Servant-Leadership: A Case Study of the Phenomenon in a Public K-12 School Setting

—Jason Anderson
  Springfield Public Schools

—Barbara N. Martin
  University of Central Missouri

As a result of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (NCLB), educational accountability standards have increased (Stecher & Kirby, 2004). Educational leaders are now responsible for meeting expectations unparalleled by those of previous decades (Aldridge, 2003). Halpern (2003) affirmed, "Rapid changes . . . require new kinds of leadership — leaders who have the necessary knowledge to achieve a goal and leaders who can manage amid the uncertainty of nonstop change" (p. 126). The necessity for a change in leadership is based on the need for an "ethic of caring" (Grogan, 2003, p. 25). Current literature also supports a need for a leadership model that is caring and ethical in nature (Halpin, 2003). Grogan (2003) describes the leader's role as being "predicated on caring about those he or she serves" (p. 24). The emerging leadership model of servant-leadership may have the unique behaviors and characteristics necessary to implement the changes required of such mandates, as the servant-leader is one who consciously chooses to lead through service to others (Autry, 2001; Hunter, 2004). Servant-leadership is both a philosophy and a working model (Spears, 2001). As described by Greenleaf (1977), "The servant-leader is servant first. . .It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead" (p. 13). While addressing rigors of federal and state directives, the greater value may be in the impact the servant-leader has upon the school's culture: the

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guiding beliefs, assumptions, and expectations evident in the way a school operates (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996). While there are numerous studies investigating effective leadership, few have been noted that investigate the impact that servant-leadership theory has on a K-12 school's culture. In order to fully investigate that impact, a mixed-design approach was selected. Using the superintendent as the unit of analysis, the following research questions guided the inquiry: 1. How is servant-leadership defined and what does it look like in a public education setting? 2. Does the utilization of servant-leadership by a public school leader have an impact upon others working within the school organization? And if so, how?

CONCEPTUAL UNDERPINNINGS

In order to discern how a servant-leader impacts the culture of a public education (K-12) setting, three constructs were applied to this investigation: effective and transformational leadership, servant-leadership, and organizational health.

Effective and Transformational Leadership

As changing expectations create a new arena for improving skills possessed by leaders, the need for the development of effective leadership qualities becomes more important and necessary than at any other time in history (Davis, 2003). Bolman and Deal (2002) argue that effective leaders "are able to see pattern and order where others are overwhelmed by confusion" (p. 1). Effective leadership is an educational organization's best hope for dealing with confusion and increased mandated standards, as well as public criticism. Moreover, authors and theorists have established that effective leadership will indeed serve as the cornerstone for future success in coping with the ever-changing educational needs of today's society (Furman, 2003). Hallinger and Heck (1999) were explicit about their belief that effective leadership is greatly responsible for overall school effectiveness, as well as for student achievement.

Leithwood and Duke (1999) surmised that transformational leadership expects "an elevation of both" leaders and followers, "a change 'for the better'" (p. 49). Rosenbach and Taylor (1998) added, "Transformational leadership involves strong personal identification of followers with the leader" (p. 3). The authors further explained that the transformational leader strives to motivate "followers to perform beyond expectations by creating an awareness of the importance of designated outcomes" (p. 3) As Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (2000 b) affirmed, "Transformational leadership is a powerful stimulant to improvement" (p. 37). The goal of transformational leadership is to transform people and organizations in a literal sense – to change them in mind and heart; to enlarge vision, insights, and understanding; to clarify purposes; to make behavior congruent with beliefs, principles, or values; and to bring about changes that are permanent, self-perpetuating, and momentum building (Covey, 1991, p. 187).

Transformational Leadership and Servant-leadership

Transformational leadership theories predict followers' emotional attachment to the leader, and the emotional and motivational arousal of followers as a consequence of the leader's behavior (House, Woycke, & Fodor, 1988). Yammarino and Bass (1990) noted that the transformational leader articulates a realistic vision of the future that can be shared and pays attention to the differences among subordinates. Tichy and Devanna (1990) highlighted the transforming effect these leaders can have on organizations as well as on individuals. By defining the need for change, creating new visions, and mobilizing commitment to these visions, leaders can ultimately transform an organization.

Spears (2002) argued that servant-leadership is a concept that is compatible with and enhances other leadership models, such as the transformational model. Senge (1995) suggested that servant-leadership opened up a new caring paradigm of leadership because it builds on relationships and focuses on service to others. By emphasizing service to others, personal and professional development, and working toward a greater good, servant-

leaders help meet the needs of everyone in the organization, which in turn influences the culture of the organization.

Servant-leadership

Servant-leadership is often viewed as an expansion upon transformational leadership (Spears & Lawrence, 2004). Farling, Stone, and Winston (1999) postulated that "servant leaders are indeed transformational leaders" (p. 49). Moreover, servant-leadership has been characterized by Yukl (2006) as including the tenets of "nurturing, defending, and empowering followers" (p. 420). Yukl further explained that servant-leaders must pay attention to the "needs of followers and help them become healthier, wiser, and more willing to accept their responsibilities" (p. 420). Servant-leaders are able to instill a certain trust in their followers. As Ciulla (1998) articulated, "People follow servant leaders freely because they trust them" (p. 17).

While servant-leadership seems comparable to transformational leadership in its goal of fostering vision, trust, and the empowerment of followers (Spears & Lawrence, 2004), Farling, Stone, and Winston (1999) further noted that servant-leaders possess "variables of vision, influence, credibility, trust, and service" (p. 49). They added, "Serving others is the means by which the servant leader facilitates the accomplishing of their desired goals. Merely serving is not the means by which to get results, but the behavior of serving is the result" (Farling, Stone & Winston, 1999, p. 49). Other researchers (Bolman & Deal, 2002; Hoyle, 2002; Sergiovanni, 2000) have deemed servant-leadership to be of high ethical and moral value within the field of leadership. By emphasizing ethical qualities in themselves and in their followers, transformational and servant-leaders have been able to achieve elevated standards of leadership in the past few decades (Ciulla, 1998; Farling, Stone & Winston, 1999; Hoyle, 2002). As Bordas (1995) postulated, "Servant-leaders serve the inspiration that guides their life: the essence of what they were born to do, their life's purpose" (p. 181).

The servant-leader displays authenticity through exhibiting values. Kouzes and Posner (2002) described values as guides that supply followers

with a moral compass and influence every aspect of their lives. Resonant leadership is being able to speak authentically from values that are attuned to people's feelings (Goleman, Boyatzis, & Mckee, 2004). Batten (1998) understood that servant-leaders live integrity because it is realistic and workable. Covey (1991) expanded on the value of integrity and how it truly influences others when he noted, "Power is created when individuals perceive that their leaders are honorable, so they trust them, are inspired by them, believe deeply in the goals communicated by them, and desire to be led" (pp. 104-105).

Servant-leaders, explained Spears (2002), have the characteristic of viewing organizations and/or problems encountered from a conceptualizing perspective while balancing the day-to-day. Leaders almost intuitively focus less on the day-to-day events and more on the underlying trends and forces of change (Senge, 1990). Although the leader is required to be in the present day-to-day, looking back and learning from the past is the first step to envisioning and conceptualizing the future. Greenleaf (1995) described the practicing servant-leader as a historian, contemporary analyst, and prophet at every moment of every day. Servant-leaders use lessons of the past and realities of the present to develop a likely consequence of a decision for the future (Spears, 1995, 1998).

Organizational Health

Since the servant-leader believes in "influencing people to enthusiastically work toward goals identified as being for the common good, with character that inspires confidence" (Hunter, 2004, p. 32), the school culture should encourage learning and progress while building "a community spirit valuing purposeful change" (Deal & Peterson, 2003, p. 8). Laub (1999) defined the servant organization as one in which characteristics of servant-leadership are displayed through the organizational culture and are valued and practiced by its leadership and workforce. Although there is no one best school culture, successful schools value learning, collaboration, professional development, and shared vision and values (Fullan, 2001). Thus, to

help ensure a healthy and growing organization, leaders must be ever vigilant to develop a culture that reflects the vision of the organization in which they lead. As today's fast-paced society is ever-changing, it is more imperative than ever that effective leaders create cultures that deal successfully with their environment (Martin, 2002).

Consequently, one of the most important aspects of leadership is being able to establish a healthy and positive organizational culture. The leader is a vital component in creating the culture of an organization, as affirmed by Tierney (1988) when he suggested that "many administrators intuitively understand that organizational culture is important" (p. 6). Tierney further acknowledged that within the last ten years, "organizational culture has emerged as a topic of central concern to those who study organizations" (p. 2).

Schein (2000) believed that in order to understand what goes on in any organization, you must first understand the cultural assumptions of that organization (pp. xxiii - xxiv). Leaders must also be aware of subcultures (Schein, 1992) that exist within organizations. Various subcultures rely on underlying assumptions that must be understood by an organization's leader. An effective leader must be able to understand that "one cannot create, for example, a climate of teamwork and cooperation if the underlying assumptions in the culture are individual and competitive, because those assumptions will have created a reward and control system that encourages individual competitiveness" (Schein, 2000, p. xxix). School leaders who fostered the climate of shared beliefs have an organization with a sense of community and cooperation (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Autry (2001) and Waters et al. (2003) have argued that these practices are closely aligned with the practice of the servant-leader:

METHODOLOGY

Participants

When identifying a population and sample for a descriptive study, the

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researcher selects participants who are able to contribute additional knowledge to further inform the study (Creswell, 2003; Yin, 2004). Merriam (1998) determined that "purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 61). Additionally, Bodgan and Biklen (2003) discussed the value of a case study in which the researcher chooses an organization and then becomes focused upon a specific aspect of it. Therefore, the population and sample for this inquiry consisted of top leadership (the superintendent), middle leadership (principals and other central office administrators), and varied representatives of the workforce (faculty and staff members). The superintendent selected for this investigation was purposefully selected through a multi-approach process including input from a myriad of sources. The sources included a university professor who has researched and presented nationally on servant-leadership who was asked to identify two servant-leaders. The state's regional staff development center was also contacted and given a brief overview of servant-leader characteristics, and then asked to identify up to three possible individuals. Finally, an outside researcher who previously examined the practices of servant-leaders was contacted. All three sources specifically named two matching servant-leaders. To make the final determination, the researcher added the criterion that the individual had to have been in the district for more than 10 years in the same capacity so that the impact of the organization is related to the longevity of the leader's influence.

Following the determination of the servant-leader, the researchers learned that the district was comprised of one superintendent (identified as the servant-leader) and three building-level principals: one was the administrator of an elementary school, one the administrator of a middle school, and one the administrator of a high school. Other administrators included a curriculum director, an instructional technology director, and central office personnel. The certificated staff in the district numbered 130. Five individuals were approached specifically to participate in the qualitative portion of

the study: five administrators (building and other), the superintendent, and a board member. Of the remaining staff members, 45 (15 each from the elementary, middle, and high schools) participants were randomly selected, making a total of 50 participants in the quantitative portion of the study.

Instrumentation

One instrument was used in this study, along with semi-structured interviews and observations, to collect the quantitative data. The Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA) (Laub, 1998) was used to measure the extent to which a leader utilized servant-leadership behaviors and the impact of those behaviors upon the school organization. Individuals also were interviewed and observed in their school setting.

Organizational leadership assessment

The OLA (Laub, 1998) was chosen because it allowed organizations to discover how leadership practices and beliefs impacted the different ways people function within the organization. The survey contained 66 items related to leadership impact that required participants to respond to a Likert-type scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

Laub (1999) developed the OLA instrument through a three-round Delphi process. A panel of experts received a series of three questionnaires. Results from the Delphi study were then used by Laub (1999) as the constructs from which the instrument items were written. The items were placed into six potential sub-score clusters: *values people, develops people, builds community, displays authenticity, provides leadership,* and *shares leadership.* The items were also written from two different perspectives: *assessing the leadership of the organization,* and *assessing from the perspective of the respondent's individual experience.* Pre-field and field tests were run with data from the completed instruments. The six subscales with an alpha coefficient of .98 ranged from the lowest (.41) and the highest subscale correlation was (.79) (Laub).

Interview protocol

The researcher conducted field interviews to gather descriptive data in the subjects' own words so that insights on perceptions could be interpreted (Bodgan & Biklen, 2003). As Gay (1996) promoted the use of open-ended field interview questions, and to further answer the research questions and triangulate the data gathered from the Organizational Leadership Assessment (Laub, 1998), semi-structured, open-ended interviews were conducted by the researcher to allow for elaboration and affective data. Research in the areas of servant-leadership (Autry, 2001; Hunter, 2004; Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 2002; Taylor, 2002) and organizational health were used to develop the interview protocol (Deal & Peterson, 2003; Gruenert, 1998; Maher, 2000; McGill, 2001). Since the purpose of the study was to examine the impact that servant-leaders had on organizational health, the questions centered on how servant-leader behaviors identified in the OLA (Laub, 1998) intersected with a healthy school culture. Field interviews were recorded and transcribed, with participants being presented with drafts of the interview transcription to review and revise in order to enhance the credibility and reliability of the collected data. Researcher bias was controlled through the triangulation of data, with documentary evidence collected to corroborate information from other data sources and through observations conducted by the researcher.

Observations

Bogdan and Biklen (2003) stated that while documents have been useful auxiliaries, they are becoming a primary source of data for qualitative research. Thus, documentary evidence was collected from the district. During the course of the on-site visit, time was also devoted to direct observation of interactions in the school environment. Direct observation allowed these researchers to discern whether there was congruency between the administrator's insights and perceptions espoused during the interview and the followers' behaviors and practices.

Data analysis

The data retrieved through the OLA were analyzed using descriptive statistics and a table of means for the six subscales. This analysis was used as the process for seeking to understand the overall perceptions of the participants and then interpreting the data to gain insight into the phenomenon under study. Next, using the six factors identified in the OLA (Laub, 1998), selected individuals were asked to articulate how the school administrator demonstrated behaviors of a servant-leader. For the purposes of this study, open coding was used initially to identify themes. Next, axial coding was used to aid in making comparisons and connections between and among the themes. The next step was summarizing, the reverse of classifying, as it promotes synthesis, identification of patterns, and the ability to discover what was important and what could be learned and shared with others. Finally, the researcher analyzed the data collected through document retrieval and observation.

FINDINGS

Research question 1: How is servant leadership-defined and what does it look like in a public education setting?

Bolman and Deal (2001, 2002) asserted that leadership is a relationship rooted in community due to the leader's embodiment of the group's most precious values and beliefs. In examining the school district, this relationship with the community was the driving force in developing, clarifying, and implementing the organization's design, mission, and belief statements. The superintendent expressed the need to pull people together behind a common mission:

> I put together a school improvement team of about 25 people and tried to get a cross-section of the representative areas of our district and the different levels of our organization. . .We established a mission that we thought was powerful; we identified some beliefs which are still true today. We bring those back. . .and they're guideposts for us.

This was accomplished at a retreat, which has become a regular event for members of the school district. As one middle level administrator noted, "Even though at first there was not a lot of support toward doing the retreat thing, they have come to be a real valuable part of our coming together and goal setting and looking at how we want to improve our future."

The development of leadership at multiple levels is also a part of the school district organization. It is the stated expectation of the school district that every individual in the organization is responsible for the inner level of leadership that calls for individuals to lead themselves, or show evidence of *personal leadership*, as "each is required to exhibit trustworthiness which is the summation of character and competence" (Individual Improvement document). The personal leadership includes the qualities expected of everyone, known as Principles (PAWS) in the district. The PAWS communicate that every individual in the district is to be trustworthy, responsible, cooperative, compassionate, flexible, respectful, and mission driven. One staff member said this of PAWS:

> We think those are the underlying philosophies that we feel have to be to be effective. If we have those things underneath our decision making, anything we do as far as dealing with students, parents, peer-to-peer, administrator-to-administrator, we think if we follow those things. . .we've developed as a district, not just as an administrative team but through the school improvement team made up of us and community and parents; we've identified those things and worked them in as principles.

The next level of leadership is the Interpersonal level, which transitions from the *me* responsibility to the *we* partnership. Trust is described as being crucial for the advancement to the third level of *team leadership,* which focuses on *empowerment.* According to the District's Organizational Design, empowerment is defined thus: "a task + trust = empowerment." Empowering others requires the servant-leader to provide and share leadership by envisioning the future, clarifying goals, and encouraging risk-taking (Laub, 1998). As noted in one of the school's artifacts:

> With empowerment, two or more trustworthy people are given the information and resources necessary to make decisions at their level in the operation. They do not need to run to a boss or supervisor with every decision. They recognize and embrace their role within the organization.

As one teacher noted, they all get together for professional development "to look at where we're going. [Superintendent] brings up our common purpose." Another staff member put it this way:

> [Superintendent]. . .set the goal of what could be the perfect world. [Superintendent]'s shown us a glimpse of what could be and sparked our interest, and that's what we want to become. You can't drag us, you can't make someone do those things, but you can show them what's there and help them find that way. That's what [Superintendent]'s done. . .shown us the vision it could be. [Superintendent] has taken the dreams and visions we have individually and told us, "I think that's possible," and then given us the opportunity and freedom to find solutions to that.

Bringing the community together for a common purpose requires that the right questions be asked (Greenleaf, 1977), as "the questions leaders ask send messages about the focus of the organization, and they're indicators of what's of most concern to the leader" (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 91). A middle school teacher stated that the superintendent "has a way of leading us through different kinds of activities. . .through posing questions." It was at a retreat with the School Improvement Team that the superintendent asked the right questions that helped the vertical team (made up of administrators, school board members, teachers, community members, and two students) define the organizational mission, purpose, and belief statements of the school district:

It is at the organizational level that the superintendent is able to define his/her role in the organization. All levels of leadership – personal, interpersonal, and team – must be preceded by organizational leadership, which makes the other levels possible. As the superintendent summarized:

> I feel the main responsibility of the superintendent is to work on the sys-

tem. Organizational development and alignment is the major task of the superintendent. . .and where is that in the training? Deming said, "People don't fail, systems fail". . .you got the wrong system, and we blame people.

One of the overarching products developed through the organizational process was the mission of the School District, which is to improve the quality of life for everyone through quality education. The mission statement in and of itself may not completely recapitulate how servant-leadership is defined in a public education setting, but the process that the organization experienced at varied levels and subsequently embraced by the entire organization aided in the clarification for this specific district, and established a potential framework to model servant-leadership for others. As one staff member commented, "Our mission statement was developed by the community through [Superintendent]'s leadership to provide a quality of life through a quality education."

Research question 2: Does the utilization of servant-leadership by a public school leader have an impact upon others working within the school organization? And if so, how?

To address the above research question, OLA scores for the School District members were calculated using means and standard deviations for each of the leadership practices. To be consistent with the researcher's original framework for the study and to be consistent in analyzing the data, the six subscales were decreased to four subscales by combining *Values People* and *Develops People,* as well as combining *Provides Leadership* and *Shares Leadership.* A review of the overall descriptive data reveals that the practice of *Providing & Sharing Leadership* was ranked to be the highest subscale (*M4.40, SD=.47*). *Building Community* (*M4.24, SD=.44*) was the second highest subscale. *Displaying Authenticity* was ranked third (*M4.20, SD=.47*). The lowest ranking subscale was *Values & Develops People* (*M4.17, SD=.46*). The range in mean scores for the combined subscales was .23. Results are reported in Table 1.

Table 1.
Combined Sub-scores of Servant-leader Practices

Sub Scale	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Displays Authenticity	52	2.77	5.00	4.20	.47293
Provides & Shares Leadership	51	2.88	5.00	4.40	.46557
Values & Develops People	52	2.75	5.00	4.17	.45733
Builds Community	51	3.00	5.00	4.24	.43547

A comparison of data between the subgroups was also conducted. Because the superintendent's leadership style was being examined, that person's responses were omitted. The reported data from the subgroups are displayed in Table 2.

An examination of the data reveals that *Provides & Shares Leadership* was ranked the highest by all subgroups. There was a difference in the rankings of *Displays Authenticity* and *Builds Community* between the subgroups. The subgroups of *Administrators, Middle School Staff,* and *Elementary Staff* ranked the practice of *Builds Community* as the second highest sub-score over *Displays Authenticity,* while *High School Staff* determined *Displays Authenticity* as the second highest ranked practice. All subgroups ranked *Values & Develops People* as the lowest sub-scores. However it should be noted that all rankings were above 4.0 (strongly agree).

The OLA survey items were also written from three different perspectives producing three different sections of the instrument: *assessing the entire organization, assessing the leadership of the organization,* and *assessing from the perspective of the respondent's individual experience.* The first two sections, *assessing the entire organization* and *assessing the leadership of the organization,* were vital in determining the overall leadership culture of the school and the confidence level in the leadership. The third section, *assessing from the perspective of the respondent's individual experience,* gave the researcher an indication of how servant-leader behav-

Table 2.
Comparison of Servant-leader Sub-scores by Service Level

District Level Subgroup		DA	PSL	VDP	BC
Administrator	M	4.11	4.46	4.09	4.25
	N	7	6	7	7
	SD	.41	.22	.33	.40
High School Staff	M	4.18	4.34	4.14	4.17
	N	17	17	17	16
	SD	.55	.53	.51	.47
Middle School Staff	M	4.20	4.38	4.16	4.25
	N	15	14	15	15
	SD	.53	.56	.54	.49
Elementary Staff	M	4.24	4.43	4.23	4.26
	N	12	13	12	12
	SD	.33	.39	.33	.32

Note. N=52. DA=*Displays Authenticity*; PSL=*Provides & Shares Leadership*; VDP=*Values & Develops People*; and BC=*Builds Community*

iors impacted others working within the school organization. An investigation of the data reveals how members of the School District were impacted by assessing their view of their own role in the organization. The findings are reported in Table 3 according to ascending means.

A review of the data reveals that the members of the school district ranked items associated with how they view their personal role in the organization. The range in mean scores was limited to .57, with *I enjoy working here* (*M4.83, SD=*.43) ranked as highest score. The lowest ranked score was *I receive encouragement/affirmation from above* (*M4.26, SD=*.86).

Although ranked the lowest, *I receive encouragement/affirmation from above* (M=4.26, SD=.86) was especially noted by one staff member as he/she discussed the importance of individual worth. While at a retreat, the district's School Improvement Team developed the mission, beliefs, parameters, values, and principles. Following the school district value of *Individ-*

Table 3.

Assessment from Participant in Viewing His/Her Own Role in the Organization

Sub Scale	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
I receive encouragement/ affirmation from above	2.00	5.00	4.26	.83553
I am listened to by those above me	1.00	5.00	4.34	.87582
I am working at high level of productivity	2.00	5.00	4.36	.59142
I feel appreciated by my superintendent	1.00	5.00	4.42	.82477
I am respected by those above me	2.00	5.00	4.51	.72384
My job is important to success of school	1.00	5.00	4.53	.69625
I feel good about my contribution to the school	4.00	5.00	4.55	.50253
I trust the leadership	2.00	5.00	4.59	.72110
A person's work is more valued than his/her title	2.00	5.00	4.60	.63062
I am able to use my best gifts and abilities in my job	3.00	5.00	4.66	.51677
I am able to be creative	3.00	5.00	4.75	.47659
I enjoy working in this school	3.00	5.00	4.83	.42679

Note. N=53.

ual Worth were these words: "Our greatest value is our people. We believe in demonstrating respect for the uniqueness of every individual." As one teacher stated:

> I wouldn't be the person I am had [Superintendent] not been around. Just personally, [Superintendent] has continued to put people first and that has definitely encouraged me because I feel the same way, that people should come before programs or test scores or the bureaucracy of the things we

have to do. We've got to take care of people first, whether it be our faculty or our kids.

The development of the WS staff has impacted the way the members view their contribution to the school. In viewing *I feel good about my contribution to the school* (*M*=4.55, *SD*=.50), a staff member reflected upon the training (Covey's seven habits and PAWS implementation) and the effect it had in the school setting and beyond:

Until I really understood and continued to see where that fits in and see how I could apply that here, and how I apply that in the classroom, and how I operate not only here but as an individual, even with my family. . . As far as a categorical change, that was the biggest thing that changed how I operated, how I looked at things, how I made decisions.

The superintendent's behavior has encouraged others to contribute in other ways, including input through terminology. The staff members knew their contributions were wanted and asked for. As one administrator stated:

We might be in a discussion and [Superintendent] would say, "That would be a good win-win." We're not thinking that necessarily we have to come up with a win-win situation, but just that constant bringing it out. And then [Superintendent] will say, "How are we going to do this? How are we going to put this out and get parents to buy into this? How are we going to get the community to buy into this?"

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings reveal that servant-leadership as defined in a public school setting is evolving. The majority of the participants saw their superintendent as a highly ethical individual who modeled shared leadership, placed others' needs above his own, and always sought out the best for children. As Spears (2001) argued, society is beginning to see traditional autocratic and hierarchical modes of leadership slowly yielding to a newer

model that attempts to improve the organization through shared decision making and ethical, caring behavior that enhances relationships (Grogan, 2003). Thus, servant-leadership as applied in this setting was both a philosophy and a working model. The respondents also revealed that what the school district personnel needed and received with this superintendent was an ethical and effective leader who served others. Many of the participants noted that their school community demographics were changing and that, in order to maintain equity and celebrate diversity within their community, someone who practiced servant-leadership was needed. This servant-leader apparently established principles guiding the way teachers and students should be treated and the way in which goals should be pursued. By setting an example for others, he allowed others to emerge as leaders. This data set revealed that leadership comes not just from the top down, but from any individual within the organization committed to the same shared vision.

Regarding the impact that the servant-leader had on the organization, the respondents in this data set revealed that this servant-leader fostered collaboration by striving to create an atmosphere of trust and support, and by celebrating the ideal of mutual respect. He served to strengthen subordinates, making each member of the organization feel that he/she was a vital part of the organization. Almost all participants noted that this leader by his actions created high levels of trust in their school setting, which in turn enhanced the collaboration needed to meet the needs of students and improve the overall quality of the organization. Woven throughout the interviews are the issues of fairness and equity.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The model of servant-leadership in this study was discovered to be a comprehensive design of caring, of integrity, and of ethical decision-making that is inclusive of many vital elements needed for the success of today's educational organizations. Contemporary school district leaders must go far beyond the everyday tasks of budgets, of dealing with personnel issues and irate parents, and seek to serve others. This caring and ethical

paradigm must be taught and modeled in leadership preparatory programs. Perhaps within such training, a greater emphasis should be placed on those principles and values that are within an individual and developing those, rather than on what managerial skills someone has mastered. Leaders, of course, must know and probably excel at these managerial tasks to keep their school districts running smoothly, but the leader who seeks to serve a higher purpose of equity, justice, and fairness will be the leader who serves effectively his/her school community and has all students learning and being successful.

Jason Anderson has been an elementary principal in the Springfield School District for 10 years. He earned his doctorate from the University of Missouri in Columbia in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis. Jason's scholarly interest is in servant-leadership.

Barbara Martin joined UCM in the fall of 2006 after being the Coordinator of the Cooperative Doctoral Program between the University of Missouri and Missouri State. Prior to that position she was an elementary principal for twelve years. She earned her doctorate in the superintendency from the University of Missouri in Columbia. Barbara's scholarly interest is in servant-leadership, gender issues, and emotional intelligence.

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