will get along and will cooperate with one another.

Students had been assigned to classrooms the preceding June, so at the sound of the 8:30 bell they entered the building and went directly to their new classrooms. Because kindergartners did not attend that first day, things appeared to run exceptionally smoothly. By 8:40, virtually all students except newly enrolled ones were in their classrooms. New students went to the office, where Gene assigned them to their classrooms; one of the special class teachers (i.e., gym, art, librarian) or Gene himself showed them to their rooms. At 9:02, Gene made some announcements over the public-address system, welcomed students back to school to begin the school year, and ended by telling students that he and the Kennedy School staff intended to make this the school's best year ever.

As I walked through the hallways that morning, all was quiet; students were in their classrooms, discussing and listening to teachers present their classroom and school rules. Because I had not yet set specific dates for classroom observations and teacher interviews, I thought it best to focus my observations on obtaining a sense of the overall tone and climate of the school. Occasionally, if a classroom door was open, I would step in to hear what was being discussed. I spent the remainder of the morning doing that. As I watched Gene interact with children and parents in the office or hallway, and as I watched teachers interact with students in their classrooms, I noticed that everyone on the staff appeared to be genuinely kind and glad to see students back for the new school year. Most students I had observed entering the school

earlier in the morning and those I saw throughout the morning appeared to be happy and content to be back at school.

At 11:15, students were dismissed to go home. As when they had arrived three hours earlier, students left the building in an orderly fashion. The only complication I observed was that one school bus to take general education students home was late. The teacher on duty became somewhat concerned at 11:30 because she was scheduled to go out for lunch with a group of her fellow teachers. Gene took her place waiting for the bus until it arrived at 11:40.

Kennedy School is unique in that it has three special education classrooms; one is a learning resource room for learning disabled students, and two are for emotionally impaired youngsters. One of the emotionally impaired children became quite upset at dismissal time when she thought her bus was not coming to pick her up. Gene was right there in the hallway when the incident occurred, and he calmed her down until the bus arrived a few minutes later.

On September 27, I watched Gene interact with children on the playground during lunch recess. During the first few minutes of recess, eight to ten fifth-grade boys became involved in a lot of shoving and pushing. Shortly thereafter, Gene appeared on the playground, walked over to the boys, and rather sternly told them to find something else to do that did not involve hitting, kicking, and tackling one another. Gene continued to circulate from group to group around the playground, and the children's behavior improved as he approached. I continued to watch the group of boys who had previously been involved in the rough play. As Gene moved away and

the boys thought he was not watching, they would occasionally attempt to sneak a punch or a kick at one another; however, their actions stayed rather subdued. Interestingly, they remained intent on watching Gene as he continued to circulate around the playground.

I asked Gene if spending time on the playground during the lunch period was his normal practice. He replied:

> Yes, it is. I feel that I have to be present in both the lunchroom and on the playground in order to keep the proper tone and to keep the lid on. Our teachers, by contract, have a duty-free lunch period. There are times when I find it necessary to call a staff meeting, or to meet with an individual or group of teachers during the lunch period, but generally I'm in the lunchroom or on the playground as much as possible, probably on the average of three times per week. I've found over the years that taking these steps to insure calm and safety at lunch time really sets the proper tone each day for the entire afternoon. Parents seem to really appreciate the fact that I'm available to assist and supervise students so much during the day.

On October 14, I again observed the principal both outside and inside the building. Again I noticed his calming influence in situations involving students. He rarely raised his voice, and students generally seemed to want to talk with him. Gene demonstrated clearly that he played a key role in influencing student behavior and in setting the tone for the school. He seemed to believe that, in the classroom, the presence and authority of the teacher usually were sufficient to influence student behavior. Concerning his role, he stated:

> Music classes, the bus, classroom situations involving substitute teachers, and recesses sometimes present major problems resulting in referrals to my office. Though I can't be present in every situation, my goal is to make everyone think that I am nearby all the time. For example, even if I'm able to make just a brief appearance on the playground,

> referrals resulting from lunch recess are substantially reduced. However, on days that I'm away from the building, discipline referrals from lunch recess are generally numerous, and that bothers me. The playground assistants and teachers at times seem to have little or no control over the students in these situations.

At 11:30, the first-, third-, and fifth-grade classes went to lunch. Gene was already in the lunchroom waiting for them. Students filed through the lunch line to purchase a hot lunch or a carton of milk to go with their sack lunch. Once everyone had been seated, Gene asked for their attention in a voice loud enough to be heard by all. He proceeded to say he had been informed that this lunch group had behaved rather poorly the day before. He restated the lunchroom rules and reminded students that if they could not abide by those rules they would be invited to go home for lunch. Having said that, he left the multi-purpose room and went outside. I remained until students were dismissed at about 11:50, and then I, too, went to the playground. Students in the lunchroom had remained rather calm after Gene left.

On the playground I found Gene. "The lunchroom was fine the rest of the time, wasn't it?" he asked. I acknowledged that it was, and he replied, "Periodically I have to remind them, sometimes even send someone home for lunch for a few days in order to set the example that I mean business." We continued to walk around the playground. Students repeatedly said "Hello" to us; in fact, one fifth grader even apologized to Gene for his behavior the previous day.

At noon the bell rang outside, signaling the second and fourth graders to go inside for lunch. As I started to follow them inside, Gene said, "I'm not going inside. This group should be fine, plus they apparently weren't a problem yesterday." He was right. The students walked in calmly, deposited their coats at their lockers, and went to the lunchroom. The lunch period was very calm. Students talked with one another in low voices; not one had to be reprimanded by the lunchroom assistants during the entire period. At 12:20 the bell rang, and students were dismissed to go to their classrooms. A handful of students who had arrived late remained to finish eating their lunches.

From the examples noted, as well as from conversations with the principal, I concluded that Gene was instrumental in influencing students' behavior and social interactions. I also concluded that Gene believed he played a critical role in monitoring and influencing students' behavior, particularly when he was present.

Further observations at Kennedy School indicated that the principal was influential in affecting student behavior in situations when he was not physically present. Related to the previous assertion, which concerned the principal's ability to affect students' behavior in social interactions, particularly when he was present, this assertion concerns the principal's influence in other situations, even when he did not personally monitor the setting. The following example demonstrates that even though Gene was not present when the incident occurred, he took measures afterward to prevent similar situations from happening again.

During visits to the first- and fourth-grade classrooms at Kennedy School, I was particularly impressed by the fact that student discipline rarely was a problem, regardless of the structure of a particular lesson or classroom activity. During only one classroom visitation did I observe a teacher, Mrs. Forster in this case, send a student to the principal for disciplinary action. On October 25, during a creative-writing activity, two students began jabbing at one another during the portion of the assignment in which they and a partner were to be discussing each other's papers while going through the peer editing process. As the students were fooling around, and before Mrs. Forster had an opportunity to respond to control the situation, Jeremy had jabbed Clyde very close to his eye with the point of the pencil. Clyde yelled and quickly jumped on Jeremy, and the two wrestled on the floor. Both Mrs. Forster and I separated the boys and got them to their feet. In the process, Clyde and Jeremy had jabbed at each other with their pencils a few more times. Mrs. Forster escorted the boys to the office to see Gene for disciplinary action, while the rest of the class continued the peer editing.

Other times I observed that teachers sometimes threatened to send students to the principal if their behavior did not change, or simply to have Gene come to the classroom to resolve a problem or misbehavior on the part of a student or group of students. On one occasion, Mrs. Forster sent a student to the office to bring Gene to the classroom because Herschel, a mainstreamed emotionally impaired

special education student, was being extremely loud and disruptive. However, practically as soon as the student left the classroom to get Gene, Herschel settled down and was relatively subdued for the remainder of the class period.

Another time, I observed the first-grade teacher, Mrs. White, ask one of her youngsters, Robert, to go to the office to see Gene because, as she told him, "You're out of control and can't settle down." Robert replied that he didn't want to go to the office, that he wanted to stay in the class. His behavior improved from that point on.

Later in the school year I asked teachers whether sending students to the office to see the principal for disciplinary purposes had any effect, either positive or negative, on student behavior. Mrs. White's response was typical of those from other teachers:

> It's not too often that I have difficulty controlling student behavior in the classroom; however, on those occasions that I have had to send a student to see Gene, the results have most often been very positive. Usually, when children come back to the classroom from his office they are generally calm, somewhat subdued, and ready to continue with the business of the day. I know that if the child wasn't ready to rejoin the class, Gene would not return the student to my classroom.

On October 20, I attended a staff meeting at Kennedy School, part of which was devoted to student discipline and school climate issues. As the year progressed, I discovered that Gene regularly included discipline in staff meeting agendas. During the October 20 meeting, however, Gene reminded the staff of guidelines for student discipline that they had developed over the years.

Primarily to ensure consistency among staff members and the principal regarding discipline policy, discussion centered on times when it was appropriate to use the principal's authority in handling a student disciplinary situation. In general, the discussion supported the notion that the staff must work together in demanding and then modeling appropriate student behavior. Gene insisted that all members consistently and often convey the expectation that students should behave appropriately at all times.

In making the preceding assertions, I discussed how Gene set the tone for student behavior and conveyed his expectations of teachers in regard to student behavior and its effect on school climate. I also concluded that the principal was involved in decision making regarding building practices, in setting policies and procedures, and in implementing and delivering the instructional program.

On October 14, I had returned to Kennedy School primarily to observe activities during the lunch period. When I arrived that morning, Gene was in the faculty room, discussing the writing program with the fourth-grade teachers, Mrs. Forster and Miss Grancy. The teachers complained that there was not enough time in the day to have students write, edit, peer conference, draft, and illustrate as part of the "process writing" approach, and still to teach reading, spelling, math, science, social studies, computers, substance abuse, and so on. Gene said he understood, but that children were to write every day even if it was at the expense of other content areas. "What's wrong with integrating it into all

subjects rather than keeping writing as a separate isolated block of time?" he asked. Gene continued:

> Writing is a high priority of the district, and we've simply got to expand on the opportunities for kids to write if we are to improve their skills. This is especially true in our fourth and fifth grades. I expect students to have the opportunity to write creatively every single day.

The teachers said they understood, and left the room to pick up their children from special classes.

After Mrs. Forster and Miss Grancy had gone, Gene commented that teachers regularly used the excuse that there just was not enough time in the day, but that he had made the priority very clear. "I've indicated that I understand that writing has to be inserted at the expense of something else; however, it still must be done and the teachers should know that very well." He continued:

> We still have some difficulty integrating the teaching of spelling and grammar in the writing process, rather than simply teaching each as separate isolated skills outside of the writing process. Overall, our writing skills have improved dramatically in the past couple of years, but the feeling of teachers that they must cover every page in the basal text and workbook as a measure of their accountability has been tough to overcome. For some reason they just don't seem to have the confidence to eliminate content even though I've given them license to pick and choose as long as our instructional goals are being met.

On Wednesday, September 14, I had decided to continue my focus on the principal. Because it was only the third week of school, I was still spending considerable time in the Kennedy Elementary School office and, in general, following Gene wherever he went. The school secretary, Mrs. Wilson, had arrived at 7:30 a.m., and Gene arrived 15 minutes later. He exchanged a few pleasantries with his

secretary and then went across the hall to get a cup of coffee. Teachers began arriving shortly thereafter, and at 8:10 Gene asked to see the third-grade teachers in his office. He asked that I not be present at that meeting.

At 8:30, students were allowed to enter the building, at which time Gene positioned himself in the front foyer just outside the main office. Numerous students said "Hello" as they passed him in the hallway, and he likewise greeted them in a pleasant, friendly manner. At 8:37, special education bus #14 pulled up, and the driver signaled Gene that she needed him. He went to her aid and shortly afterward got off the bus gripping a rather large, plump youngster firmly by the arm, escorted him into the office, and closed the door behind them.

At 9:05, Gene went to the faculty room where he met with the fifth-grade teachers. Both teachers seemed rather upset as they explained that the proposed instrumental music classes (i.e., band and orchestra) would be interfering with their scheduled science lesson two days a week. Gene responded that he would look into the matter with Mr. Harmon, the administrator responsible for scheduling the classes. "However," he stated, "you realize that instrumental music classes must interfere with something, and creating a districtwide schedule is very difficult."

When Gene returned to the office, Mrs. Wilson told him that two parents had telephoned and wanted to speak to him. She explained that both were upset with one of the safety patrol members. Gene called the parents and assured them that he would look into the

matter, remedy the problem, and get back to them. He immediately called the student to the office, discussed the parents' concern with him, and concluded that the youngster had indeed harassed and threatened the other children. Gene warned the student that he was being placed on probation and that he would be removed from the patrol if such an incident happened again.

The brief vignettes included so far have illustrated Gene's interest in meeting with students and staff regarding the instructional program, as well as his apparent authority in establishing policies, practices, and procedures.

On October 20, I attended a staff meeting at Kennedy School. The major portion of the meeting was devoted to a presentation by Stephanie Martin, the language arts coordinator for the intermediate school district. In introducing her, Gene reminded the staff that Mrs. Martin had started working with him and the first- and second-grade teachers the previous year to increase the use of literature in the language arts program. Mrs. Gibson, a second-grade teacher, had even begun using all literature and trade books and had completely discarded the basal text and workbooks. Gene commented:

> I want you to know that I totally support teachers moving in this direction, and I've invited Stephanie here today to discuss the incorporation of extensive use of literature throughout the entire school. Though I don't intend to insist that our basal texts be thrown out completely across the board, I do believe that by emphasizing the use of good literature with children, combined with the much greater emphasis on student writing, that we no longer need to depend as heavily on the combination of basal text and workbooks to provide the organization for reading.

Mrs. Mitchell, a fifth-grade teacher, asked how to explain to parents the change to a less-structured approach. Mrs. Martin said:

> Remember, you make the changeover gradually by bringing more and more paperback books as well as books from our own library. You're not simply throwing everything else out overnight. I recommend you do it gradually, little by little building up your reserve of books, and the rest will take care of itself because the children will enjoy reading much more and this feeling will come across to the parents.

Gene added:

> We'll be discussing this much more as a total staff, and Stephanie will continue to consult with us. Before we wrap up the meeting, however, I want to emphasize that I do have budget money set aside so that we can continue to purchase much more in terms of literature-based materials. This is important because, as we know, we have a number of children coming to us these days who are completely turned off by reading, and if for no other reason than providing high-interest reading materials at a variety of levels, it is a good way to restore their interest.

Now that we have examined the role of the principal in terms of his authority to set policies, practices, and procedures autonomously, we now turn to his role in maintaining expectations for students and staff. Primarily as a result of my interviews with teachers, I concluded that <u>the principal maintained expectations, standards, and goals for student and staff achievement</u>.

In interviews conducted toward the end of the school year, teachers provided me with examples of the high standards and expectations that Gene held for students and staff. On April 27, I interviewed Mrs. White, a first-grade teacher. The day had been a difficult one for her, and as I entered her classroom it was obvious that she really would have preferred to go home and skip the

interview. However, when I started asking questions regarding the school administration, she suddenly came to life. She said:

> Gene is tough on us. He expects a great deal, but to every student and member of this staff he comes across as being a very sensitive individual. Somehow, and I don't know how he does it, Gene gives the appearance that he is everywhere at all times no matter what the situation.

In an interview on May 25, Mrs. Forster, a fourth-grade teacher, described the principal as being "truly a curriculum specialist" because of his strong background as a reading consultant in the district. She termed Gene the "single most important factor responsible for keeping the school from going under." She continued:

> We were going through some tough times here. In recent years our reputation has been tarnished by the changing community and the influx of new students resulting in slowly declining test scores. Gene saw the indications coming and insisted that we develop a systematic means to evaluate what we were doing [accreditation] and to insure that we were reacting proactively; thus, the development of the school improvement process and involvement in the Michigan Accreditation Program.

She concluded by saying:

> The staff here is a good one. We always thought we were good, but the truth of the matter is he was right. We needed something to boost our image, and though we still come in for some criticism because our scores continue to decline, this staff works hard. Gene pushes us even harder, our goal is kids, and we believe that we really will succeed.

On May 11, I interviewed Miss Prendergast, a first-grade teacher, who commented:

> Gene Snowden is the best principal that I have ever worked for. This is a difficult school, and the community is going through some tough times with the integration and all, but this school is a positive focal point to the community,and he's the one who really makes it that way. Being a reading specialist, Gene is second to none in terms of his expertise on the instructional program and the curriculum. People here would do anything for

> him; consequently, we work very hard simply because he drives himself so hard. If he has a weakness it's because he tries to be too much to so many people. His expectations of us are extremely high, just as they are for himself; however, sometimes he is spread too thin to be effective.

In summarizing the leadership style in effect at Kennedy Elementary School, I discussed the administrator through a series of vignettes describing major assertions I made about Gene's involvement in the school operation. From my observations at Kennedy School, I could see that he was the true leader of the school and was actively involved in virtually every facet of its operation. I described Gene's ability to provide leadership, promote expectations for students and staff, set the tone for the overall climate of Kennedy School, and use his authority to administer building policy and practice. Now it is time to consider the Kennedy teaching staff.

## Teacher Expectations, Instructional Emphasis, and Pupil Evaluation

Another correlate of school effectiveness is teacher conveyance of academic expectations. According to Edmonds and Lezotte (1982), teachers convey these expectations in two ways:

> First, teachers must be prepared to describe the schoolwide grade by grade bodies of knowledge and sets of skills that describe minimum mastery for any student. This standard of mastery must be uniform although some students may exceed the minimum much more than others. The second important set of teacher behaviors convey the impression that all students are expected to obtain at least the minimum. This means for example that probability of pupil recitation is seen not to vary as a function of pupil sex, size, age, race, class, or any other extraneous set of student characteristics. Observed teacher behavior must convey the impression that at a minimum the teacher expects all students to acquire the prerequisites to subsequent successful access to the next grade. The teacher

> behaviors that are important here include distribution of recitation, quality of teacher response to student recitation, and written work, uniform imposition of discipline and other behaviors which taken together permit one to know whether all students are treated in ways that convey the expectation that they are to obtain mastery. (p. 3)

In terms of teacher expectations, instructional emphasis, and pupil evaluation, in effective schools the principal and staff:

1. Understand and expect from students mastery of specific grade-level skills and knowledge.

2. Set uniform standards of mastery for all students, realizing some students will exceed the minimum much more than others.

3. Expect students to master certain skills before passing to the next grade.

4. Impose discipline uniformly.

5. Place high priority on pupil acquisition of basic skills.

According to Standard IV of the Michigan Accreditation Program (1989):

> The professional staff must be adequate in number and in diversity to provide for the educational needs of its students. Each staff member must have the qualifications and skills needed to contribute to the school's implementation of its philosophy and goals. (n.p.)

Primarily from observations and interviews with the first- and fourth-grade staff, I concluded that <u>teachers at Kennedy Elementary School believed that through the delivery of instruction they maintained high expectations while accepting varying levels of student achievement</u>.

On May 25, I questioned Mrs. Forster about teacher expectations, delivery of the instructional program, and student evaluation. Early in the interview she pointed out that Kennedy School and the entire Hillside Public School System were continually criticized by parents of new children entering the district for having too-high goals and expectations for the children. She showed me the district's instructional booklet, which identified essential skills that students had to master before the end of each grade, to help ensure success in the next grade. She commented:

> Through the first ten weeks or so of each school year, in recent years we have had to place significant numbers of new students back one grade because they simply don't come to us with the skills that we expect them to have. As a staff we are addressing that issue also. We're seeing children come to us who don't have the skills and the educational background that we've been accustomed to, and in many cases have been educationally deprived. But, instead of continuing to expect kids coming to us to meet our needs, we are actively moving to better meet their needs.

How were the Kennedy staff members striving to become more successful in meeting the needs of children? The obvious answer might be to lower their goals and expect less from children, thus allowing more students to succeed. But that was not Mrs. Forster's solution at all. She continued by saying:

> We're all together now in believing that our curriculum doesn't have to change, our goals don't have to change, and most of all our expectations for student outcomes don't have to be lowered, but it is our delivery of instruction that must change. That is why we now have teachers proactively pursuing the use of manipulatives in their classrooms, particularly in science and math; approaching writing through a more process-oriented methodology and using a whole-language approach to reading through much greater use of literature, trade books, poetry, writing, and so on instead of depending only on the use of basal texts and workbooks.

Mrs. Forster realistically analyzed the situation even further when she stated:

> This direction still won't bring kids to us who are any smarter, or that meet our expectations any better, or that have a stronger educational background, but it does help us work more successfully with them initially. For a while we had a difficult time accepting a more heterogeneous student population, and understanding also that parents send us the best children that they have to offer. Once we accepted that, we found that we really can take students successfully from where they are, regardless of their skills, to a point of where we would like them to be without really lowering our expectations throughout each grade level in order to accommodate the students.

During my classroom observations throughout the 1988-89 school year, I noticed teachers using manipulatives a great deal. I was also particularly interested in watching teachers work with creative writing in their classrooms. At the end of October, I watched Mrs. Forster carry out a process-oriented writing approach with her class. Students conferenced with one another and/or with the teacher, read their drafts to one another, and participated in class discussion as Mrs. Forster reviewed student papers with the entire class, displaying each paper on a screen using an overhead projector. In January 1989, I observed fourth-grade teacher Miss Grancy operate in a similar manner.

During interviews on May 25 with Mrs. Forster and again on June 8 with Miss Grancy, I asked them more about their process approach to teaching. Mrs. Forster's answer was an excellent example of how the Kennedy teachers had modified their delivery to meet the needs of children more effectively; the result had been a better-quality writing product than they had ever seen before. She said:

> We use cooperative learning by allowing kids to interact with one another and to critique one another. I focus my correcting on certain aspects of each writing activity that are known to students before they even begin. By focusing on the process rather than the product, the end result has developed into a higher quality product from virtually all students. The good part is that as I evaluate papers and student writing, I haven't lowered my expectations one bit. They are still every bit as high as they have always been. The only thing that has changed is my approach [the process] to arriving at that end product.

Further examples that relate to the teaching staff, their delivery of instruction, and their expectations of children are discussed on the following pages.

On November 22, I visited Kennedy just before the Thanksgiving vacation. My purpose was to observe the first-grade classes, particularly because I had been invited to attend the Thanksgiving feast that students had prepared for the occasion.

As I entered the building, I found Gene standing in the hallway in front of the office. Apparently the special education bus had arrived late, and he was making sure the students got to their classrooms without difficulty.

At 10:30, I went to Mrs. White's classroom to observe preparations for the Thanksgiving feast. She was just completing a math lesson; like Mrs. Forster, she used a process-oriented approach to teaching just about everything. As I entered the classroom, Mrs. White was finishing a lesson in counting and place value, using the large assortment of colored beans and the plastic "unifix" cubes that are designed to be connected to each other from one end to another. As students were cleaning up, she commented:

> This is the greatest program. Can you imagine that I can actually teach place value in first grade using the manipulatives, and most students can actually understand the concept? It's too bad that more teachers aren't willing to change to this approach. Using manipulatives allows students to visualize the arranging of concrete objects to help them understand and conceptualize what is actually taking place.

One of the prominent topics of research in education today concerns the use of cross-age tutoring to give at-risk students additional instructional help. Kennedy School had begun a cooperative program with Hillside High School, in which at-risk high school students in the "Focus Success" program visited the elementary school every Tuesday and Thursday morning and tutored individual students for 50 to 60 minutes.

At 9:25 on December 6, the school bus arrived at Kennedy from the high school. Sixteen students got off the bus and entered the elementary school. They were chaperoned by a male adult who I learned was one of their teachers. Gene met the students at the front door as they came in, had a few words with their instructor, and began calling off names of students from the list he had been given. When he called the name Jim Stimpson, Mr. Clay, the teacher, explained to Gene and the others that since their last visit to Kennedy, Jim had dropped out of school and was hospitalized because of a drug overdose. Later, Mr. Clay commented to me that "Jim's problem is one of the difficulties we face because we never know how long the students are going to be with us. Jim was progressing quite well, too. It's these situations that really make our job tough to deal with at times."

A little after 9:30, the high school students went to individual classrooms. I followed a young man named Donald into Mrs. Kilroy's third-grade classroom. She excused herself from the class for a moment, quietly spoke a few words to Donald, showed him what he was to do from the math text, and then asked a youngster she identified as Clayton to go with Donald for a while to work with him in the commons area. Clayton appeared pleased that Donald had returned to work with him. As the two walked out of the classroom into the large carpeted area, other high school students were leaving other classrooms, escorting their young students to a vacant area in which to work.

"This is a great concept," Gene said to Mr. Clay and me. "This is their third session here, and so far it is working much better than we thought it would. The teachers really love it also because it really gives us an opportunity to focus on and provide tutorial help with skills that our students are lacking. Not to mention the fact that our students absolutely worship their high school tutors."

"The high school students are really taking their responsibility seriously," said Mr. Clay. "These mornings have really become the highlight of their week in school."

Gene replied, "Likewise for our kids, as well."

We walked down the hallway to the kindergarten room to see how things were going there. The concept worked a little differently in the kindergarten classroom. Two high school students circulated around the room and assisted kindergartners as they manipulated various objects during their math time. The high school students

sat right on the floor with the youngsters as they helped them make symbolic geometric shapes using two-dimensional wooden pieces. Before we knew it, it was 10:30 and time for the high school tutors to board their bus and return to school. Mr. Clay thanked Gene, rounded up his students, and back they went to the high school. As we walked toward the office, Gene commented:

> It is much too early to tell if this concept produces any real academic gains. We think that it will; however, regardless of that aspect, the benefits of companionship, responsibility, and success they are having far outweigh any cognitive drawbacks that might be found. We are using this as a pilot study for potential usage in other elementary schools in our district. Based on what we have seen today and the two previous days, it appears that we have latched onto something that has a great deal of potential.

The preceding commentary illustrates how Kennedy staff were expecting these high school students, who had numerous problems, to serve as leaders and role models for their younger counterparts. In terms of the elementary school students, the Kennedy staff were expecting some benefit to them, as well. While making allowances for the varying levels of student achievement, they were using an intervention that might enhance students' affective and cognitive skills.

On December 21, I visited Kennedy once again. I had no particular plan in mind other than to pay a brief visit to the school to wish everyone a happy holiday. Mrs. Dawson, the learning resource teacher, invited me to attend the carnival that her learning-disabled students had organized for the first-grade

classes. I obliged, thinking it would be an opportunity to see what kinds of expectations were held for learning-disabled students.

When I went to Mrs. Dawson's classroom at 1:10, I discovered that the students had already started the carnival activities with the first-graders from Miss Prendergast's class. Although both teachers were in the room supervising, it was apparent that the program was being run by Mrs. Dawson's learning-disabled students. Each learning-disabled student was situated with 4 of the 24 first graders. Each learning-disabled student had devised a board game to play with the younger children, and had designed a number of awards as prizes. One youngster, Edward, whispered to me that all of the students would receive an award whether they won a game or not. After about five minutes, the first-grade students at each station were told to rotate to the next game. Even though the games were similar, the first graders did not seem to object, and they screamed with joy at winning the awards, which were stuck on their shirt or blouse after each game had been completed.

At 1:45, the games had all been played and the first graders from Miss Prendergast's class were asked to leave. Mrs. Dawson lavishly praised her students for the fine job they had done. Then she reminded them that they had to get ready for Mrs. White's class, which was coming at 2:00. The students quickly put the finishing touches on some more awards, and at 2:00 sharp, Mrs. White and her class entered the room. Mrs. White had already grouped the children by fours; she asked them to sit quietly in their groups at a designated game and to listen carefully to Mrs. Dawson and her

students for instructions. Soon the games began, and the first graders showed the same enthusiasm that the previous class had shown. The next 45 minutes passed quickly, with the first graders being instructed by the learning-disabled students. The teachers said very little during the entire time because the students from both classes were quite self-directed.

By about 3:00, the games had all been completed, the first graders had received their awards, and it was time for them to get ready to go home. Mrs. Dawson again praised her students for a marvelous job; pride showed on their faces as they grinned from ear to ear. I got the feeling that they believed they had accomplished something that was truly great. It was now time for them to return to their general education classrooms to get ready to go home. I thanked Mrs. Dawson and the students for allowing me to observe all afternoon. When the students had gone, Mrs. Dawson expressed how pleased she was. She said:

> This was a big step for them. This should really give them a boost of confidence. I was quite concerned whether they would be too intimidated to go through with it and really take control of the younger children, but they did and I'm really glad I decided to have them give it a try. We'll have to do this kind of activity more often.

On January 24, I visited Miss Grancy's fourth-grade class, which was doing a creative-writing activity that involved revising and rewriting a third draft, followed by a teacher-student conference and then writing the final piece that was to be published and put on display. I had visited Miss Grancy's class earlier in the month and had watched them do the first rewriting and develop

their second drafts, as well as peer conferencing. When I arrived this time, the students had already conferred with one another and were writing their final drafts. Miss Grancy was circulating around the room, stopping regularly with students who were nearly finished. She visited with each student for about two or three minutes, made final corrections, and then gave some students approval to begin writing the final copy "in absolutely your best penmanship possible." I had hoped to see some further examples of peer conferencing because I had been fascinated with that aspect of the writing process when I had observed it before.

I left the classroom but waited until after the students had been dismissed before going back to talk with Miss Grancy about evaluation and grading, particularly in the sense that each finished piece was really a group effort because of all the opportunities for peer conferencing and the collaborative learning that had taken place. She said:

> This is an issue we are still addressing. Some of the staff are quite concerned because to this point in the upper grades we still grade papers just as before. The student's grade is based on the quality of the paper even though it is something of a group effort. The important thing, though, is that students here are writing more than ever before. We also feel that the quality of student writing is better than ever before, partially because of the time we spend and the fact that we expect perfection in every finished writing piece, and last but not least, they are growing through the process. What could be more important? Each student still has to make judgments as to the final product and what finally ends up being written on the paper. Most of the writing is done here at school, and I would venture to say that primarily the writing is the student's own work. So there are some things still to be resolved, but by and large, we are all very supportive and things are really moving in the right direction.

On February 8, I was scheduled to visit Mrs. White's classroom to observe a Math-Their-Way lesson with her first graders. As I stepped through the front entrance doors, Gene appeared, as if he had been waiting for me to arrive. "Well," he said, "Where are you going today?"

I replied, "Mrs. White's room to see a math lesson with her first graders."

He responded:

> You'll enjoy that. The district is in the process of adopting and implementing Math-Their-Way, and Kay White is one of the leaders to adopt the movement here in the Hillside School System. She's been using the program for about three years now, and I'll tell you, she's made a believer of me to the extent that I believe it is the way to go not only in math, but the approach to teaching should carry over to other content areas and the way they are taught. This approach preaches thinking skills and has allowed Kay to raise her level of expectations of students to previously unexpected heights.

After exchanging some more small talk with Gene, I headed down to Mrs. White's classroom. I was late because of my conversation with Gene, and the classroom activity had already begun. The entire class was working with Mrs. White on a place-value exercise, a concept that is unusual for introduction and mastery at the first-grade level. The children were still working at the symbolic and concept level because they were not yet involved in writing numbers through the exercise. Each student had a little flip chart with what appeared to be a ones and a tens column, a set of small paper cups, and some small valentine heart candies. About every 30 seconds, Mrs. White would ask the students to take one away. At her

command, each student would eat a candy heart and flip the ones-column portion of the chart to read one less. Each paper cup was filled with ten candies, to indicate the tens column. When it was appropriate, students were to dump the "tens" paper cup into the ones column, eat a candy, and flip the chart--either the ones or tens place or both.

The students and Mrs. White continued for about 45 minutes until most of the candies had been eaten. Then she asked the students to look at her at the front of the room. Mrs. White held up a fairly large jar (maybe one cup) and asked each student to estimate how many candies were in the container. As each student called out an estimate, Mrs. White recorded the number on a graph on the board. Estimates ranged from 16 to as high as 160. Mrs. White and the students then counted the candies into groups of ten and placed each group in a paper cup until they had counted eight cups with nine left over; thus the final count was 89 candies. Nobody had guessed the right number. The closest estimates were 95 and 84; four students guessed 70.

That day I had observed a unique way to teach math. Most students seemed to understand what they were doing, which means they were actually conceptualizing the process they were using and were actually learning the concept of place value--and in grade one, no less! Math-Their-Way is not a new program; it has been around for ten years or more. In using this approach, the teacher is much more active than in teaching traditional math. The teacher is the facilitator, and much work, organization, and energy are required to

teach a lesson. I did not see Mrs. White go to her desk and sit down once. She was actively presenting, supervising, assisting, and monitoring all the time.

The preceding discussion gives an idea of the expectations that Kennedy teachers had for their children. It should also exemplify what Mrs. Forster was saying at the beginning, when she alluded to the recently discovered delivery of instruction that the teachers were then using. Through the vignettes, I referred to the extensive use of a process approach in all content areas--teacher use of literature, whole language, the use of manipulatives in math and science, the use of peer and high school tutors and, most important, extensive use of cooperative and collaborative learning. All of these techniques and approaches allow teachers to maintain their expectations of children, yet they also give teachers numerous ways to meet the varying levels of student needs.

As I continued to observe the first- and fourth-grade teachers at Kennedy, it became apparent to me that Kennedy teachers were aware of the need for equality in the distribution of teacher recitation and student feedback, and in turn provided opportunities for guided and independent practice.

On October 25, I first visited Mrs. Forster's class to observe teacher and student behavior. Mrs. Forster was a black teacher and, according to Gene, had an excellent reputation in the Kennedy community and the Hillside School District. Before entering her classroom, I asked Mrs. Forster to describe her objective for the

teaching lesson I would be observing. She said she would be doing a lesson in creative writing that would integrate the reading, writing, and social studies curriculum areas. Her goal was to proceed through the first draft of a story with students and have them confer with two partners about the draft.

Because Michigan is a mandatory unit of study in the Hillside School District's social studies curriculum, Mrs. Forster intended to integrate the social studies curriculum with language arts. She started by reviewing with the class numerous points regarding Michigan geography and history. Then she asked the class to brainstorm with whatever geographical and historical aspects of Michigan they could recall. Students responded by calling out numerous points while Mrs. Forster wrote them on the chalkboard. Having gathered numerous points, she then organized them into a diagram, using Michigan as the focal point. She organized the facts that had been gathered into a chart, using the storywebbing technique.

Once she had accumulated approximately 50 historical or geographical topics on the board, Mrs. Forster asked the students to stop. She then said:

> Now I would like each of you to begin to write the first draft of a creative story about yourself related to one or more of the topics you see listed on the board. For example, you might write about "The Day I Swam Across Lake Michigan" or "My Life With Henry Ford." If you wish, the story can be a description of something that has actually happened to you, or it could be something completely fictitious that you have made up, or it could be a combination of both. In any case, I would like each of you to make sure that you incorporate some of the historical and factual information from our unit of study on Michigan. I'll give you about 45 minutes to begin on your first draft,

> working only by yourselves at this time. Then I would like you to meet with your partners, read your draft to them, and then partners you are to make suggestions that in your mind would help to improve the story. Let's begin quietly drafting your stories.

The classroom became very quiet as students considered the topics on the board before beginning to write. Some students went to the bookshelf at the back of the classroom to refer to their Michigan text and/or other reference materials that were available. Mrs. Forster circulated around the room, pausing to observe what students were writing. Occasionally, a student asked her a question or she offered comments and encouragement to children as she circulated.

After about 45 minutes, Mrs. Forster asked the students to meet with their partners and begin reading what they had written thus far. All students knew where to go and whom to meet with, leading me to conclude that this type of activity occurred quite regularly. The classroom suddenly became rather noisy as students began reading their stories to one another; however, the noise was not particularly disruptive, nor were students acting out. For the 90 minutes I had been observing in the classroom, not once had Mrs. Forster returned to her desk to sit down; she was continually involved with students. After about 30 minutes of group involvement, Mrs. Forster asked everyone to stop. The students immediately became quiet. She then asked them to return to their original seats and either to continue writing the first draft or to begin the second draft, based on the input from their partners.

In reflecting on the activity I had witnessed in Mrs. Forster's classroom that day, I made the following observations: Mrs. Forster developed the activity surrounding her objective by first asking students to reflect on past experiences and knowledge gathered from their unit of study on Michigan. She appeared to be intent on involving all students in the class discussion; in fact, I believe every class member did contribute in some way. She used "wait time," when necessary, to draw answers and suggestions from a student before going on to the next, and her insistence on circulating around the room during the entire activity was particularly noticeable.

Some years ago, an important research study was completed that was designed to give classroom teachers feedback concerning the frequency with which teachers call on or give attention to certain students in the classroom. In that study, called Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement (TESA), participating classroom teachers allowed a classroom observer, generally another teacher, into the room to record which students the teacher called on or worked with, versus which students were given little or no attention. The results were startling. Educators discovered that surprisingly high percentages of students were being neglected. Consequently, TESA has become an important part of observation techniques used by researchers and administrators nationwide when observing teachers perform with students in the classroom.

Although this assertion does not totally reflect the TESA project, over the years I have become cognizant of the way teachers

respond to students and the ways in which they allow opportunities for student feedback. As I visited classrooms throughout the 1988-89 school year, I noticed that teachers provided opportunities for all students to perform. Through guided practice, students had opportunities to work in class, sometimes individually and sometimes cooperatively under the teacher's supervision. Through independent practice, they had opportunities to complete homework assignments.

The first- and fourth-grade teachers differed in their use of independent practice. Simply because of the differences in grade levels and the maturity of the children, very little homework was given to first graders. However, both Mrs. White and Miss Prendergast demanded that their first graders spend time each evening reading with their parents. Depending on the developmental readiness of the children, they could read to parents, parents could read to them, or parents and children could take turns reading to each other. Each teacher used a simple form that parents were required to sign every day, indicating that they and their child had read that evening.

In fourth grade, homework was a different prospect altogether. During visitations to Miss Grancy's and Mrs. Forster's fourth-grade classrooms, I observed that homework was a part of the classroom time. However, before an independent practice was assigned, it was preceded by a short period of guided practice in the classroom. In Mrs. Forster's classroom on October 25, when the class was doing some creative writing, I observed that a portion of the work was to

be completed as part of a homework assignment. Both Miss Grancy and Mrs. Forster allowed students to begin their homework in class, under their supervision.

I had excellent opportunities to observe teachers' reactions to and interactions with students as they asked questions or discussed something they did not understand. This was particularly evident during observations of Mrs. Forster (grade 4) and Mrs. White (grade 1) on February 8. In each case, students readily approached their teachers toward the end of class, when class members were working independently.

In my previously recounted observation of Mrs. White's math lesson, as children worked with their flip charts to manipulate the "flips" for the ones and tens columns, Mrs. White moved about the room observing and stopping to help children as they had difficulty or needed to ask her a question. About every 30 seconds, Mrs. White would ask students to take one away. At that command, each student would eat one of the candy hearts from their ones container, and at the same time they would flip the ones-column portion of the chart to read one less. In each case, Mrs. White asked a student to read the correct number showing on the chart. Questions arose when students had flipped the ones column nine times and it became time to eat a candy heart from the tens column, and turn the "tens flip" to read the correct number. Each time the tens flip had to be turned, there was a longer pause before proceeding because it presented an excellent opportunity for Mrs. White to observe which students were having difficulty understanding the place-value

concept, to assist those students, and to answer questions about this difficult math concept. The motivation for students to perform under this type of guided practice seemed very high.

Teachers sometimes fail to provide positive reinforcement as they work with students. However, in observing each first- and fourth-grade classroom at Kennedy, I concluded that teachers went out of their way to react positively to students. I have presented some examples demonstrating teachers' responses to children, how Kennedy teachers skillfully used various techniques to elicit responses from all children, and how they used guided and independent practice to assist children through the learning process. I have concluded that teachers operated in ways that school effectiveness researchers have determined make for effective teaching.

A final conclusion related to the teaching staff and their expectations for students is that the Kennedy <u>teachers believed they were a very good teaching staff</u>. This assertion was based primarily on information gathered in interviews with teachers near the end of the 1988-89 school year.

On May 25, Mrs. Forster stated:

> The staff is a good one. We grumbled and complained at the thought of getting involved in the accreditation program. We thought that we were good; therefore, why get involved? But the truth of the matter is that [Gene Snowden] was right. We needed something to boost our image as well as our morale, and though we still come in for some criticism because of our declining test scores, this staff works very hard, likes kids, and we are continually looking for further steps that we need to take to combat this problem.

According to first-grade teacher Miss Prendergast during her May 11 interview, "The staff here is excellent." She described them as being extremely close, even in their private lives; however, she saw Gene as being the "glue that holds them together." She said:

> Though we're a very experienced staff, we're continually seeking to update our skills and staying current with what's going on in education today. We're lucky in that central administration seems to support a strong staff-development program in the district, and they aren't afraid to spend some money.

Mrs. White thought that:

> By and large, the staff at Kennedy Elementary School is superb. Though it is disheartening to see our standardized test scores in a state of decline, the staff is encouraged that they are approaching children in the right way. There is some evidence that the longer students remain with us the better they achieve on standardized tests. However, one of the real frustrations that we face is in dealing with the transience of the community. You don't find too many 8:00 to 3:00 people here. Most staff members arrive at school very early each day and stay well beyond the time that students leave the building.

Miss Grancy, in her June 8 interview, indicated that she saw the staff at Kennedy as being "wonderful." She identified they as being intelligent, creative, and sensitive to student needs. She added:

> We're constantly striving to be better, even though we could be described as being an experienced staff. People are highly professional here. The community is changing rapidly, yet we are doing our best to keep pace with what's going on in education. The appearance of the building is always kept very pleasing. Most of the staff is fairly low key, but intense, yet an environment is conveyed that this is a good place to be and that we are committed to learning. With some students it takes a little time because they're new and are coming in from Detroit and other urban areas. But give us some time, they all eventually like it here and we are usually able to make them understand our purpose for being here. After all, most parents have moved to Hillside because of the school system and they need to understand that we are very good and that we are not here to fool around.

I have discussed numerous ways in which the Kennedy staff delivered instruction and how they maintained high expectations for students by using essential goals and alternate approaches to delivering instruction to students with varying skill levels. In addition, I have discussed approaches Kennedy teachers used to elicit feedback from students equitably and uniformly. The techniques Kennedy teachers used to help students master certain skills, to elicit feedback, and to maintain high expectations might be considered rather untraditional. However, teachers appeared to be using these means to motivate students, to encourage greater student response, and, in the long run, to enhance learning.

## School Climate

Another correlate of school effectiveness is school climate, which is most easily discussed in terms of outcome. To be effective, a school must be relatively orderly, safe, clean, and otherwise suitable for achieving the school's major purposes. School age and size seem to matter less than the impression of institutional adequacy and care. Edmonds and Lezotte (1982) stated:

> We know that windows are less likely to be broken in effective schools than in ineffective schools, but we also know that effective schools tend to repair broken windows more effectively than ineffective schools. It can be shown that all school personnel play a vital role in the creation and maintenance of a climate conducive to effective teaching and learning. (p. 5)

In terms of school climate, the effective school has:

1. An orderly environment conducive to learning.
2. Safe and clean buildings.

3. Evidence that all school personnel have a vital role in the creation and maintenance of a climate conducive to effective teaching and learning.

Standard II of the Michigan Accreditation Program (1989) related to school climate states:

> The school recognizes that every student needs attention, acceptance, approval, and a sense of achievement. The climate is non-threatening and generates a sense of excitement in learning. All aspects of the school must evidence concern for the affective and physical well being of each student by providing for a safe and orderly learning environment. (n.p.)

The discussion of leadership style related in many instances to the principal's role in establishing the environment in terms of both school climate and leadership style. I will not refer here to that discussion or to the assertions generated from it. Rather, I will give additional examples relating to school climate. Primarily through observations and interviews, I concluded that the principal and staff at Kennedy Elementary School believed they were promoting an orderly school environment that was conducive to learning.

During my many visits to Kennedy School, I formed several impressions of the school climate. From the first day of observing first- and fourth-grade teachers on August 29, I constantly assessed the orderliness and general atmosphere of the total school environment. This had been part of my previous training; however, almost any individual who enters a school does the same thing. The cleanliness of the building and the orderliness of students passing in the hallways give the visitor an initial impression of how that

school is run administratively, how skilled the teachers are at their profession, and how sophisticated the curriculum is.

In my year at Kennedy, as early as October I observed teachers working with students in ways that allowed youngsters to express themselves and to work cooperatively with one another. This was exemplified in Mrs. Forster's creative-writing lesson with her fourth graders, Miss Grancy's doing the same with her fourth graders during observations in January, and Mrs. White's and Miss Prendergast's using manipulatives in mathematics with their first graders. Each time I entered a classroom, students were being given opportunities to interact with one another, either in large- or small-group situations. The teacher appeared to be more a facilitator than a lecturer. In very few instances did I observe teachers lecturing to the entire class.

Further evidence supporting these observations surfaced during the interviews with the teachers beginning April 27 with Mrs. White and ending June 6 with fourth-grade teacher Miss Grancy. Because I had had numerous opportunities to observe before beginning interviews toward the end of the school year, many of the interview questions concerned the approaches to teaching children and delivery of the curriculum I had observed. During her interview on April 27, first-grade teacher Mrs. White summed up what others also noted:

> The fine atmosphere that you've seen this year is typical. It's not just a show that's put on for you each time that you arrive. Our custodial staff, in addition to the teaching professionals, is top notch and works very hard. What you've seen is typical. . . . This place always has a very calm, friendly atmosphere, but that doesn't mean we are not businesslike either.

The assertion that the administration and staff promoted an orderly school environment was further supported by visitations to two staff meetings, one on October 14 and the other on April 11. In each case, I noted that "orderly school environment" was a specific topic on the meeting agenda that Gene had prepared. Mainly, Gene reminded the staff members that they were responsible for ensuring that students did not get out of control and that this could best be accomplished by keeping the children engaged in meaningful tasks and activities. Gene had told me more than once that discipline and other topics concerning school environment and climate were included on each staff meeting agenda and that these topics had to be emphasized at certain key times. "Naturally, the beginning of the year is one of those times," he said. He again commented on April 14:

> This really begins the time of year when students, particularly the older ones, can be the toughest to handle. I remind everyone that learning continues through most of the month of June and doesn't stop any earlier. It's interesting that when April arrives, all of a sudden you see teachers giving students more recess time, etc., and unless it is closely monitored, time on task and consequently learning can fall off drastically.

Two other observations of specific events further clarified my thinking regarding the attention given to maintaining an orderly environment at Kennedy School. These observations led me to believe that the principal and staff were influential in setting the tone and trying to control the school climate.

Tuesday, November 8, was election day, and Kennedy School was a voting precinct. As a principal, I had thought that on elections in

which national or state officials were being elected, a holiday should be declared, or at least there should be no school. Seeing the number of people voting at Kennedy that day supported my belief. As Gene said:

> This is one of the few days of the school year that I feel that I have almost no control. I take several steps and precautions to insure the safety of students, staff, and visitors on this day, but no matter what, I always feel that I'm almost helpless for one day.

Voting took place in the multi-purpose room, located near the front entrance. Voters were turning out in large numbers; the weather had been bad early in the day, and the Kennedy parking lot and driveway area was not large enough to accommodate the large number of voters. The parent-teacher association (PTA) was having a bake sale to sell baked goods to the voters. Gene said that in previous years the PTA had sold baked goods to the students as well; however, he had put an end to that because of the number of people walking around the school. He did not want students anywhere near the voting area. The PTA was upset with him, but he had made this decision out of a concern for the children's safety. In addition, he said:

> Having the election in the gym means that our students can't have P.E. classes in there, plus the fact that they have to eat their lunches in the classrooms. Then on top of that, with all the cars parked around back we can't send children out to the playground. This place is like a three-ring circus.

Gene was right; he did not have enough supervisors. However, he was able to get a number of the teachers to give up their lunch

period to help supervise. Some of them ate lunch in their classrooms. Gene continued:

> The other major imposition has meant that our gym classes had to be held somewhere other than in the multi-purpose room. We had hoped to have the classes outside on the playground, but because of the weather today and the fact that there are so many cars parked out there, it is impossible.

Gym classes were held in the classrooms, where teacher Ed Frandor taught a portion of his health and hygiene unit. "He normally takes time to do that each year anyway," Gene said. "However, we are currently trying to finish up our physical fitness testing, and we were hoping to accomplish that outdoors today."

As I walked around the building, all seemed to be fairly normal away from the multi-purpose room. As I returned to the front of the building, an elderly voter angrily came up to Gene, screaming, "You'd better do something about that parking area. I was almost killed as I walked from my car to the building." Gene explained that he had contacted the police earlier, asking for an officer to come to direct traffic in and out of the area, but so far none had arrived. He said, "I'll call again right now." He did and was told that a patrolman would arrive soon. Within 15 minutes an officer arrived to help control traffic.

Gene's entire afternoon was spent between the office and the voting area. A constant stream of people entered and left the school all afternoon. "This is how it has been all day," Gene said. "In fact, this is a little easier now than it was earlier. I arrived at 7:00 today, and it just hasn't let up since. I've just

barely been able to keep the lid on around here today. I'll be glad to get out of here, go home and relax."

I had planned to observe in the classroom that day, but the situation with voting was interesting. Also, Gene recruited me to help direct people and to help keep things under control. I knew how he felt. A big election is absolutely the worst day of the school year. Watching Gene operate was interesting. Even though I knew he was agitated, in most situations he did not show it. Many people came up to him to talk; poll workers and voters constantly placed demands on him that required his time, yet he handled every situation and demand without appearing to be flustered. To the outsider, Kennedy School appeared to be under control, even though Gene might not have felt that way. That day Kennedy School was no different from any school I had been a part of on election day. Although I had been away from school administration for a couple of years, witnessing the situation at Kennedy that afternoon brought back the memories.

On February 23, I went to the school to observe Mrs. White's first-grade class put on a program with Mrs. Blumer's second-grade class for the rest of the school, as well as parents. They had been writing about famous black Americans and February presidents' birthdays and were going to read their writings to the rest of the school in two programs--one that morning for approximately half the school and one in the afternoon for the remainder of the school.

I debated whether this program would be suitable to incorporate into my study and concluded that it might be because it would give

me an excellent opportunity to observe the entire school participating in an activity and to observe parents' reactions to and impressions of the school. I also thought this setting could further illustrate my assertions regarding the principal's and staff's efforts to establish a positive school climate.

The program was presented in a large commons area surrounded by the first- and second-grade classrooms. Mrs. White's class began their presentations first. Each student stepped up to the microphone to read his/her report. The reports were brief, but each presented a little factual information along with a short explanation of "what this person means to me." The reports were very well done and were presented in a manner that only a five, six, or seven year old could achieve. I thoroughly enjoyed each presentation, as did the audience. After the first graders had presented their reports, the entire class performed a combination speaking and choral presentation having to do with Abraham Lincoln and George Washington. At the conclusion of the songs, Mrs. Blumer's second-grade class performed in much the same way; however, because they were a year older, their presentations were slightly more sophisticated and were not quite as humorous as those of the first graders.

In addition to observing the students, I was also interested in focusing on the audience that day. The audience was composed of approximately 150 students sitting on the carpeted floor and 15 to 20 parents sitting on folding chairs at the back of the commons

area. The audience was polite and considerate throughout the program. Students and parents listened intently to each presentation; occasionally, a parent stood up to take a picture when his/her child was making a presentation. If a student stumbled through a report, the audience remained patient and supportive. At one point a toddler became restless, and as soon as it became apparent that the youngster was not going to settle down, his mother immediately removed him from the commons area. If the pause between presentations was lengthy, the audience became somewhat restless and there was a low undercurrent of noise; however, it was not disruptive. As soon as the next child was ready to give a presentation, the audience became quiet and attentive. I enjoyed the performance and found it interesting to observe the audience, as well. Consequently, I decided to stay through the lunch period and see the next presentation at 12:45.

During lunch I saw Gene, who went into the lunchroom and then out to the playground to perform his usual lunchtime routine. The afternoon performance went virtually the same as the morning program. This time I focused almost entirely on the audience members, who again were extremely polite and seemed to be silently encouraging the students as they made their presentations. Some parents I had seen in the morning returned for the afternoon performance. A dozen or so other adults were seeing the program for the first time.

Although this vignette could also be included in the discussion of school and community relations, I thought it pertained to school

climate, as well. It seemed apparent to me that the overall tone and climate of the school influenced the actions of visitors coming in to the school, although this was never mentioned. The principal and staff were responsible for the climate one sensed upon entering the building. They set guidelines for children as they went about their business each day. I believe those guidelines had an effect on the parents also.

The correlate of effective schools that pertains to school climate, overall tone, and orderly school environment is probably the most readily observable and easiest to summarize because evaluation of climate begins as soon as the observer enters the school. However, the reader must understand that most observers are drawing from past experiences and comparing what they see to those experiences and have different levels of acceptance. In this section, I highlighted some observations of Kennedy School that focused on school climate. To conclude, Kennedy was clean, attractive, and safe; these elements produced a physical environment that was pleasant and conducive to learning. The examples given in this section demonstrated that the Kennedy School principal, staff, students, and parents were concerned for the overall safety of all individuals entering the building and endeavored to create an environment that enhanced learning.

## School and Community Relations

Most educational researchers have reported that parent and community involvement are a desirable aspect of school improvement.

Although Edmonds and Lezotte (1982) did not include parent involvement as one of their correlates because it is not directly controlled by the school, they did agree that it is an important component of a school and is integral to its successful operation. Hence, I chose to include parent and community involvement as a key component of effective schools.

On Thursday, February 23, I had the opportunity to attend a general meeting of the Kennedy Elementary School PTA. I was surprised to see how many parents turned out for this meeting. At the conclusion of the meeting, I questioned Mrs. McGraw, the president, for a few minutes. She said: "Tonight's turnout of 47 parents was quite typical of most of the meetings. Gene uses a gimmick to help us. Each meeting he schedules a few staff members to give a presentation on some part of the curriculum or school operation." That night, third-grade teacher Mrs. Johnson and fifth-grade teacher Mrs. Kopacki made a 30-minute presentation on their writing program. They were the designated coordinators of the program. "So that helps," explained Mrs. McGraw. "However, we would probably do quite well with our attendance anyway."

Other evidence of the community involvement at Kennedy I either observed or heard of during my visits to the school. Even on regular visits throughout the year, I often noticed parents in the building, although not necessarily in the rooms I had come to observe. During these visits I usually noted that Gene was involved with a parent in some way. Often when I visited classrooms, parents

were also in the room, observing what was going on or, particularly in the lower grades, assisting the teacher or helping with particular activities. During a conversation with first-grade teacher Mrs. White, she told me that a couple of years ago several parent volunteers had been organized to assemble the numerous materials gathered for the Math-Their-Way program for all of the K-2 teachers.

School personnel often tend to view parents as a threat to their security or as a disruption, interfering with a teacher's ability to keep children on task. That sentiment simply was not evident at Kennedy. The examples given here are just a few instances in which I noticed parent involvement. The Kennedy staff seemed to welcome parent involvement in their school and went out of their way to create situations that would encourage community participation. Further examples of parent involvement that I noted through visitations and artifacts such as calendars, newsletters, announcements, and so on, throughout the 1988-89 school year are as follows: new parent orientation night, open house, curriculum night, monthly PTA meetings, Parents Week celebrating National Education Week, parent-teacher conferences (evenings), winter and spring musicals, science fair, education fair, art fair, spring carnival, and community dialogue meetings.

Thus, based on a combination of observations, interviews, and interpretation of artifacts, I concluded that <u>the teachers believed there was community interest and involvement at Kennedy Elementary School</u>.

In my interview with Mrs. White on April 27, I directed some of my questions toward the community and, specifically, whether Mrs. White viewed their involvement as hindering or supporting the school and its goal to educate children. She commended the community, particularly their involvement with the school, yet in some ways she also blamed them for pressuring the school to improve standardized test scores. She asserted:

> The community is supportive, and always turns out in droves for school activities, yet so many are wrapped up in their own personal lives, and their own personal careers, that they sometimes give the appearance of not placing a high enough priority on their children. The school is expected to handle so many of their problems. But stick around tonight because you'll see this place lined wall to wall with people.

Kennedy School had scheduled its Education Fair for that evening, and Mrs. White was correct; the entire community must have been there. Calling the evening an Education Fair meant that teachers could display student work from any of the content areas rather than focusing solely on science, art, writing, and so on. Children were invited to the fair, as well, and their responsibility was to show parents their work--not only what was displayed in classrooms, but also in various other locations in the building. One of the priorities I had heard Gene discussing with teachers on previous visits to the school was that each teacher was to make sure every child had at least one piece of work displayed that evening. After about two hours, the crowds of parents and children began to dwindle, and after circulating around the building, occasionally talking to people throughout the evening, I decided that parents

seemed to be impressed by the quality of work displayed, particularly students' writing. As discussed before, writing was a high priority of the Kennedy principal and staff, and that was obvious the night of the Education Fair.

On April 11, I had an opportunity to observe a program at Kennedy that depended heavily on parent volunteers for its continuation and success. For some time, Gene had been suggesting that I observe the special education/general education team-teaching program, which was in operation every morning. The program had recently been cited by the Michigan Department of Education as an exemplary, innovative program. Although it was too early to obtain any statistical results, it was believed that student achievement had improved as a result of the program. All of the identified academically at-risk students in grades one and two were brought into a commons area. The group included both special education and general education students. Participating adults included general education and special education staff members and a number of parent volunteers.

As I walked around the area, I saw about 40 students working in various centers with 15 adults. At one center, Mrs. Rubin, the resource teacher, was reading a story to eight students and periodically stopping to ask them what they thought would happen next. At another center, Mrs. Schiller, the teacher of emotionally impaired youngsters, was working with eight other students on the Baratta-Lorton DeCode If You Can program. At still another center, Mr. Cirna, the reading consultant, was working with students on an

extension of the Baratta-Lorton program, using letter stamps to match the pictures shown with the correct sound. At a fourth center, student-parent pairs were reading together from various selections of New Zealand trade books and other children's literature. Mrs. White was working at the fifth station with a group of students who were writing their interpretations of stories they had just read. Parent volunteers were assigned to assist the teachers at four of the centers (one or two parents per center), and eight parents were assigned to the reading center to help children read from the various selections that were available.

Mr. Cirna, who had organized the project, said that students remained in their groups for 30 minutes, and all students completed two centers every day. "The program really depends on the parents' participation," he said. "They have been with us long enough that if for any reason one of the teachers is not available, the parents simply take over the center." I stayed for the entire 60-minute period. The students switched centers after 30 minutes in an orderly fashion. I asked Mrs. White where the rest of her class was, and she replied that her students who were average to higher readers were with Miss Prendergast, while she had all of the low-functioning first graders.

As the session was ending, Gene walked by the commons area and I joined him. We proceeded to walk around the building, and he continued our previous conversation regarding parents and their involvement in the school. He said:

> We really are quite fortunate to have the parent willingness to be involved as much as they are in this day and age. Some of our schools are complaining about the lack of community involvement, but that's not true here. In addition to the program you've just seen, they assist us with our self-esteem program, our math and science programs, field trips, and whatever. When we need to have parental help here at school, all we have to do is put the word out and we have it. Though some principals and teachers would view this parental involvement as a nuisance, that's not the case here. We welcome it.

## Summary

In this chapter, I made and discussed a number of assertions regarding Kennedy Elementary School. According to the research on correlates of effective schools and Michigan Accreditation Program standards, the principal, teaching staff, instructional program, cognitive and affective environment, and school community are key components that must be evaluated in determining the effectiveness of the school. These are the broad areas I observed most closely, asked questions about in interviews and informal conversations, and expanded on in this chapter. I periodically stepped back from my role as a field researcher so that I could evaluate and draw conclusions about what I had observed, and then presented those conclusions based on a careful, albeit subjective, analysis.

Although more time is needed to analyze further the reasons for declining test scores at Kennedy School, I believe that the principal and staff were addressing the issue. They were not simply maintaining the status quo in their delivery of curriculum and approach to children, but instead were modifying their teaching behaviors to include a more process-oriented approach than had

previously been used. They allowed children to manipulate objects and become actively involved in their learning, rather than being passive learners. The school clientele was changing rapidly. Until that trend stabilizes, test scores might not improve dramatically. However, I believe the Kennedy staff and administrator were approaching the problem correctly, and despite what the cognitive test data showed, Kennedy was a good school and will continue to improve. The principal and staff were willing to address the problems rather than ignoring the critical issues confronting them. Gene was the key individual in the school. Everywhere I went, it seemed he was present--either in person or in the minds of staff, students, and parents.

One of the reasons I chose Kennedy Elementary School for this study was its students' declining test scores, which, according to the research, are a clear indicator of an ineffective school. However, schools such as Kennedy disprove some of the effective schools research that has emphasized that school effectiveness can be determined by analyzing cognitive data, specifically children's performance on standardized tests.

Yet the correlates of school effectiveness also include school climate, involvement of the principal as instructional leader, expectations of the principal and staff related to instructional emphasis, and community involvement. In this study of Kennedy Elementary School, I concentrated on these areas and included in this chapter a number of examples of activities that should give the reader a sense of what Kennedy School is really like. My

involvement with the school during the 1988-89 school year led me to a much different conclusion from what I reached through the disaggregation of test scores. I believe that John F. Kennedy Elementary School is a very good school.

# CHAPTER VI

# FINDINGS: ABRAHAM LINCOLN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

## Introduction

In Chapter V, I discussed John F. Kennedy Elementary School in terms of specific assertions based on key observations I made during the 1988-89 school year. These assertions were discussed in relation to Edmonds and Lezotte's correlates of effective schools, and North Central Association and Michigan Assessment Program accreditation standards, which have indicated that the principal's administrative style, teacher expectations, instructional emphasis, pupil evaluation, school climate, and community relations are key components of the overall effectiveness of any school.

In this chapter, instead of repeating the entire discussion of each correlate, I have included a synopsis of characteristics of effective schools and the Michigan Accreditation Program standard pertaining to that correlate. In presenting the findings regarding Lincoln Elementary School, I have attempted to be consistent with how the results were reported in Chapter V. The reader will notice similarities between the schools in terms of the assertions that are made and the discussion that follows each assertion. This will allow me to compare the two schools in Chapter VII.

The reader will recall that, based on the disaggregation of MEAP test scores, Lincoln Elementary School was judged to be effective, for purposes of this study.

## Administrative Style

According to Edmonds and Lezotte (1982), in effective schools the principal establishes classroom instruction as a first priority and communicates this to the staff, spends considerable time in classrooms and other teaching stations, provides strong leadership, promotes high expectations for students and staff, has authority to administer building policy and practice, provides leadership in evaluating student programs, and sets the tone for staff and student behavior.

Standard III of the Michigan Accreditation Program (1989) states:

> The principal of the elementary school is the administrative head of the school and maintains sufficient autonomy and authority to insure the successful functioning of all phases of the school's program. . . . The quality of leadership provided by the principal is a prime factor in the effectiveness of the school's program. (n.p.)

In my visitations to Lincoln School, I found that the principal was instrumental in controlling and monitoring the behaviors and activities of students in social situations.

As I had done at Kennedy School, I observed Jerry Doyle, the principal of Lincoln School, in numerous situations at the beginning of the school year. I had been an elementary school principal for a number of years and knew that the beginning of the school year severely tested a principal's ability as an administrator and

organizer. This seemed to be an excellent time to observe Jerry in action, to discover the type of tone and climate he established in the school.

The first day of school in the Maplewood Community School System is a half day for all K-5 students. September 7, 1988, was bright and sunny, and the hot spell of the summer had broken just in time for school to open. Before school began that year, teachers and administrators in the district had been concerned about whether the school would be unbearably hot because of the record-breaking summer temperatures. However, the heat wave had broken just in time, and the school was quite comfortable.

In preparation for the first day of school, class lists were posted on the front doors of the school. At 9:00 the bell rang, signaling the students gathered outside the school that they could come inside and find their classrooms. During that time, Jerry and the entire staff circulated in the hallways, class lists in hand, helping students locate their classrooms. The office was filling up with parents and students who had recently enrolled and were not yet included on a class list. By 9:30, most of the students were in classrooms, and the hallways were quiet and empty of children and parents. Jerry and Mark Andrews, the physical education teacher, walked by, congratulating each other on the relative ease of this often hectic phase of school opening. As I walked down the hallways, I could hear the teachers talking to their students. I stopped briefly inside Mrs. Taylor's fifth-grade classroom; the

children were listening intently as she discussed her classroom rules and those of the school.

I returned to the office at about 10:00, and things were quiet there, as well. Jerry explained that he was very satisfied with the opening of school; in fact, it was the best he had experienced in his 13 years as a principal. Jerry was a short, slightly built man in his mid-forties. Lincoln was his second elementary school, and he had also spent two years as a middle school principal in the 1970s. Although Jerry had once aspired to be a central office administrator, he no longer appeared to have such a position as his goal. Jerry seemed to be content to remain an elementary principal.

On October 4, I observed the principal during the lunch period as I had done the previous week at Kennedy School. Jerry invited me to come early to discuss the lunchtime arrangement. Because physical education teachers in Maplewood did not teach kindergartners, Jerry had been able to schedule his P.E. teacher for lunchroom and playground duty. Mark Andrews usually stayed outside on the playground the entire time. Jerry explained:

> It used to bother me to have to use my teacher in that way; however, I've changed my thinking and can see some real benefits. Mark is good with children; they like and respect him, and it provides a real supervisory need that we have during recess.

At noon the bell rang, indicating the lunch period was to begin. First- and second-grade students were escorted to the multi-purpose room by their teachers; third, fourth, and fifth graders went outside for recess. Jerry also went outside because, as he explained, "I have pretty good noon aides; besides, the first and

second graders don't usually present much of a discipline problem. I usually spend most of the second half of the lunch period inside when the older children go in to eat lunch." Outside recess proceeded without incident. Mr. Andrews organized a football game with most of the fourth- and fifth-grade boys. A smaller group of children were playing soccer in another area of the playground. Jerry walked around the playground, occasionally cautioning students that their play was too rough. Other than that, he seldom spoke to the students, and they made no effort to talk to him.

At 12:30, the bell rang again, indicating that third, fourth, and fifth graders were to go inside for lunch. Jerry went inside as well, and took a position in the hallway outside the multi-purpose room, where he had a perfect view down each of the two hallways where students were coming in from recess. The youngsters were quite noisy as they came to the lunchroom; however, they were reasonably well behaved. As with outdoor recess, Jerry stood and observed; he usually did not speak to the students unless their behavior needed correcting. The lunchroom was quite noisy, but, for the most part, students were quite orderly and not disruptive. In one instance, however, a group of fifth graders began shooting peas from their lunches at one another. Jerry moved in quickly and warned the students they would have to eat lunch at home if they could not cooperate. The misbehavior stopped immediately and did not recur for the remainder of the period. I asked Jerry what happened when he was not there. "I usually ask Mark to tend to this

part of the lunch period. It usually goes very smoothly under his direction," he replied.

During the lunch period, it was obvious to me that Jerry's role was strictly as an enforcer. It was difficult to determine his relationship to anyone because there was no observable relationship. He generally did not speak with students unless it was necessary; likewise, students chose not to speak to him. Jerry's reasons for being present during lunch were similar to Gene Snowden's; however, Jerry said:

> I don't hesitate to schedule lunchtime meetings with teachers; in fact, I usually average one or two meetings per week because I feel confident that things will go reasonably well without me. Lunchtime is an ideal time to meet with teachers, and because my supervision at lunchtime is quite good, I don't hesitate to meet with staff members during this time.

On November 3, I again observed Jerry interact with students in a manner that was designed to bring about a specific change in their behavior. The students were just coming into the building from lunch recess when I noticed Jerry reprimanding two students for misbehaving on the playground. He took both students into the office to call their parents. As they went in, Jerry slammed the door shut, but his voice was still audible in the outer office. A short while later the door opened, and both students appeared, visibly shaken. After they went to their classrooms, Jerry explained that he had had the students call their parents to tell them they could not stay at school for lunch the next day and through the following week. Both parents protested, he said, because they worked and this discipline presented a hardship, "but

we have to hold on to our rules and principles because without student cooperation, the lunch period would be sheer chaos."

Thus far I have discussed the principal's role in controlling student behavior in social situations. The preceding examples should indicate that Jerry was quite involved with that aspect of his role. In moving ahead to a somewhat different situation, from my observations I concluded that the principal appeared to have authority in setting, enforcing, and negotiating practices and procedures for the school.

On October 20, I gained some interesting insights into Jerry's relationship with his staff. I had gone to the school to attend a staff meeting with Jerry and the teachers. The meeting was scheduled for 3:45 in the media center. A walk around the building before the meeting seemed to be a good idea. Even though it was quite late in the school day, the building was quiet; there was little activity in the hallways, and the overall tone was subdued. The school parking lot and driveway at the front entrance were beginning to fill with cars, apparently because many parents were picking up their children at dismissal. Even though the weather was reasonably good--cold but not inclement--it seemed that an inordinate number of students were being picked up from school.

At 3:40, Jerry came on the intercom, asking that teachers go to the library so that the staff meeting could start promptly at 3:45. The meeting did start on time. The media center was arranged with tables spread out around the room. Jerry stood at the front of the room to address the staff. First he spoke of the November calendar,

which included the end of the first marking period, sending home report cards, and scheduling parent conferences. He then reviewed the procedures for scheduling conferences with parents. Teachers then asked questions; however, it was obvious that teachers were familiar with the procedures, and they did not have many questions.

The remainder of the meeting centered on an issue that was of major concern: allowing parents to observe in classrooms. Jerry had told the teachers in their meeting two weeks earlier that he wanted to try allowing parents to visit classrooms whenever they wished. The teachers had reluctantly agreed at that time; however, at this meeting they were ready to voice their concerns. According to the trial procedure, parents could come to school and visit classrooms any time they wished and stay as long as they wished. This practice had apparently been causing a problem for some teachers, who thought they were spending too much class time being observed by parents, and that it was turning out to be disruptive and nonproductive for students.

Jerry listened and then suggested they continue the procedure for another two weeks. The teachers would not hear of it and said they were prepared to file a grievance if the practice was allowed to continue. Jerry reminded the staff that parents were entitled to observe in classrooms. The teachers agreed, but one said, "We should have the opportunity to mutually agree with the parent when it is convenient to have them visit the classroom."

Jerry could see that he was in a no-win situation. "Okay," he said, "I'll send a letter home tomorrow telling parents that visitations are welcomed still; however, we now must require that parents contact the school, and specifically the teacher, to mutually agree to convenient times for visitations in classrooms."

That procedure seemed to be acceptable to most of the teachers. Jerry told them:

> Remember, we can't refuse parents the right to come in to school and visit their children's classrooms. Under certain circumstances we do have the right, if they are disruptive, if it is not a convenient time, and if they have questionable motives for observing. We'll try this for a while, however. I don't see us watering down the procedure any further; we simply have to give parents the opportunity to come in to school for classroom visits and/or observations.

The meeting ended at 5:00. Jerry appeared somewhat harried and agitated. He commented to me:

> I expected this to come up. I knew teachers weren't happy about the looseness of the original procedure, but I really hoped to extend the trial period. I could see tonight, however, that simply wasn't going to happen, so we'll see how this new modification works.

In this example, Jerry found himself in a controversial situation. He had set a policy whereby parents could visit classrooms at their discretion. The staff reacted negatively to the policy, and at that point Jerry had to make a choice. He could enforce the policy despite staff resistance, or he could negotiate for some other options. In this case, he chose to negotiate, and as a result he and the teachers arrived at a procedure that was more acceptable to them and less acceptable to him, but acceptable nevertheless.

As a school principal for 11 years, I had found it somewhat discouraging to hear teachers discussing in the faculty room or the hallways various aspects of school, their students, parents, and so on, with little regard to where the conversation was taking place, how loudly they were speaking, or who might be hearing them. Although over the years I continually warned teachers to avoid such conversations, much unprofessional "teacher talk" often surfaced. In one of our talks, Jerry reinforced the same concern I had had over the years. "Talk gets pretty unprofessional at times, if not downright embarrassing," he said.

On November 28, I arrived at Lincoln School. Mrs. Dixon was the first to enter the faculty room, followed shortly by her fourth-grade-teacher colleague, Mrs. Wright. Both were pleasant women, probably in their early fifties. Immediately, they began talking about the previous day's conference with the mother of one of their fourth graders. "Can you believe that she had the nerve to tell us that she works with Jerome every single night?" asked Mrs. Wright. "Jerome comes to school, knows nothing, and does exactly the same. I don't understand how the third-grade teachers even passed him on to us when he does exactly nothing."

By 8:30, several other teachers had come in, and the conversation had become rather raucous. This was surprising, even for a Monday morning. By 8:45, students were beginning to arrive, and Jerry called over the intercom for Mrs. Dixon to go to her duty station at the front door. "Oops, I forgot," she said. However, before leaving the faculty room she grumbled:

> Why do we even have these duties anyway? I guess we'll have to get that taken care of through contract negotiations, but you know, I hear there are some schools in the district where teachers don't have a single duty. Why should we have to do it? We've all got more important things to worry about.

At 9:00, the students were allowed to enter the building and go to their classrooms. About two minutes after the bell had rung, Jerry came into the faculty room; very few teachers had left for their classrooms. He said:

> Let's go, teachers, to your rooms. The kids are coming in now, and for some reason they seem to be quite high. That's unusual for a Monday morning. We may be in for a rough week. You've got to be in your rooms when that 9:00 bell rings, not just in the process of getting ready to go to your rooms when it rings.

Students walked through the hallways to their rooms, and by the second bell at 9:15, things seemed to be calm. The classrooms were fairly well settled, and the office was now free of parents; the school secretary, Mrs. Wilbur, was getting ready to make the morning announcements. At 9:20, the fourth- and fifth-grade students changed classrooms to go to language arts. They seemed comfortable with changing to their homogeneous language arts classroom.

Mrs. Wright invited me into the classroom, saying:

> Quite often I begin my week by asking students to write a paragraph in answer to the question, 'My weekend was. . . .' It tells me a lot about students, their families, and what children do with their time at home; plus my goal is to encourage my students to write as much as possible. It also serves as an excellent means to settle down and begin to focus their minds on the day and week ahead.

The students seemed to look forward to this writing exercise. They took out their papers and immediately began drafting their response to Mrs. Wright's question. "I give them 15 to 20 minutes in all,"

said Mrs. Wright. "I don't expect them to write a whole lot, but they've gotten to know by now that I expect quality rather than quantity."

As I left Mrs. Wright's room, I encountered Jerry, who was walking down the hall. He still seemed irritated by the incident in the faculty room and said:

> Why should I have to go in the faculty room like that and remind teachers that they have a job to do? Some day a student is going to be injured going to class, or in the classroom when the teacher isn't there, and then we'll have a real problem on our hands. I hate to think that's what has to happen, but what you saw this morning wasn't the first time I've had to remind teachers. This morning's reminder will last for a while, and then they'll begin to become very lax once again. We all want to be called professionals, yet these are the things that have to be done day in and day out that give us the credibility that we need to have.

Although I believe the school district had given Jerry the authority to establish practices, procedures, and policies, the previous examples highlight his struggle to control certain situations and his willingness to negotiate options, but still with the intention of maintaining control. Another example of the control Jerry attempted to exert with the Lincoln staff occurred during my interview with Mrs. Keller, a first-grade teacher, on Thursday, May 5. Mrs. Keller was quite outspoken, which caught me by surprise. She appeared to be an easy-going, low-key individual, but I had been told "she tells it like it is." She was most vocal about the school administration. Although she thought central office was generous in providing numerous staff-development opportunities, she also thought most direction was strictly "top-down," with little or no input from staff. She believed Jerry Doyle

was a good principal, but she observed that he tended to run the school in much the same way as central administration did. "He usually makes the right decisions, but direction must always come from him; he must be in control." She continued:

> One of the real strengths of this school is the staff. We are a very cohesive unit and regularly see one another socially outside of school, and that includes Jerry. We like to be together, and though most everyone has been here for 20 years or more, we do keep abreast of what's going on. Though I would rate Jerry a very good principal overall, this staff also makes him look very good as well. A real weakness of Jerry Doyle is in the area of early childhood. However, it has been his demanding style of leadership and his drive that have really been responsible for all of the recognition that we've received over the years. The rest of the district looks to us to set the trends, and Jerry and the staff take great pride in being looked up to in that way.

Thus far, I have discussed Jerry's role as it related to student and staff behavior, which provided a sense of his relationship with staff and students. Regardless of the controversy involved in the issues that were just described, I concluded that Jerry was the school leader. He was in control and had been given the authority to make decisions, negotiate, and set policy.

In my observations, discussions, and interviews, I also witnessed examples that the principal set and maintained expectations for students and staff. To set the stage for the ensuing discussion, I shall first return to a talk I had with Jerry Doyle on Monday, September 19.

Because of a number of things that had come up at my office that day, I arrived at Lincoln School later than I had anticipated. I had been hoping to spend some time watching students during

lunchtime, both inside the lunchroom (multi-purpose room) and outside during recess, but when I arrived at 12:45, students were returning to their classrooms. It was a cold, wet, dreary day, so recess was held indoors in the children's classrooms. Unfortunately, I arrived too late to observe students during the interval most principals consider their most difficult time of the day.

Lunchtime had apparently been fairly quiet because no referrals had been made to Jerry by the lunchroom or playground assistants. Teachers in the Maplewood School District have a duty-free 50-minute lunch period. Jerry invited me to join him in the faculty room while he and his secretary ate lunch. Jerry began discussing his perception that the first two weeks had been extremely difficult. Lincoln School had received a number of new students, most of whom were coming into the school with few of the school- and district-identified prerequisite skills to enter the grade for which they had registered. "Our expectations are extremely high here," Jerry said, "but they are very much in line with the district behavioral objectives for each grade level." He added that some of his teachers were upset and were considering filing a grievance if he did not quickly remove some low-achieving students from class and place them in a more appropriate grade level with lower expectations for student outcomes. Jerry was obviously agitated as he said:

> We are fighting very hard to keep our expectations of students as high as they've always been. For the most part, we've always had a homogeneous, high-achieving community, and we have built our program around that. Now that we're consistently seeing a different type of student with lesser skills coming

> in, things have become more difficult, and teacher morale has been lowered. My style has been to keep pushing the staff, to keep expecting the high standards from them, and to make them work harder than ever. Our test results are still good--in fact, they continue to be very good--but we are all beginning to feel extreme pressure.

Although I had not intended to do so, I suddenly found myself falling into the role of colleague rather than researcher. I explained that my school district had experienced an identical situation ten years before. "It's difficult, and I sympathize with you," I told him. I explained that my district had had to take a firm position, and as a result, a number of new students had been enrolled in a lower grade shortly after entering the new school. I told Jerry:

> The thing you have to constantly tell yourselves is that most of these students have come to Maplewood Community Schools, and specifically to Lincoln Elementary School, because of your reputation and because of your high standards. The worst thing that you could do right now would be to compromise your expectations and your standards in order to accommodate these new students. Hang in there, and don't lower your expected student outcomes. What you and your teachers may have to compromise is the delivery of the curriculum that produces results comparable to your expectations.

I spent much time with Jerry, relating my own experiences with a problem similar to the one he and his staff were experiencing. He seemed to appreciate our talk, and I left feeling pleased even though I had stepped outside my role of objective observer. Later in the school year, I witnessed another event that led me to conclude that Jerry continued to maintain numerous expectations for his students and staff, but I also began to see signs that he had taken at least some of the advice I had given him back in September.

Lincoln School was accredited by the North Central Association in 1978 and was one of the first schools to be involved in the Michigan Accreditation Program. They had completed their self-evaluation and, the year before my observations, had been involved in developing a school improvement plan as the third and final phase of the MAP project.

On February 2, the Lincoln staff met all afternoon in the large meeting room at the district board of education office. School was closed that afternoon. During the first part of the meeting, the staff watched a recently taped presentation by Lawrence Lezotte, concerning the evolution and continuation of the effective schools movement. In the video tape, he gave a detailed overview of effective schools, which included information similar to that presented in Chapter II of this study.

Following this presentation, the staff listened to a report on the disaggregation of scores from standardized tests that had been administered throughout the Maplewood School District over the past three years. The important point being made was that black males had performed significantly more poorly on the tests than had students of any other race or gender. At the opposite end of the scale, white male and black female students were almost even, whereas white females ranked the highest. The Oakland County Intermediate School District representative who presented this information pointed out that even though the percentage of minority students at Lincoln School was significantly smaller than that of

Caucasians, it was large enough to arouse concern about their test scores.

In the third and final phase of the afternoon's program, the staff were separated into smaller groups, each of which was to discuss goals and objectives for various areas of school improvement (i.e., school climate, curriculum, administration, and so on). At that point, Jerry asked all visitors to leave so that the staff could freely discuss the issues at hand. A number of people left the room, presumably central office administrators, board of education members, and, as I was told, a newspaper reporter. Jerry invited me to stay, and I did for a while, primarily to observe the process and to examine the group dynamics.

The discussion, organization, and dialogue of the meeting were interesting; a good deal of the interchange in each group concerned the lack of support given to them by central administration. For example, the group discussing the school curriculum placed much of the blame for the staff's frustration in working with new students on central administration's insensitivity and refusal to provide them with new texts, supplies, and materials that would help them meet the needs of the diverse population they were beginning to see. Jerry moved from group to group, joining each one for a short time. I noticed no perceptible difference in the tone of the discussion within these groups when he joined them and participated in the dialogue. I did not stay for the entire program, which lasted until about 7:00. During the last hour, each discussion group presented its recommendations to the rest of the staff.

The next day, Jerry called me at my office. He asked what I had thought of the previous day's program, and I said I had thought it was extremely interesting. Once again, I felt the need to abandon my role as a researcher and to share my feelings as a colleague and school administrator. I told him:

> The Lezotte video tape was an excellent refresher, the presentation by [the consultant] was factual, though somewhat distressing, and the staff discussion seemed to be healthy and therapeutic for many, but in my judgment some of the discussion was inappropriate and misguided. The real issue is that the staff has really got to [address] their relationship with what they see happening, and then develop an action plan to [deal with] the issues.

Jerry said:

> They will. In fact, they began to do that later in the afternoon, and the presentations that took place later did demonstrate to some extent a readiness to begin to be proactive in dealing with the issues. You have to understand that I had a terrible time pulling this session off this afternoon. First there was resistance from the superintendent in allowing me to close school yesterday afternoon, and second there was a great deal of resistance on the part of staff, even the steering committee, in planning the day. I had no choice but to become very direct and authoritative in planning that entire session, so all in all, I'm glad that it's over, and I think that it really turned out to be quite successful.

On May 18, I interviewed Mrs. Wright, a fourth-grade teacher. Although she, too, was very negative about the central administration, she was extremely complimentary about Jerry. She told me:

> Jerry puts a great deal of pressure on us. His demands are extremely high, and at times his constant emphasis on our looking good, and in staying at the forefront gets to be a bit much, but overall, Jerry does an excellent job. If he told me to jump, I would simply ask, 'How high?'" Jerry is task oriented, and he himself must keep busy all of the time. He expects a lot from everyone here, including the kids. Sometimes he's not the most popular individual with students,

> particularly the older ones, but I'll tell you, it's amazing how high school and college students come back here to thank Jerry and the staff for the fine education they have received at Lincoln.

With regard to the effective schools correlate of administrative style, it seemed apparent to me that Jerry spent considerable time away from the office at various teaching stations. Additional examples of his leadership style are given in the section on school climate.

## Teacher Expectations, Instructional Emphasis, and Pupil Evaluation

According to Edmonds and Lezotte (1982), in effective schools the principal and staff:

1. Expect from students mastery of specific grade-level skills and knowledge.

2. Set uniform standards of mastery for all students, realizing some students will exceed the minimum much more than others.

3. Expect students to master certain skills before passing to the next grade.

4. Impose discipline fairly.

5. Place high priority on pupil acquisition of basic skills.

This correlate is addressed in Standard IV of the Michigan Accreditation Program (1989), which states:

> The professional staff must be adequate in number and in diversity to provide for the educational needs of its students. Each staff member must have the qualifications and skills needed to contribute to the school's implementation of its philosophy and goals. (n.p.)

Toward the end of the first marking period, I scheduled another one-to-one discussion with Jerry. I had spent my four visits until then observing the total school environment and was now ready to begin classroom visitations. On November 3, I arrived for my appointment with Jerry. He had returned from his rounds, and all appeared to be quiet in the school.

I asked Jerry if he would be willing to share his thoughts about the first- and fourth-grade teachers whom I would be observing. He said he would, but that the conversation had to be off the record and could not appear in the final report. I gave him that assurance and said I was simply seeking background impressions that would help me prepare for my interviews with the teachers. Jerry told me:

> It so happens that you've picked probably the two best grade levels in the school. Actually, go ahead and include our discussion if you so choose, because I really have nothing but the highest regard for these teachers. In first grade, Mrs. Keller and Mrs. Sims are two of the finest individuals I know, plus the fact that they are excellent teachers. Both are knowledgeable of where their children are from a developmental standpoint, and both are skillful in motivating children to get the maximum results. I probably get fewer phone calls with parent complaints from grade one than any other grade level in the school.

Mrs. Wright and Mrs. Dixon were the fourth-grade teachers and, according to Jerry, worked very well together. They were even considering sharing a teaching position with each other the following year; each would teach half time. Jerry said:

> The district actually promotes the concept of shared teaching. I have every confidence that with Edith Wright and Ellen Dixon the concept would work very well because they make such a fine team. That isn't always the case, however. You need teachers who get along well, complement each other, and are agreeable to

> a sharing schedule that benefits kids. In their case, they are each considering teaching half of the day throughout the school year. Some shared teaching arrangements in our schools have allowed teachers to work five weeks on, five weeks off, or alternate every ten weeks [a marking period], or every semester. With very young children, some of these arrangements would be a disaster.

Jerry continued by saying:

> Mrs. Wright probably communicates with parents more than anyone else on the staff, and consequently, I tend to hear from her parents more than anyone else. She doesn't back off with anyone. She really tells it just exactly as she sees things. So there really is little more to talk about concerning the teachers, unless you've got some specific questions. You have chosen to work with the best that we've got at Lincoln Elementary School.

The discussion with Jerry gave me a good perspective of how he perceived the teachers I had selected as my major focus at Lincoln School. As I observed teachers' classroom behavior throughout the year, I determined that teachers at Lincoln Elementary School were aware of the importance of balancing teacher recitation with feedback from all students, and the importance of students demonstrating mastery of at least minimal skills.

According to the Teacher Effectiveness and Student Achievement (TESA) research referred to in Chapter V, some students ask more questions, volunteer more answers, and interact more in group settings than do others. Research has also shown that teachers are inclined to interact with some students and totally ignore others. Thus, teachers must constantly be aware of which students voluntarily interact in class, and they must find ways to involve those students who do not actively participate. According to recent

research, the effective teacher encourages those students who do not readily participate to do so.

Mrs. Dixon, a fourth-grade teacher, invited me into her classroom the afternoon of December 14, to observe the mathematics lesson she was going to teach. As I usually do before going into a classroom to observe, I asked Mrs. Dixon what her objective was for the lesson; she said it was to teach the students multiplication of one- and two-digit numbers. "This is still a carry-over from third grade," she said, "but once we get into operations involving more than one digit, many students tend to be left behind."

Mrs. Dixon began the lesson by drilling the class about multiplication facts. Students could volunteer to answer the problems she called out by raising their hands. She called out the questions very quickly, and after a short time she began calling on students who were not volunteering. Most of these students also knew the correct answers. Next, Mrs. Dixon began to review multiplication problems involving more than one digit, and more than memorization of facts. She began calling on students to solve problems on the chalkboard, first calling on a few students who volunteered but then calling on some of the nonvolunteers from the previous exercise. She called on yet other nonparticipants to answer questions or to verify whether a problem had been completed correctly or incorrectly.

Thus far, the lesson had taken approximately 35 minutes and consisted of a review of multiplication with more than one-digit numbers. Next, Mrs. Dixon asked the students to turn to page 123 in

their math texts and to do the even-numbered problems through number 20. As the students began their work, Mrs. Dixon circulated around the room, stopping to assist youngsters who seemed to be having difficulty.

She stopped at the desk of one youngster who apparently was having difficulty carrying from one place to another. "Well, Kenny," she said, "you know your facts real well, but we've got to help you understand how to carry from the ones column to the tens column." With that she got up, went to the shelf behind her desk, and brought a container of beans to Kenny's desk. "What does this problem say?"

Kenny responded, "Seven groups of 14 beans."

"Great," said Mrs. Dixon. "Let's see if we can make seven groups of 14 beans." Kenny did so. Then Mrs. Dixon said, "You know, this is one way to figure this problem out. We can do it by counting the beans and coming up with the answer." She asked Kenny to count the beans; he finally responded with the correct answer: 98. "That's great," she said, "but it took a long time, didn't it? Now let's look at the multiplication again. You know your facts, so let's multiply your seven times the four in the ones column." Kenny did and responded quickly with 28. "Good," said Mrs. Dixon. "So we write the eight below the line, and then we've got to regroup, but how do we do it?"

Kenny responded, "Put the two at the top over the one."

"That's right," she said, "but what does that two really represent?" Kenny looked puzzled and did not answer. "That two is really 20, and we're really putting it above that one that really represents what?" Again Kenny didn't respond. "Okay," she said. "I think you understand the process, even though you don't quite understand what it all means. We'll keep working on that, so go ahead and finish the problem." Kenny did, and Mrs. Dixon praised him when he came up with the correct answer.

She then continued to circulate around the room. After about 20 minutes, Mrs. Dixon put two of the problems on the chalkboard, one of them being the same problem that she had just helped Kenny solve. She said, "Kenny, come up and solve this problem [14 x 7] for the class, and Gina, please come up and solve the other." Gina was one of the students who did not seem to participate much. Kenny and Gina solved their problems correctly. "Great job," she said. "Are there any questions?" No one responded. "Okay, will you all please complete the even-numbered problems through number 50 for tomorrow. It's now time for a short recess."

I had not told Mrs. Dixon that my focus in observing the class was on the frequency of student participation. After observing the class, I was sure she was aware of the participants and nonparticipants and seemed to make a conscious effort to involve all students. In the hour I observed in Mrs. Dixon's classroom, virtually all students had participated and were actively involved in the discussion. Although her approach was traditional and the expectation minimal, Mrs. Dixon did not hesitate to go to the

manipulatives and use a visual approach with Kenny when he was having difficulty understanding the concept.

Afterwards, I told Jerry I was favorably impressed with Mrs. Dixon's ability to involve all students. I said I was eager to observe other aspects of her teaching on future visits. "You'll continue to be impressed. She is a wonderful teacher," he said.

As Mrs. Dixon and her class were coming into the building from recess, I stopped to talk to her outside the classroom. I thanked her, telling her what my focus had been and that I had been impressed by her ability to involve students. She said:

> Most of us had TESA training some years ago. In fact, Mrs. Wright and I have worked as a team observing each other teach, taking notes, and then providing feedback as to the patterns of responding to students during classroom discussion and guided practice opportunities. It is some of the most valuable training that I've had, and periodically I have to ask Edith to come back into my room to observe, take notes, and give me feedback. It's too easy to slip into a pattern of calling only on, and responding only to, those children who are the most verbal and are always seeking your attention. We are obligated to get the most that we can from all students, and that means giving everyone opportunities to respond and to demonstrate their knowledge.

On January 5, I returned to Lincoln School. The Christmas vacation had just ended, and I debated whether to attempt to visit one of the schools. I decided to go to Lincoln to observe Mrs. Sims's first-grade class. I arrived at her room at approximately 12:45, just as the children were returning from lunch. Students entered the room in an orderly fashion, sat down, and waited for Mrs. Sims to begin the afternoon agenda.

After she had taken attendance, Mrs. Sims told the class: "It's time to work with our math manipulatives." As she said that, one could sense the students' enthusiasm and interest. She asked a child at table four to go to the shelves and get the geoboards. Then a student from table two went to get the mirrors and geometric shapes, and so on until all six tables had some manipulative materials.

She briefly explained the activity that children at each table were to complete and then asked the students to begin working. Some children were making rubber-band designs with geoboards, and others were making two- or three-dimensional shapes using "unifix" cubes; still others were grouping beans by color and using them to convert from ones to tens, and so on. Mrs. Sims told me enthusiastically:

> This is the real way that children learn their math. Just look at how much they are into what they're doing. I'm really the facilitator. There is a scope and sequence with the activities that move from the exploration stage to the mastery stage. We're still in exploration, as you can see, because the children are manipulating objects and are going through the thinking process, but because we're not actually writing numbers here, or doing pencil/paper tasks, we haven't moved into the symbolic or mastery stage. We're still a ways off from being at that point.

Mrs. Sims began circulating and stopping at each center to make sure children were doing their tasks correctly. She later confirmed that she had been working intensively with manipulatives and concrete objects for three years, and the second-grade teachers had confirmed that they thought children's math skills, particularly their understanding of concepts, had been much improved under this approach in comparison to the traditional program.

During the next 45 minutes, Mrs. Sims continued working with individuals or groups of children. During that time, students moved to a different center three times, spending approximately 15 minutes at each one. What impressed me was the students' familiarity with the rotation process and what was expected of them, which further exemplifies the assertion made later in the section on school climate that the principal and staff promoted an orderly school environment. During these symbolic-stage activities, children found ways to solve their own tasks. The classroom was noisier than what might typically be considered normal because children were allowed to confer with one another, and they were spread around the room; however, students were definitely on task. As I observed, it occurred to me that Mrs. Sims had to have a well-organized plan for this activity to be accomplished with the control, the order, and the task-oriented atmosphere that were apparent. It also occurred to me that, during the math activity, Mrs. Sims was probably more actively involved in facilitating the lesson than she would have been had she used a more traditional approach to teaching the lesson.

When it was time to end the lesson, Mrs. Sims asked the students to return the materials to the shelves in the condition in which they had taken them. I left Mrs. Sims's classroom at the end of the math lesson and then returned at recess to thank her and tell her I had enjoyed what I had observed. She replied:

> You know, this approach has really put the fun and excitement back into teaching for me. It's not only a math program, but a philosophy and a way of life for teaching young children, and

the good part is that it has had carry-over to just about every aspect of my teaching, no matter what the subject.

On April 7, I visited Mrs. Wright's class again. I had observed her class earlier in the year and was impressed with a writing lesson she had conducted. As I entered the building, I first stopped in the office to see Jerry, but he was in a second-grade classroom watching the teacher present a lesson. This is something I noticed in both schools: The principals were extremely active and were rarely in their offices; one got the feeling that they were in control and were truly instructional leaders. This observation is expanded on in the next two chapters.

As I entered Mrs. Wright's classroom, she was just finishing up with a writing assignment she had given earlier in the week. The students were working in groups of three or four and were going through the process of peer editing their rough drafts. Partners had exchanged papers for each other to read and to suggest additions or deletions. As students finished, Mrs. Wright let them take a 15-minute recess with her outside.

About 20 minutes later, Mrs. Wright and the class returned. Her purpose in the lesson that followed was to demonstrate multiplication of two single-digit numbers, using unifix cubes she had borrowed from Mrs. Keller, one of the first-grade teachers. "Now all of you have mastered your multiplication facts," she said, "and today, I'm going to demonstrate how to visualize each multiplication fact. Let's take 5 times 6. What's the answer, John?"

"Thirty," he said loudly.

"Correct," she said. "By taking these blocks, here's how we can visualize that problem." She laid out six groups of cubes with five cubes in each group. "How many cubes in each?"

"Five," the class answered.

"How many groups?"

"Six," they said.

"Correct. So 6 times 5 equals 30. Even though it's important that all of the facts become automatic to you, it is also just as important that each of us be able to visualize and demonstrate what is happening. Let's take a few more." She proceeded to take 9 times 7, 4 times 8, and 5 times 5, and asked students individually to come to the front of the room and demonstrate each fact visually to the rest of the class.

When students had completed the sample problems, Mrs. Wright stated:

> Now, for tomorrow, I'd like you to complete the odd numbers on the timed test at the back of your books. I'd like each problem written completely in equation form, but also I would like each of you to draw a diagram picturing each equation. Feel free to picture any type of object that you wish to use to demonstrate each equation. We'll take the next 20 minutes to get started in class before lunch; then whatever is not completed must be finished at home for tomorrow.

I stayed and watched for awhile, assisting students or checking their level of understanding. Their comprehension seemed to be quite high, and many students artistically pictured each multiplication equation.

Although the examples given on the preceding pages supported the notion that the Lincoln staff were aware of the importance of

equality in student feedback, they also illustrated that the expectations teachers had for students, which pertain to instructional emphasis, were essentially at relatively low skill levels. After observing in various classroom situations, I can assert that the instructional emphasis and expectations of students at Lincoln Elementary School were quite minimal. This assertion is further supported by the following example from the Maplewood Community Schools' instructional program booklet.

Each year, the Maplewood School District produces a booklet entitled "The Elementary Instructional Program." The booklet contains a grade-by-grade description of minimal behavioral objectives or skills that all students must master in order to be promoted to the next grade. Examples of goals for first-grade language arts and fourth-grade mathematics are as follows:

**First-Grade Language Arts--Specific Student Goals**

A. Readiness

1. Follow left-to-right progression
2. Discriminate visually--likenesses and differences
   a. Simple pictured objects
   b. Letters
   c. Words
   d. Short phrases
3. Recognize upper- and lower-case alphabet letters

B. Initial Consonants

1. Discriminate likenesses and differences in initial consonant sounds
2. Recognize sound-symbol relationships of consonant letters
3. Identify specific initial consonant sounds in words

C. Final Consonants

1. Discriminate likenesses and differences in final consonant sounds of words
2. Identify specific final consonant sounds in words

D. Auditory Blending

1. Employ initial substitution in rhyming and word-family activities

E. Structural Analysis

1. Recognize words formed by adding inflectional endings: s, ed, ing
2. Recognize two words that form a compound word

F. Vocabulary

1. Identify a vocabulary word that matches the picture
2. Identify a vocabulary word given orally from a choice of four words

G. Comprehension

1. Recognize a simple sentence and the corresponding picture
2. Illustrate a simple sentence
3. Sequence four pictures from a given simple story
4. Read a given page to locate answer to a specific question
5. Recognize the main idea of a story by choosing the most appropriate title from the choices given

H. Language

1. Distinguish between rhyming and nonrhyming words
2. Follow two simple oral directions in correct sequence
3. Act out simple situations
4. Distinguish orally the difference between a sentence and a question
5. Use capital letter to begin first and last name
6. Compose orally a simple sentence
7. Identify word opposites
8. Alphabetize by the first letter
9. Classify objects by common attributes

I. Writing

1. Reproduce D'Nealian upper- and lower-case manuscript letters
2. Write D'Nealian manuscript letters, words, and sentences legibly on first-grade paper

**Fourth-Grade Mathematics--Specific Student Goals**

A. Compute addition and subtraction problems with regrouping through 100s

B. Recognize the relationship between addition and subtraction

C. Compute simple multiplication of whole numbers

D. Compute simple division of whole numbers

E. Recognize the relationship between multiplication and division

F. Recognize fractional parts of a region

G. Write and solve equations for story problems in all four basic operations

H. Recognize two- and three-dimensional shapes

I. Interpret bar and picture graphs

J. Measure lengths of line segments

K. Read temperature on a thermometer

L. Solve addition and subtraction problems with monetary symbols

M. Tell time to the nearest hour, half-hour, quarter hour, and nearest five minutes

Once again, the reader needs to understand that the objectives shown above represent a sampling of the school and district expectation that <u>all</u> students must demonstrate mastery of each objective in order to proceed to the next grade. Along with teachers maintaining the expectation that all students can learn at

a level that demonstrates at least minimum mastery, some other ways in which Lincoln teachers insured that all students had opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge will now be examined. The preceding narrative showed how some teachers provided opportunities for student feedback during classroom activities and discussion. Further, the teachers who were observed in this study provided opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge through the use of guided and independent practice.

A science activity described later, involving Mrs. Dixon and her class, exemplified the two-way exchange of information in which the teacher provided meaningful guided practice while still maintaining order, control, and a healthy climate during a lesson that could have ended in chaos. Students had chances to manipulate real objects, to respond both orally and in writing, and to receive feedback from their peers as well as the teacher.

On January 18, I observed Mrs. Wright use a series of techniques during a reading class that exemplified her ability to elicit student feedback, as well as to provide opportunities for guided and independent practice.

When I arrived, Mrs. Wright was conducting a reading lesson. Seven students were seated with Mrs. Wright at a table in the back of the room and were reading aloud to her a story called Mortimer Frog. The other children were working independently at their seats. No cooperative work was going on at the time, presumably because Mrs. Wright needed to have a reasonably quiet atmosphere so she could hear the students read. The youngsters working at their desks

were completing worksheets and were working with little or no commotion.

I sat with the group of students who were reading with Mrs. Wright. As I listened to them read, I concluded that they were a low reading group because of the stumbling and lack of smoothness with which they read. Mrs. Wright patiently listened as, one by one, students read portions of the story to her. If children had difficulty sounding out a word, Mrs. Wright said the word herself, rather than asking another student to pronounce it. The student having difficulty seemed to welcome this, and it avoided embarrassment. Each student read once, and then Mrs. Wright continued to call on students at random to continue the oral reading. She probably did this so that youngsters in the group would follow along in case they were called on to read. She even called on one student, Randy, to read again shortly after he had already read for a second time. I continued to watch the students who were working at their seats. Virtually all of them kept working on the task at hand. Not once did Mrs. Wright have to remind any of them that they had a job to do.

After about 45 minutes, Mrs. Wright asked her first group of readers to remain at the table and to begin their assigned seat work. She told them to work quietly and independently, rather than cooperatively. She then went to the front of the room and asked the others to take out their readers and open them to page 72, the beginning of a story about Lou Gehrig. Mrs. Wright asked students to get together with their reading partner and to begin reading

orally to their partner as though he/she were only "this far away," spreading her hands approximately a foot apart. "In other words, "how do I want you to read?" she asked.

"Softly," they replied. That is exactly what they did. Students took turns with one another, reading softly so that they did not disturb other readers or the group working independently at the back of the classroom. Mrs. Wright monitored the situation by walking around the room, occasionally taking a seat next to two partners and listening to them read.

After about 45 minutes, Mrs. Wright asked the members of the group that was reading to stop right where they were. The story was long, and nobody had finished. "Without reading the rest of the story at this time, I would like you to write your own conclusion to the story," she said. "How many of you knew who Lou Gehrig was before even reading this story?" Only a few students raised their hands. Mrs. Wright continued, "Please write your own conclusions to the story, picking up right where you are now and writing what you feel will be the end of the story. Then when you have completed your writing, feel free to read the rest of the story silently to yourselves."

While the students were writing, Mrs. Wright came over to me and quietly said:

> I do a lot of this kind of thing. Rather than give them a worksheet that fills in the blanks, I accomplish much more by asking them to write about it. Michigan's new definition of reading depends a great deal on a teacher being able to access prior knowledge from students prior to reading a selection, while at the same time [it] forces students to predict

> outcomes. The reading/writing connection accomplishes a lot for us, and teachers have got to get into the habit of integrating writing across the curriculum.

My main purpose in presenting this account of Mrs. Wright's reading lesson was to show how the teacher provided numerous opportunities for students to offer feedback, as well as her use of guided and independent practice. Mrs. Wright allowed students to read to her, read orally to their peers, write cooperatively with their peers, read silently to themselves, and write independently by themselves. What an excellent example of the principles stated in the preceding assertion!

## School Climate

The correlate of effective schools that is the focus of this section is school climate. To be effective, a school must be relatively orderly, safe, clean, and otherwise suitable for the major purposes of school. School age and size seem to matter less in creating an orderly climate than does the overall impression of institutional cleanliness, care, and adequacy. According to Standard II of the Michigan Accreditation Program (1989), all aspects of the school must evidence concern for the affective and physical well-being of each student.

In the section on administrative style, a number of the examples of Jerry's relationships with students and staff could also have been used to describe his influence in controlling the tone and setting the overall climate of the school. In situations that I

observed, Jerry was usually businesslike; in fact, that is the first impression one gets of the entire school.

The school plant and site appeared to be continually maintained to provide a safe, secure, and clean instructional environment. The school was well furnished and equipped to meet the traditional and specialized needs of the instructional and extracurricular programs. During the course of the school year, having observed in classrooms and conversed with the principal and members of the staff, I concluded that the atmosphere at Lincoln School was one of business, time on task, and a concern for children's cognitive development.

These opportunities to witness situations first hand helped me formulate the assertion that the principal and staff were influential in setting the tone for the school climate. One might ask: If the principal and staff were not influential in this regard, who would be? Right from the beginning of the school year, I noticed that the atmosphere at Lincoln was very subdued. Most classroom doors remained open as teachers taught their classes, allowing one to hear teachers and students conversing in a reasonable tone of voice.

While passing the third-grade classrooms one day, I came upon a young boy sitting in the hallway outside the classroom. When I asked why he was there, the child said he was not in trouble, but that he had been absent for three days and the teacher was giving him some time to get caught up.

As I continued to walk through the building, I came to the large carpeted area outside the fourth-grade classrooms. I noticed

15 students from Mrs. Dixon's class, seated at four tables in groups of twos and threes, working cooperatively on social studies. The youngsters appeared to be drilling each other on questions for an upcoming test. In Mrs. Dixon's room, the remainder of the class (approximately ten students) were apparently doing the same thing. Periodically, Mrs. Dixon came out to the commons area to check on her students; however, whether she was present or not, the children's behavior was excellent. There was some conversation, but it was apparent that the students were on task and were serious about what they were doing.

Edmonds and Lezotte's (1982) effective schools correlate dealing with climate speaks to the need to have an orderly school environment. The preceding narrative addressed in general terms the principal's and staff's part in creating the desired setting, but it also concerned the maintenance of an orderly environment. During my visits to the school, I never witnessed a situation that could have been described as being chaotic or out of control. Early in the school year, it became evident that the principal and staff at Lincoln Elementary School promoted an orderly school environment.

An orderly school environment is one of the correlates of school effectiveness that educators often discuss. Some educators argue that order and control must come first in order to have successful instruction and high achievement, whereas others believe that effective instructional techniques bring about order and control. I have alluded to situations dealing with or resulting directly from an orderly environment. Previous assertions regarding

Jerry's role in controlling and monitoring student behavior, as well as the discussion of his role in setting the tone for desired classroom behavior, pertained to this issue.

From the first day of school, it was apparent to me that Jerry and his staff placed a high premium on an orderly school environment. That day, as I walked around observing the school environment, teachers appeared to spend much time discussing school and classroom rules and procedures in great detail. This pattern seemed to hold true in further visits to the school throughout the year. Previous discussion of Jerry's role in the school demonstrated that he was businesslike and task oriented, particularly in his ability to control and influence student behavior.

Each time I visited Lincoln School, I made a point of walking through the hallways. They were generally quiet and free from children unless it was lunch or recess time; usually classrooms were also under control. Children appeared to be on task, and teachers, like Jerry, went about their business in a task-oriented fashion. Had I not had the opportunity to visit the first- and fourth-grade classrooms, I might have been concerned that the school environment at Lincoln School was too orderly, almost to the point of being stifling. However, those classroom visits reassured me that this was not the case. I witnessed Mrs. Wright, Mrs. Sims, Mrs. Kelly, and Mrs. Dixon presenting lessons to their entire classes, and working with individual children, and allowing students to work cooperatively in groups. Each situation, without being stifling,

provided the structure and organization to keep children on task and under control. Even in conducting a science experiment with her entire fourth-grade class, Mrs. Dixon was able to provide sufficient structure to maintain order in the classroom.

On Tuesday, April 18, I was invited to Mrs. Dixon's class to witness a science experiment demonstrating the inability of some substances to mix with one another. Her vehicle for conducting the experiment was the American Instruction in Math and Science (AIMS) program, which is designed to supplement the basic text that school districts use for math and science. It is a hands-on, manipulatives-based program, much like Math-Their-Way but significantly lower in cost. AIMS is highly recommended by the Michigan Department of Education, yet few districts have fully adopted the program.

Mrs. Dixon's experiment demonstrated how two substances such as water and oil stay separated rather than mixing. Each student was given a small beaker, a container of water, and a small vessel of cooking oil. "First, I'd like each of you to add a small amount of the food coloring to your water," she said. Every third student was given a small bottle of food coloring in assorted colors. Students put a few drops into the water to give it color and then poured some of the water into the beaker. "Now take your container of oil and pour some into the beaker. What would you normally expect to happen?" One student replied that the two liquids should mix together. "Okay, pour it now and watch what happens," replied Mrs. Dixon. As they did, of course the oil and water stayed separated as

the students watched in amazement. In each child's beaker, there was a definite separation between the colored water and the oil. The children recorded their observations on the experiment study sheets that Mrs. Dixon had given them.

"Now to conclude," said Mrs. Dixon, "I'd like each of you to pour the remainder of your water into the beaker." Some students creatively added another color of food coloring to the already colored water. The students added the remaining water to the beaker, and as they predicted this time, the water again stayed separated from the oil. "You see," said Mrs. Dixon, "it doesn't matter which you add first, the mixtures are incompatible and simply don't mix together. Some of you still have a little oil left; now add the remainder to your beaker. What should happen?" asked Mrs. Dixon.

Jenny raised her hand and, when called on, replied, "The oil should stay on top of the water."

"Very good," replied Mrs. Dixon. "Now go ahead and pour the rest of the oil." The students did, and the outcome was as predicted; the students now had four separate stripes in their beakers. She went on:

> To finish the experiment, I'd like each of you to write up this experiment in your own words from beginning to end, but while you're doing that, I'd like each of you to bring your solution up here one at a time and pour it into this large container. We'll watch it for a while and see what happens. To get a clue, place your plastic top over your beaker and shake the contents.

The students followed that direction, and the oil and water mixed. "Start writing, and watch what happens to your mixture," Mrs. Dixon

told them. As students wrote and watched, they noticed that the mixtures in each beaker began to separate almost immediately. "Will that happen when we pour all of these together?" she asked.

Jordan replied, "Yes, but it should take a long time because there will be so much more solution."

"Very good," said Mrs. Dixon. "Each of you continue writing and finish this up while we watch to see what happens to our solution up here."

I remained in Mrs. Dixon's classroom until dismissal at 3:30. Then I pursued some questions with her. She said:

> As you can see, it takes quite a bit of preliminary preparation to organize this properly, and without sufficient organization behind a project like this there would be total chaos. I completed most of my preparation for this activity during my lunch time. In addition, like the math manipulatives that the primary teachers use, it can nickel and dime you to death. Last year it did just exactly that to me; however, this year Jerry gave me some budget money to purchase the materials. The actual cost of the program is very low, but material costs, as you can see, can be quite high. Mrs. Wright doesn't use this program yet. I discovered AIMS at a workshop two years ago, liked it, and thought I'd give it a try. I average one experiment per week. However, sometimes I use the program two or three times, and, of course, some of the activities involve observations and recording observations over an extended period of time.

My primary purpose in discussing Mrs. Dixon's science activity here was to demonstrate the organization and structure she applied to an activity that helped her accomplish an objective in an orderly fashion. This was another indication that the Lincoln administration and staff gave high priority to maintaining order and control in the school environment.

## School and Community Relations

Many educational researchers have reported that parent and community participation is a desirable aspect of school improvement. However, Edmonds and Lezotte (1982) did not see community relations as being totally within the school's control and therefore did not include it as one of their correlates of school effectiveness.

Both the North Central Association and the Michigan Accreditation Program include school and community relations as one of their standards for school accreditation. The latter states that:

> The school establishes relationships with its community that result in a feeling of mutual trust. These relationships are based on open, two-way communication. The school must display a willingness to respond to the community, and the community supports the school and its programs. (MAP, 1989, n.p.)

I included school and community relations as an important correlate of school effectiveness because researchers have agreed that effective schools are places where principals, students, teachers, and parents are united in recognizing the importance of public relations in the successful operation of any school (Lezotte & Bancroft, 1985). With regard to Lincoln School, I rarely observed interaction between the school and community during my visits. This assertion is elaborated on in succeeding pages of this chapter, and the subject of school and community relations is explored further when the schools are compared in Chapter VII.

Although I made the assertion that, during my visitations, I rarely observed interaction with the community, I cannot contend that the Lincoln School and the community were not working

cooperatively with one another. However, the above-cited October staff meeting gave an indication that staff members did not want the community to participate in the day-to-day operation of the school. Although continuous unscheduled visits by parents can result in serious distractions in the classroom, it was clear that the teachers preferred to have no visitors at all. They did not enthusiastically receive Jerry's negotiated compromise of having parents make appointments for classroom visits. One might infer that the staff had no intention of working cooperatively with Jerry or the community on this matter.

On Monday, February 13, I attended a meeting of the Lincoln PTA that was limited to executive board members and the principal, Jerry Doyle. Mrs. Anderson, the PTA president, chaired the meeting, which pertained mainly to fund-raising activities sponsored by the PTA and a presentation by Mrs. Johnson, who had attended the state PTA conference. After the meeting ended, at about 8:30, I talked briefly with Mrs. Anderson and asked her about PTA membership, general membership meetings, and PTA involvement in the school.

Mrs. Johnson told me that PTA membership had increased to 120 families and that general membership meetings were scheduled four times a year. She said:

> We've tried scheduling monthly meetings, but generally the only people to show up consistently were members of the executive board, and sometimes their attendance was rather inconsistent. It just isn't a priority here. Most people are reasonably content with the school, so consequently we just let them do their own thing. Besides, so many parents today have their own careers to worry about and just don't have time to participate in school activities.

I asked what parent participation was like when the school or PTA planned a specific activity or event. "Oh," she said, "participation is generally very good, but we're only talking about three or four major events per year, plus parent-teacher conferences are generally very well attended."

Later in the school year, I asked Jerry how he perceived parent/community involvement in the school. He began by saying that the PTA had been an enigma for some time:

> Until about four or five years ago, the PTA had been extremely involved in the school to the point that it seemed we were having cookie sales, fund-raising activities, and PTA-sponsored programs every time we turned around, so much so that it became a terrific nuisance and the staff was almost ready to revolt. So, today, partially because of that and partially because of parents' busy schedules, participation has fallen off tremendously. Though the monthly executive board meetings are actually open to anyone who wants to attend, they are not announced to the general community, and very few people actually know that the meetings even take place. Occasionally, someone will show up if they have a specific complaint about the school and are trying to rally support from the executive board. Generally, we have no more than ten participants in our executive board meetings.

Another indication of community involvement in the school is the number of parent volunteers who assist with specific projects or work with children and teachers in other ways. During my 20 visits to Lincoln School, I did not see parent involvement during the school day. Parents seldom entered the school except to pick up a child in the office, meet with the principal, or observe in a classroom. Naturally, my 20 visits to the school over the course of a school year did not make me aware of all the activities that took place during that time. However, those visitations gave sufficient

indication of the lack of community involvement, as well as principal, staff, and community perceptions of such involvement.

## Summary

This chapter contained a discussion of various events and activities I witnessed at Lincoln Elementary School during the 1988-89 school year. Included were direct quotations and descriptions of ideas and concerns emerging from those events, as well as information gained through interviews and informal talks with some of the key players in the school.

From those observations and interviews, I made assertions based on what I had witnessed. The assertions were related to Edmonds and Lezotte's correlates of school effectiveness and the standards for accreditation identified by the North Central Association and the Michigan Accreditation Program.

As a result of my observations at Lincoln School, I viewed positively some of what I had experienced, and at the same time I was extremely concerned about other aspects of the school, particularly as they relate to the future. To begin to understand what was happening at Lincoln, one must remember that, for a number of years, the school had been considered the showcase elementary school of the Maplewood district and the trend-setter for other schools in the district to follow. At the time of this study, the school and community were beginning to experience the result of demographic changes in the community. New students entering the school had lower skills than the school staff had been accustomed

to; this was disrupting the homogeneity of the clientele and the student composition of the school.

I found Jerry Doyle to be a dedicated administrator with great energy, but he was also a controversial person. During my visitations, in which I had a number of opportunities to discuss with Jerry the school and his role in it, I found that he was sensitive to detail and wanted to maintain his authority at all times. The meeting in which the staff members were petitioning Jerry to change the newly developed policy on parent visitations exemplifies this need even though he was not able to maintain the policy he had established. Even the alternative solution agreed to by the staff was one he had recommended. During the interviews, staff members were somewhat critical of Jerry, but they also were highly supportive of his ability to lead them and credited him with making Lincoln the showcase elementary school in the district. As Mrs. Wright said, "I may not agree all the time with him, but when Jerry tells me to jump, I simply ask, 'How high?'"

The overall atmosphere of Lincoln School was one of extreme calm. At times, particularly early in the school year, I thought the climate was too stifling and controlled. However, the more I visited classrooms throughout the year, the more I realized that was not the case. Jerry's relationship with students and parents was difficult to determine because it simply was not observed very often. Just as with teachers, he was generally businesslike and rarely was seen to loosen up and relax. However, it was obvious that, like the teachers, students respected him.

Lincoln Elementary School had an excellent reputation in the Maplewood community, but some concerns might arise, particularly if the demographics of the student population continue to change. Test scores have remained high, and the school has remained at the forefront of elementary schools in the district. In my visitations in classrooms, staff meetings, and the faculty room, I perceived some staff members' reluctance to adapt to changing times and to involve a changing community. The principal and staff maintained standards and promoted the expectation that all students could achieve at least to minimal expectations. This assertion was substantiated by my impression of the lessons I observed and the instructional goals included in the Maplewood School District's instructional booklet.

I frequently roamed the halls in an attempt to assess the overall picture at Lincoln. As stated before, my impression was that a businesslike atmosphere was maintained. As I visited classrooms, I noticed that traditional approaches were being used, and that teachers ensured that all students had mastered minimal or lower-level skills. In each classroom I visited, I noticed teachers' need to be in control, but not to the point that children were discouraged from asking questions and gathering information. Children worked alone, with partners, in small groups, or in large groups. They received feedback from teachers in much the same way--sometimes alone and other times in small or large groups.

Based on my disaggregation of MEAP test scores, Lincoln Elementary School was considered an effective school. However, after spending numerous hours observing at the school and gaining a perception of the total school operation, I question the overall effectiveness of the school and believe some serious concerns might arise in the future. Yes, achievement test scores remain relatively stable, and the analysis of MEAP test scores presents a view that the school is effective. However, the various vignettes discussed in this chapter give an indication that the principal and teachers have some fundamental differences between them, and these are some of the instances described that question the degree of professionalism of the teaching staff. Although the overall climate of Lincoln Elementary School is one of order, discipline, and external calm, the discussion in Chapter VI described the level of instruction and teacher expectations to be essentially minimal in nature, with teaching approaches, for the most part, being quite traditional. Although there were some instances of the use of cooperative and collaborative learning as well as other innovative practices, it is my hope that these will expand to other teachers and be used more frequently. Reliance on traditional approaches might not always work with a new clientele and may prove to be a source of frustration for the Lincoln administration and staff in the years that lie ahead.

# CHAPTER VII

# A COMPARISON OF THE SCHOOLS

## Introduction

Chapters V and VI contained the findings regarding Kennedy Elementary School and Lincoln Elementary School, based mainly on my observations and interviews during the 1988-89 school year. In comparing the two schools in this chapter, I have used a format based on the correlates of school effectiveness developed by Edmonds and Lezotte (1982), which were described in detail in Chapter II.

The assertions presented in Chapters V and VI were related to the correlates of school effectiveness and were based on my findings as I carried out the case study of the two schools. In comparing the schools in this chapter, I have emphasized the principal's importance to the total operation of the school. According to the effective schools research, the principal is the instructional leader, and the overall success of the school depends primarily on this individual.

The correlates of school effectiveness also emphasize the importance of administrative style, teacher expectations/instructional emphasis, and school climate. Although Edmonds and Lezotte did not include school and community relations as one of the original correlates, I have included it in this study because

Lezotte and other school effectiveness researchers have since included community involvement as a critical component of any successful school.

In Chapters V and VI, the discussion of findings for each school centered on the relationship of the practices, interactions, and activities I observed to the effective schools correlates listed above. The comparison of the two schools in this chapter follows the same format.

## Administrative Style

The principals of Kennedy Elementary School and Lincoln Elementary School presented an interesting contrast in administrative styles. Before examining their differences, however, I shall discuss some of the similar qualities they manifested. In terms of the criteria pertaining to administrative style, I believe the principals demonstrated strong leadership, established classroom instruction as a priority, and spent considerable time in classrooms and at other teaching stations.

During my observations at each school, it became apparent that the principals spent very little time in their offices. Both appeared to be active around the building--in most cases, meeting with teachers or monitoring the instruction that was taking place in the classrooms. Both principals seemed to be very much in control and to have the necessary authority to manage their buildings autonomously. From the first day of school, both principals seemed to set the tone for their respective schools. Each school began the

school year in an organized fashion. The leaders took strong positions in dealing with parents, particularly in being firm about student discipline. When students were sent for disciplinary purposes, they came away knowing that they had been reprimanded and that they were facing the consequences of their inappropriate behavior.

Gene Snowden, the principal of Kennedy School, was an extremely hard-working, sensitive individual whose philosophy seemed to be: "Make everyone believe I am everywhere at all times." He pushed his teachers hard, but they respected him for it. In my observations of Gene during lunch and recess, he appeared to have a cordial relationship with students. He often stopped to talk with them as we walked around the playground; likewise, children continually came up to ask Gene a question or simply to talk with him. Gene seemed to have a pleasant relationship with parents and teachers, as well. When I visited Kennedy School, I often saw him conversing with students and parents or meeting with teachers in the classroom, the office, or the faculty room.

The teachers described Gene as an instructional specialist. He spent time meeting with teachers individually or in small groups to talk about the writing program or some other aspect of the curriculum. Gene occasionally used a top-down approach to decision making, as evidenced by his conversation with the fourth-grade teachers about the writing program and teachers' comments regarding his insistence on becoming involved in the Michigan Accreditation Program. However, Gene's usual style of decision making appeared to

be collaborative. This was particularly noticeable the many times I observed him meeting with teachers to discuss various concerns. It seemed obvious to me that the staff members observed in this study were at Kennedy because of Gene Snowden and that he was the central figure in whatever successes the school had achieved over the years. Likewise, the staff viewed Gene as the person who would lead them successfully through the tough times they were experiencing. As his staff members told me, "If Gene Snowden has a flaw, it is that he tries to be too much to too many people."

Although the administrative styles of the two administrators were similar in many ways, they differed in other respects. Based on my observations at Lincoln School, I would describe Jerry's administrative style as being primarily top-down rather than bottom-up or collaborative in nature. Conversations with teachers and personal observations seemed to support that conclusion. Although he was challenged during the staff meeting I attended in October, Jerry continued to exert himself with his persistence in renegotiating the situation involving parent visitations to classrooms. He had temporarily lost his command of the situation when the teachers challenged his first directive that parents could visit classrooms at their own discretion; however, a temporary solution occurred when Jerry proposed a second approach.

Like Gene, Jerry was very active around the school. He continually left the office to monitor what I perceived to be the tone and climate of the building. His concern for the instructional

program appeared to take a skills-driven approach. Rarely did I observe Jerry discussing with teachers the instructional program and higher-level teaching skills.

Jerry was respected by his staff. People I interviewed spoke positively of his ability to run the building and to promote a safe and orderly environment, although some thought he was slightly limited as an instructional specialist. Rarely did I observe him conversing with children or parents unless a situation required discipline or some corrective action on his part. I believe that children, teachers, and parents respected him, although my personal observations gave only a limited basis for that conclusion. The orderly but businesslike tone of the school, the comments made by teachers during interviews (i.e., Mrs. Wright's comment that "if Jerry Doyle asked me to jump I would simply ask, 'How high?'"), and PTA president Mrs. Anderson's indication that the community was satisfied with the school and was willing to let the school operate with very little community involvement all indicated that the principal's authority and ability were respected.

### Teacher Expectations, Instructional Emphasis, and Pupil Evaluation

One reason for selecting Kennedy and Lincoln Elementary Schools for this study was that the schools and their communities were similar in many ways. Specifically, I had thought the school staffs were similar. In each school, the teachers were experienced and offered comparable support services to students and parents. With regard to the criteria for this correlate, the principals and staffs

of the two schools placed high priority on pupils' acquisition of basic skills, set uniform standards for students, expected students to master certain skills before passing to the next grade, and imposed discipline uniformly.

Even though the principals and teachers fulfilled the above-mentioned criteria pertaining to teacher expectations and instructional emphasis, the schools and the districts they represented differed in terms of instructional objectives. Both districts had uniform behavioral objectives for students in each grade. However, the objectives identified by the Hillside Community Schools (Kennedy Elementary School) were considered to be essential. Objectives identified by the Maplewood Public Schools (Lincoln Elementary School) were considered to be minimal objectives. Identifying goals as minimal objectives means that all students must pass each objective before proceeding to the next grade. On the other hand, essential objectives are those skills necessary for a student to succeed in the next grade at the mastery level for that grade or above; students are not required to master every objective before proceeding to the next grade.

To help understand the difference between minimal objectives (Lincoln School) and essential objectives (Kennedy School), a sample of mathematics objectives from each school's curriculum guide is provided on the succeeding pages.

**Abraham Lincoln Elementary School**
**Fourth-Grade Mathematics: Specific Student Goals**

A. Compute addition and subtraction problems with regrouping through 100's

B. Recognize the relationship between addition and subtraction

C. Compute simple multiplication of whole numbers

D. Compute simple division of whole numbers

E. Recognize the relationship between multiplication and division

F. Recognize fractional parts of a region

G. Write and solve equations for story problems in all four basic operations

H. Recognize two- and three-dimensional shapes

I. Interpret bar and picture graphs

J. Measure lengths of line segments

K. Read temperature on a thermometer

L. Solve addition and subtraction problems with monetary symbols

M. Tell time to the nearest hour, half-hour, quarter-hour, and nearest five minutes

**John F. Kennedy Elementary School**
**Fourth-Grade Mathematics**

A. Write numerals to millions

B. Add numbers greater than 1,000 with or without regrouping (trading)

C. Subtract numbers greater than 1,000 with or without regrouping (trading)

D. Multiply a number up to 3 digits by a 1- or 2-digit number

E. Divide a 2- or 3-digit number by a 1-digit divisor with or without remainders

F. Check division using multiplication

G. Identify fractions using regions, bars, or other visual aids

H. Add and subtract fractions with like denominators

I. Tell time to the nearest minute by reading a 12-hour clock

J. Solve word problems involving units of time (i.e., What time will it be in 8 hours after 9:00 a.m.?)

K. Solve story problems involving +, -, x, or ÷ with or without regrouping (trading)

L. Recognize and identify plane and solid geometric shapes

M. Round numbers to the nearest thousand

N. Solve simple problems involving area and perimeter

O. Measure length in meters, centimeters, and millimeters

One can see from these examples that the essential objectives from the curriculum guide of Kennedy Elementary School were at a higher skill level than the minimal objectives taken from the Lincoln Elementary School's curriculum guide.

For example, students at Lincoln Elementary School are expected to complete addition and subtraction problems through the 100's, whereas students at Kennedy are expected to compute numbers greater than 1,000. Lincoln students are expected to compute simple multiplication and division of whole numbers, whereas Kennedy students are expected to multiply and divide three-digit by two-digit numbers. Kennedy students are expected to add and subtract fractions; Lincoln students are required simply to recognize

fractional parts of a region. Kennedy students are expected to tell time to the nearest minute, whereas Lincoln students are required to be able to tell time to the nearest five minutes. In addition, Kennedy students are involved with rounding numbers to the nearest thousand, solving area and perimeter problems, and computing measures using the metric system. Such goals are not addressed in the Lincoln Elementary School curriculum guide.

By maintaining minimal objectives, the Lincoln staff are primarily expanding efforts to insure that all students have achieved to minimum expectations. Based on my observations, a good deal of instruction seemed to be geared toward making sure that lower-achieving students attain at least the minimum. Although student equity is addressed in that instruction is geared so that all students can attain minimal levels of mastery, one has to question whether the average to above-average students at Lincoln are challenged sufficiently to suit their needs. My classroom observations indicated that when instruction was geared to a minimal level of expectation, all students appeared to be participating at that level.

My observations at Kennedy Elementary School presented a somewhat different picture in terms of essential skills and their relationship to equity concerns. I have mentioned that essential objectives do not require all students to master every objective before proceeding to the next grade. Although essential objectives are geared to the average to high-achieving student, it also supports the notion that students are approached with instructional

techniques that allow all students to proceed instructionally from where they are currently and move forward according to their capabilities. Equity is addressed in this manner because of the realization that all students are different, all have different capabilities, but all have the opportunity to proceed at a pace that they can realistically handle. Kennedy teachers address the issue by allowing students to work cooperatively with peers, adults, and high-school-age students; to use manipulatives extensively, and to employ numerous other resources that provide them with real-life experiences. Consequently, teachers at Kennedy Elementary School are primarily facilitators rather than lecturers. Their approach to instruction appears to be directed mainly to individual children and small groups of youngsters, rather than to the total class.

Based on my observations of classroom activities at Lincoln, as well as the mathematics behavioral objectives just discussed, I would describe expectations for Lincoln students to be essentially low level. For example, I consider such goals as recognizing fractional parts of a region, computing simple multiplication of whole numbers, reading temperatures on a thermometer, and telling time to the nearest five minutes to be no higher than typical third-grade outcomes. In addition, Mrs. Dixon's and Mrs. Wright's instruction emphasizing regrouping in subtraction and conceptualizing multiplication facts are typical goals for second and third graders at Kennedy Elementary School. It should be remembered that all students in a particular grade are expected to meet or exceed

the minimal objectives, whereas only those students performing at or above grade level are expected to meet or exceed the essential objectives.

The delivery of instruction at the two schools differed, as well. At Kennedy School, I frequently witnessed teachers using manipulatives in mathematics and science. Classrooms contained large supplies of paperback and trade books; these played an important role in the whole-language approach to language arts. Although children at both schools were extensively involved in writing, Kennedy staff seemed to use the cooperative and collaborative learning approaches to teaching writing more than the Lincoln staff did. At Kennedy School, both peer and high-school-age tutors were used, and teachers were involved in team teaching. I did not observe such approaches at Lincoln School.

I would characterize the teaching staff at Kennedy School as being child oriented. Their approach seemed to be one of using teaching styles that would best meet students' needs. Staff members were disappointed and frustrated with the school's declining test scores and even more disgruntled with central office and community reaction to the situation. They were proactive in that they were addressing the concern by using alternative, less traditional methods of teaching to better match the learning styles of the children they served. The Kennedy staff used manipulatives to a great extent in math, science, and social studies. They made much greater use of children's literature, poetry, and other nonbasal materials as they moved to a whole-language approach; finally, they

used cooperative and collaborative learning more than ever before. As I observed them, I thought the teachers were more like facilitators than lecturers, as in the traditional approach. They had apparently found that the traditional methods of learning, which incorporated much rote memorization, did not work particularly well with their new clientele. They had begun using teaching techniques that promoted the manipulation of concrete objects and stimulated higher-order thinking skills, which enhance the understanding of concepts.

The Lincoln staff differed from the Kennedy staff in their instructional approaches. This difference might be explained by the diverse clienteles they served; the Lincoln community was considerably more homogeneous than the Kennedy community. Although the demographics of the Lincoln community were beginning to change, the teaching approach used by most Lincoln teachers was designed to serve a relatively homogeneous student population. The expectation was still that students must meet the established standards in order to be promoted to the next grade. As I observed teachers performing with students in their classrooms, it seemed that the presentation and content of the lessons were at a relatively low level. This might have been because grade-level behavioral objectives are considered to be minimal expectations. Teachers seemed to be directing their teaching to the lowest level, thus insuring that all students would attain at least a minimal level of understanding. However, I saw very few techniques being used to challenge the

students who were performing above grade level. This approach has proven successful to the extent that, over the years, it has resulted in excellent results on standardized tests, in particular, high scores on the MEAP test. Lincoln's MEAP test scores remained high; however, as the MEAP test continues to change and as the community becomes more divergent, test scores could begin to decline.

Lincoln staff members told me they were a closely knit group, and I have no reason to doubt that. They were pleasant to me, and they were friendly but businesslike with their students. In the October 20 staff meeting, teachers indicated an unwillingness to extend themselves to the community and a reluctance to accept the changing community they were beginning to see. Some staff members seemed quick to use the word "grievance" when something occurred that upset them.

The Lincoln staff appeared to experience some turmoil during the 1988-89 school year. I suspect this is typical for a school that is beginning to encounter a changing community. Whereas the Kennedy staff seemed to be unified in their outlook, even though they were concerned about declining test scores, they might have had the same lack of cohesiveness two or three years before, when they began to see changes taking place in their community. The Lincoln staff seemed to believe they had a good administrator, and they respected him; likewise, they believed they were still a good school. However, the staff may need to view change more positively

and begin to adapt their teaching to the learning styles of all of their students.

## School Climate

The school climate correlate is most easily summarized in terms of outcome. To be effective, a school must be relatively orderly, safe, and clean. As a result of my observations during visits to Kennedy and Lincoln Elementary Schools, I would give both schools high marks in this area. Lincoln and Kennedy had orderly environments and safe, clean buildings. The principals and staff members played a role in maintaining an orderly environment, although they approached the task in somewhat different ways. I readily sensed the level of order and control in the schools because classroom doors were usually open. I could step into classrooms and quietly sit down for a few minutes, or simply form an impression of what was going on inside the rooms as I walked by.

The climate of Kennedy Elementary School was student oriented. Whether my visitation was to a first- or a fourth-grade classroom or whether the content being studied was social studies, science, or language arts, students were often collaborating with each other or the whole class was interacting with the teacher. The election-day vignette was intended to give the reader an insight into the principal and staff's concern for the safety of children and adults in the building during a difficult time. Because of the collaborative style of teaching and the cooperative grouping of students on most activities, the classrooms at Kennedy were

generally noisier than those at Lincoln. However, I rarely witnessed unproductive use of instructional time.

In contrast to Kennedy School, the climate at Lincoln was more businesslike and systematic. The building was meticulous and so quiet that I sometimes wondered whether children were there. Classrooms appeared to be highly structured; in most cases, desks were placed in rows rather than in a more informal cluster arrangement. Mrs. Keller, Mrs. Sims, Mrs. Wright, and Mrs. Dixon all seemed to use fairly traditional approaches to teaching. However, Mrs. Sims and Mrs. Dixon did not hesitate to use manipulatives in mathematics, Mrs. Dixon used the AIMS approach in teaching a science lesson, and some teachers placed students in cooperative groups during writing activities.

## School and Community Relations

Lincoln and Kennedy Elementary Schools were diverse in terms of parent and community involvement. Kennedy School parents were actively involved in various school activities. According to the PTA president, evening meetings of the PTA and other activities sponsored by the school or the PTA were very well attended. The number of parent volunteers who were involved in various activities during the school day indicated that parents were welcome and were involved with the basic operation of the school. In addition, the many times I observed principal Gene Snowden conversing casually with a parent or meeting with a group of parents indicated that they were definitely welcome at Kennedy Elementary School.

I did not get the same indication of parent and community involvement at Lincoln Elementary School. In a staff meeting early in the year, teachers indicated they thought parental involvement in the daily operation of the school disrupted the instructional process. Although I believe they had reason to be concerned about an open-door policy regarding parent visits to classrooms, teachers' strong objection during the staff meeting indicated that they would have preferred not to have parents enter the classrooms at all.

In my daytime visits to Lincoln School, I rarely saw parents entering or leaving the building. Few, if any, parent volunteers were helping in classrooms, nor did many parents come to the school office. After an evening PTA board meeting, the president indicated to me that parental participation in PTA activities was minimal. Even though Jerry Doyle had told me that, at one time, parents had been actively involved in the PTA, he corroborated that community involvement was currently quite limited. The PTA president's comment that "the community is reasonably satisfied with the school, so why get involved" indicates either community apathy toward the school or a belief that the school was doing such a good job they did not want to interfere.

## Summary

Although I initially chose Kennedy and Lincoln Elementary Schools for study because of their similarities to one another, I discovered three major differences between the schools. These differences were in the areas of administrative style, teacher

expectations and instructional emphasis, and school/community relations.

Whereas the principals were similarly involved in the total operation of the schools, there were major differences in their administrative styles. Both principals were in control and were definitely the authority figures in their schools, but one used a top-down approach to decision making whereas the other employed a more collaborative leadership style. One principal maintained a rather distant relationship to staff, students, and parents; here, too, the other used a more collaborative approach in working with others.

Additional contrasts between the schools were noted in the areas of teacher expectations and instructional emphasis. Student outcome and goal expectations, as evidenced by the behavioral objectives, demonstrated this difference; one school used minimal objectives as the standard for all students, whereas the other identified essential objectives as outcomes necessary to achieve at or above grade level. This difference in objectives partially explains why teachers' explanation and delivery of lessons at one school appeared to be at a particularly low level. The emphasis seemed to be on compartmentalization of material and a skill-based approach that included little construction of meaning. In one school, teachers used a more collaborative and child-centered approach to delivery of instruction. Cooperative grouping was more prevalent in one school.

Major differences in the attitudes of the two staffs were also observed. Although both schools were experiencing changes in the demographics of their communities, one school appeared to have adapted to the change more readily than the other. Staff members' attitudes toward and expectations of students also differed. Staff in one school appeared to prefer a more businesslike approach to students and to convey the belief that "the students should meet our needs and expectations." Conversely, staff in the other school evidenced an attitude of "How shall we deliver instruction that will best meet students' needs without drastically lowering our expectations?"

The third area of difference concerns the schools' relations with parents and the community. The absence of observable parent and community involvement at one school is noteworthy. I rarely witnessed a major confrontation with community members at either school, and I cannot claim that relationships were particularly bad in either situation. However, the fact that in numerous visits to one school I noted minimal relationships with parents, either positive or negative, is sufficient reason for concern about this aspect of the school's operation.

My intention in this chapter was not to express misgivings about one school more than the other or to promote one school over the other. Both schools were facing difficult situations. Staff at Kennedy Elementary School were experiencing declining standardized test scores and were concerned about how to improve students' performance. Lincoln Elementary School had different problems;

although their standardized test scores had remained stable, greater difficulties lie ahead unless staff members accept and adjust to the demographic changes occurring in the community.

A major point to be made in comparing the two schools in this manner concerns my initial analysis of MEAP test scores in each school. Based on the disaggregation of standardized test results at each school, Lincoln Elementary School was considered to be effective, while Kennedy Elementary School, with its declining test scores, was considered to be ineffective. However, my visitations to Kennedy School gave me a view of the school that was completely different from my initial label of "ineffective" school. My observations of both schools extended opportunities for analysis in greater depth and provided indications to me that determining whether a school is effective or ineffective must be based on more evidence than that drawn solely from the disaggregation of test scores. Although the results of standardized tests can be useful, much more than these results must be considered in determining the effectiveness of a school.

# CHAPTER VIII

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, QUESTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY, AND REFLECTIONS

## Introduction

For an entire school year I was permitted to become a part of the environment of two elementary schools. During that time I had many opportunities to realize the nature of each school's operation. Because my focus was on discovering as much as I could about each school's culture, I observed in as many situations as possible, rather than concentrating on a single aspect of the school operation. This was particularly true of classroom visitations. I observed the classroom of each teacher in the study four times, which gave me ample opportunity to sense the atmosphere and structure of each classroom and how it fit into the total school climate.

As a result of my observations and interviews, I have formulated conclusions and made recommendations that I believe are the key outcomes of this study; they are presented in the first section of this chapter. I have also presented a number of questions that have possible implications for future research and practice. Some of the recommendations made in this chapter pertain to the two schools involved in the study. In addition, possible

implications are discussed that extend beyond these schools to education in general.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

**Additional information should be considered in the determination of an effective school, beyond that obtained through the disaggregation of standardized test scores.**

The 1981-82 school year represented my first year of involvement with effective schools research. I remember spending three days during March 1982 in Lansing, listening to an in-depth presentation of the research conducted by Edmonds and Lezotte. I remember hearing a great deal of information about the School Improvement Project that Ron Edmonds began in the New York City public schools, and other early projects begun in various locations around the United States. I remember receiving specific information pertaining to characteristics of effective schools, as well as behaviors of effective principals and effective teachers. I viewed the wealth of information to be informative and valuable, and I have used some of it in determining my own administrative style, as well as for guidelines in my assessment of effective teaching. The final charge of the teachers and administrators participating in the workshop was to return to our individual schools to determine whether we represented an ineffective or ineffective school. However, we were instructed that the determination of effectiveness or ineffectiveness was to be based solely on the disaggregation of test data, rather than an in-depth analysis of administrator and teacher behavior. Just as I did at Kennedy and Lincoln Elementary

Schools, I returned to Vandenberg Elementary School, separated my fourth-grade classes into high and low socioeconomic groupings based on free and reduced-price lunch data, analyzed the results of MEAP tests, and was disappointed to find that I was the principal of an ineffective school.

Since the presentation of the original research completed by Edmonds and Lezotte in the late 1970s and early 1980s, there has been a growing body of information that challenges their conclusion to use solely the disaggregation of test data to determine school effectiveness. I believe that the conclusion I have reached regarding Kennedy Elementary School serves as an additional piece of information that challenges the reliance on test data to arrive at an important conclusion such as school effectiveness.

I applied the same process of disaggregating test scores at Kennedy and Lincoln Elementary Schools that I used almost ten years ago at Vandenberg Elementary School. Kennedy Elementary School has been experiencing declining test scores in recent years, so I had an idea going in that the probable conclusion of the disaggregation of MEAP scores might be that of an ineffective school. The disaggregation of scores over a three-year period indeed led to the conclusion that Kennedy Elementary was an ineffective school. What I did not know at that time, however, was that after making numerous visits to the school involving more than 90 hours of observation and study, I would form a conflicting conclusion to the one I had reached by analyzing standardized test data.

Throughout my visits to the school during the 1988-89 school year, I applied my knowledge and experience related to the effective schools research and presented information based on observations in a format that showed some relationship to the correlates of school effectiveness presented by Edmonds and Lezotte. As I began to spend more and more time at Kennedy Elementary School, I started to formulate an overall conclusion of the school that differed from my original one. I observed a principal, Gene Snowden, who was a caring administrator and one whom I consider to be effective. I would characterize him as one who took his responsibility seriously, as one who was the instructional leader of the school, and also one who carefully addressed the environment and climate issues of the school. The staff seemed to possess the same caring qualities as their administrator. Their approach to instruction seemed to be child centered and seemed to be based on techniques that allowed children to manipulate objects, collaborate with their peers as part of the learning process, and participate in classroom activities that allowed for a certain degree of freedom that would enhance opportunities to extend thinking skills.

The intention behind disaggregating test data is an attempt also to look at student background and, in a sense, is a beginning toward accomplishing that goal. However, in my opinion, it is only a beginning and represents only a small part of the total picture. Analyzing test data, if done properly, can be used to raise questions that require further investigation. But once again, should it be used as the sole determinant as to what is an effective

school? I do not think so, yet this is exactly the premise on which effective schools research is based.

As discussed previously, patterns have emerged that have led me to conclude that Kennedy Elementary School is an effective school even though the disaggregation of MEAP data would suggest otherwise. A future in-depth study might be to monitor those students closely over a period of time to determine whether their opportunities to learn are equivalent to those of other students. In this study, I have attempted to analyze the total school environment and have concluded that opportunities presented to children, whether instructional, social, or emotional, were of high quality. It was not at all apparent to me that any one classification of student, whether referring to socioeconomic class, race, or gender, was given an advantage over another. Thus, once again, the example of Kennedy Elementary School leads to the conclusion that other criteria must be used to support the determination of effective or ineffective schools.

Lincoln Elementary School, on the other hand, if the determination "effective school" were left simply to the disaggregation of test data, would without question be classified as being effective. Further investigation based on my findings begins to challenge that conclusion.

Because of my perception of teacher attitudes observed in some situations, the apparent skills-driven approach to teaching based on minimal learning expectations at Lincoln, the compartmentalized

sequencing of instruction, and the observed lack of community involvement in the school raise questions as to whether students truly do have equivalent opportunities to expand knowledge regardless of background. This area deserves further consideration and could be addressed by examining the opportunities students have for enrichment or enhancement of instruction beyond the minimal expectations directed at the entire student body. The example of Lincoln Elementary School reiterates in a different way than the example presented by Kennedy Elementary School the need for further investigation beyond what is determined through the disaggregation of test data.

The disaggregation of test data provides a clean approach to determining an important question such as school effectiveness. However, because such determination can have a tremendous effect on a school, either positive or negative, the question deserves much greater attention than simply the comparison of test data. I am not trying to minimize the importance of using test data. However, to conclude that a school is effective or ineffective based only on the result of test scores presents one more example of how test data can be used to formulate improper conclusions.

The findings in this study serve to refute the contention of effective schools researchers--that effective school status can be determined by the disaggregation of test scores (Edmonds & Lezotte, 1979, 1982). These test data do have value, if they are kept in the proper perspective. However, additional information should be used in determining whether a school is effective.

**The effectiveness of a school is based on more than meeting established standards to achieve accreditation status.**

Both Lincoln Elementary School and Kennedy Elementary School had been involved in accreditation programs. Lincoln School had been involved in the North Central Association and the Michigan Accreditation Program and pilot study for several years. For some time, accreditation programs were a means for schools or school districts to determine whether they met fairly rigorous standardized conditions that showed they were moving toward the achievement of excellence. Today, primarily because of the Michigan Accreditation Program, schools can strive for greater effectiveness because school improvement planning is part of the accreditation process. Undertaking this process has helped the Kennedy administration and staff address their frustration concerning declining test scores and attempt to meet the needs of a changing community. Although they have begun to see some positive results, particularly related to the delivery of instruction to a changing clientele, involvement in the accreditation process and accreditation itself has not changed perceptions concerning their declining test scores. The accreditation process has simply been a vehicle by means of which they can evaluate where they are now and where they need to go.

A similar conclusion can be drawn about Lincoln Elementary School. The principal and teachers at Lincoln appeared to be satisfied with their performance, particularly from a cognitive point of view. They had been accredited by the North Central Association for a number of years, and that status had resulted in a

great deal of school district and community recognition. Their students' standardized test scores were high and remained stable. Although Lincoln School met many prerequisites for effectiveness, the principal and teachers need to pursue their planning for school improvement, which will help them become more effective in delivering instruction as community needs continue to change.

Whereas the accreditation process is important in indicating prerequisites for school effectiveness, accreditation is even more meaningful if it includes the requirement that schools develop a comprehensive school improvement plan that incorporates both short- and long-term goals. School improvement planning has been a component of the Michigan Accreditation Program since its inception as a pilot study in 1985, and the North Central Association recently has begun to integrate school improvement planning into its program. However, other school-accrediting agencies have not yet moved in that direction. If school accreditation is to be an indication of school effectiveness, it is not enough that a school simply achieve certain preconditions for accreditation.

**Lincoln Elementary School teachers must prepare to use different methods of instructional delivery to meet the needs of their changing community.**

Three concerns surfaced during my observations at Lincoln Elementary School that need to be addressed. Principal Jerry Doyle was actively involved in what was going on in the building, particularly with regard to school climate and students' performance on standardized tests. He was respected by staff and community, as

evidenced by their apparent willingness to allow him to control most situations. However, I believe he needs to use a more collaborative approach in decision making. A principal occasionally needs to exert his/her authority, but that authority needs to be combined with shared decision making.

Instruction at Lincoln School seemed to be geared toward having children meet or exceed minimum expectations. As a result, the delivery of instruction appeared to be somewhat narrow in focus. Although teachers used some approaches that allowed for children's unique needs, lessons that I observed generally were designed to help children master lower-level skills.

The third issue pertains to community relations. During my visitations at Lincoln School, I did not observe any community involvement. There was also an indication that teachers preferred as little community involvement as possible, and that is cause for concern. The Lincoln administration and staff need to reopen the channels for community involvement.

**Kennedy Elementary School personnel must be proactive in marketing the school's accomplishments, to counteract the negative perceptions resulting from declining test scores.**

The climate and atmosphere of Kennedy School were low key and calm. Although such a school environment is pleasant, it might have contributed to some negative perceptions of the school. I am not recommending that Gene and the teachers change the school environment; however, I believe they might have been so concerned with creating the desired climate that they have overlooked another

important aspect of the school's operation: public relations and marketing.

In one sense, Kennedy School's public relations was already good because the school welcomed and received extensive parent and community involvement. However, Gene and the staff need to be more active in promoting the school's accomplishments. Kennedy's special education/general education team teaching program has received state recognition, and such information should regularly be shared with the community. In his monthly newsletters, Gene might publish the accomplishments of students and teachers. He might even consider distributing the newsletters twice a month. The school's constituents should be apprised of the many good things that are happening at Kennedy School.

**Kennedy Elementary School students will be in a position to succeed on future MEAP tests.**

The Kennedy staff has discovered that children learn differently today than they did in the past. Kennedy teachers have set out to deliver instruction differently than they did before because they understand that children learn by doing, by manipulating objects, and by experiencing real-world situations, rather than by the traditional approaches of listening to the teacher lecture and absorbing facts through rote memorization. In essence, teachers are encouraging students to use higher-order thinking skills.

Like the Kennedy teachers, the Michigan Department of Education has found that students learn differently today than they did in the past. The MEAP tests are being revised to reflect that change. Success on the new MEAP reading test depends on the student's ability to retrieve prior knowledge and to use prediction skills in answering test questions. Although students are still required to fill in the appropriate boxes for a series of multiple-choice questions, it appears that future MEAP writing, reading, social studies, and science tests will be geared toward a more subjective analysis of skills.

Kennedy has had a highly mobile student population, and the change in instructional delivery will not immediately help children who come to Kennedy School from more traditional instructional environments. However, students who remain at Kennedy for a year or more before being exposed to standardized tests should be able to perform successfully on those tests.

**Educators need to seek better measurement instruments that evaluate the teaching of critical thinking skills.**

Just as educators today have a tremendous challenge to deliver instruction that is process rather than product oriented, the designers of measurement instruments are faced with the challenge of evaluating the outcome of such instruction. Most current evaluation instruments do not evaluate problem-solving and critical-thinking skills, but instead test lower-level skills that deal with memorization of facts rather than application of knowledge to real-life situations. Lincoln Elementary School is an example of how

pressure to have students perform well on standardized tests has forced educators to teach to test instruments that measure those lower-level skills.

To their credit, the Kennedy principal and teachers have been involved in restructuring their instructional approach to broaden the focus of the skills they teach. In time, the result should be students' enhanced ability to think for themselves and to arrive at realistic solutions to real-life situations. Measurement instruments that accurately evaluate students' progress in achieving these higher-level skills need to be developed, as well.

## Implications and Questions for Future Study

An effective school has been described as one in which all students have opportunities to learn, regardless of their background (Edmonds & Lezotte, 1979, 1982). The intention in disaggregating standardized test scores is to consider students' background in relation to their test results, so in a sense disaggregation is a beginning in ensuring that all students have a chance to learn. However, the process is only a beginning and represents only a small part of the total picture. Test scores can be useful for certain purposes, but should such data be the sole determinant of whether a school is effective and has a quality instructional program? That is the premise on which effective schools research is based.

In this case study, questions arose about a number of issues. These questions pertain to the schools themselves, the disaggregation of test scores as a means of determining school

effectiveness, the accreditation of schools and what that should mean, and a number of other issues. Some of the questions that emerged from this study that have possible implications for future research are discussed in the following pages.

### What does the disaggregation of test scores really mean?

The disaggregation of test scores for a three-year period led me to conclude that Kennedy Elementary School was an ineffective school and that Lincoln Elementary School was an effective school. However, as I spent more and more time at each school, I began to draw conclusions about the schools that differed from my original conclusions based on the disaggregation of test scores. The results of this study challenge the use of disaggregation of test scores as the sole determinant of school effectiveness and suggest that disaggregation is only one factor to consider.

### What should accreditation really mean?

Historically, accreditation has been used to indicate that a school has met certain established standards of excellence. Typical school accreditation programs require a school to go through a process of self-evaluation, followed by a similar evaluation by an external visitation team. If school accreditation is to be linked with school effectiveness, it is not enough that a school simply achieve certain preconditions to meet that goal. Whether the accreditation process can go beyond indicating that a school has met

certain preconditions for excellence is a major question that needs to be addressed in future research.

**What other measures should be used for determining that a school is effective, beyond the disaggregation of test scores?**

The disaggregation of test scores is an objective approach to determining school effectiveness. However, the findings of this study indicate that other approaches can and should be used in drawing conclusions about effectiveness. In reaching my conclusions, I primarily used participant observation. Although that technique is subjective, it is an alternative to the disaggregation of test scores. Observation gave me opportunities to analyze the administrators, teaching staffs, curricula, communities, and school plants in detail. That is just one approach. Additional study is needed to determine what other alternatives or measures might be used in assessing school effectiveness.

**How is a school affected by incongruence between goals and measures?**

Kennedy Elementary School is an example of how test results affect the day-to-day operation of a school. The principal and staff believed they were correctly approaching the delivery of instruction, but school district administrators and community members constantly reminded them that test scores needed to improve. In their instruction, Kennedy teachers stressed cooperative learning and the use of hands-on manipulatives. This process-oriented approach to learning does not correspond to the product-oriented, compartmentalized, rote-memory approach used in many standardized

tests. In evaluating a school such as Kennedy, other measures such as observation should be used, or evaluative measures should be changed to correspond to the changing goals of the school. Kennedy School is just one example of how incongruence between goals and measures can have a tremendous effect on the school operation.

**What influence does the community have on whether a school is effective or ineffective?**

Personnel in the two schools that were the focus of this study had different views of the role of the community in the school operation. It is not easy to decide how much community involvement is too much and how much is too little. The staff and principal of Kennedy School thought community involvement in their team-teaching and tutorial programs was invaluable, whereas the staff at Lincoln School preferred that the community not be involved. Each school's community is only part of the total picture. The influence a community can have on the effectiveness of a school would be a useful topic for future study.

**How should the leaders of the school and school district be influenced by test scores?**

At Lincoln School, the need to perform well on standardized tests influenced the teachers' instructional approach. Historically, Lincoln students had performed well on standardized tests, and teachers had directed their instruction toward continuing such achievement. This is an excellent example of how test scores have driven the curriculum. The extent to which building and

district leaders should be influenced by test scores is a much-debated topic and could be addressed in future research.

## Reflections

I spent nearly three years developing this study, conducting the research, and reporting the findings in this dissertation. The most rewarding aspect of the process is that it has enabled me to grow professionally. My knowledge of field research and research in general has been greatly enhanced.

One of the drawbacks in conducting a field study is the length of time required to gather the data. A major strength of this research was the personal involvement I had with the schools and the people I was studying, which was much greater than if I had gathered data through an impersonal questionnaire.

Since Edmonds and Lezotte presented the findings of their original effective schools research in the late 1970s and early 1980s, educators have voiced growing concern about dependence on the disaggregation of test data to determine school effectiveness. The conclusion reached in this study regarding Kennedy Elementary School also challenges the reliance on test scores to determine school effectiveness. Thus, I conclude that additional information, beyond that gained through the disaggregation of test scores, should be considered in determining which schools are effective. Educators striving to assist schools in moving toward greater effectiveness must be extremely sensitive to the research findings regarding effective schools and effective teaching. Viewing school

improvement through nothing more than the attributes of effectiveness as depicted through the correlates, or through accreditation alone, or simply through the disaggregation of standardized test scores is too limiting. School administrators and teachers who can promote excellence by meshing all of these attributes together within their organizations will begin to get at the fundamental qualities and characteristics that truly contribute to the development of more effective schools and school systems.

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