

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Phoebe Ann Janzen \_\_\_\_\_ for the \_\_\_\_\_ Masters \_\_\_\_\_

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Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Comparison of Attitudes Toward The Educational  
Needs of Gifted Children: Rural Principal VS Urban Principal  
In Kansas \_\_\_\_\_

Abstract approved: \_\_\_\_\_

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A sample of 184 randomly selected elementary and secondary rural public school principals and a sample of 114 randomly selected elementary and secondary urban public school principals from the state of Kansas were mailed a 20-item survey. The survey also contained fifteen demographic questions. A total of 215 (72%) of the surveys were returned.

One research hypothesis was tested to determine if a statistically significant difference in attitudes toward the educational needs of gifted children existed at the .05 level of significance between the urban and rural principal in the state of Kansas. A t-test was utilized to test the difference. Results of the data analysis revealed 10 areas of statistically significant difference.

It was concluded that rural and urban principals' attitudes toward the educational needs of gifted children are significantly different within the state of Kansas.

As a result of the survey a characteristic profile of the rural and urban principal within the state of Kansas was determined. The profile contains the following information: years of teaching experience, administrative certification,

coaching experience, parent or nonparent, college special education class, membership in professional organizations, rural or urban life environment, rural or urban teaching environment, and teaching fields.

COMPARISON OF ATTITUDES TOWARD  
THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF GIFTED CHILDREN  
RURAL PRINCIPAL VS URBAN PRINCIPAL  
IN KANSAS

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by

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Statement of the Problem

"The creative and intellectually gifted have been discriminated against in school. Teachers have often failed to motivate, support and encourage them. Many teachers have felt threatened by their superior knowledge, novel solutions and nonconforming behavior" Costley (1982, p.81). In a 1972 report J.P. Marland, U.S. Commissioner of Education, found that gifted individuals in the American school systems were severely neglected. Existing special programs for the gifted were usually for the secondary student. The provisions made were insignificant for the most part and implemented exclusively in urban and metropolitan areas; rural areas seemed the least responsive to the gifted student's special educational needs (Marland, 1972).

Since the Marland Report, programs for the gifted have proliferated. But, teachers of the rural gifted find themselves in difficult situations in terms of the following: time constraints due to scattered student caseload and travel time (McIntosh, 1986), lack of support and acceptance for the gifted program by regular education personnel (Davis, 1983), lack of support by administrators (Dettmer, 1985), and sole responsibility for the Individual Educational Programs (IEP's) (Hilton & Hagen, 1983).

Attitudes of educators outside of special education

greatly influence the success or failure of programs for the gifted (Dettmer, 1985; Fox, 1968). Lack of support by administrators and staff is identified as a major reason teachers of the gifted leave the field (Dettmer, 1987). In particular, the attitude and support of the building principal determines the success or failure of a gifted program (Sivage, 1982). Marland (1972) urges that active administrative support is necessary to encourage teachers in the extra effort required to maintain programs of high quality.

#### Purpose of the Study

Because of the importance of administrator attitudes toward the success of programs for the gifted, the present study will, first, assess the attitudes of Kansas public school principals toward issues pertinent to gifted education. Second, because of the significant differences between rural and urban educators, school systems, and special education programs, apparent from a review of the literature (Thomason, 1981; Cole & Ranken, 1981; Sher, 1977; Helge & Marrs, 1982), the study will explore whether the urban and rural principals surveyed differ as groups in their attitudes toward gifted education.

#### Significance of Study

Findings obtained in this study should serve as a source of information for boards of education, administrators and teachers who may wish to organize or

reorganize a program for the gifted. It may also be of interest to state legislators who must consider whether appropriate education services for gifted students should be a matter of legislative mandate.

Dettmer (1987) states, "If the regular education program could provide for the learning needs of gifted, talented and highly creative students, a gifted program could be primarily a monitoring and documentation system. A few teachers cover all the areas by serving in multiple grade or subject assignments" (p.4). Dettmer's suggestion for the gifted child's needs to be met within the regular classroom is a viable one. A Kansas superintendent made the following statement: "If teachers are trained in both regular and special education and if class sizes were reduced, most special educators could be hired for consultant services and minimal teaching" (Costley, 1982, p.137). This goal will not be reached until there is greater acceptance of the gifted child and his special educational needs. The examination of attitudes is one step in the direction of the ideal program.

Farmerie & Travers (1986) found that there is a considerable amount of literature focusing on the problems and characteristics of the urban principal, but few studies have looked at the rural and semi-rural principal. The present study will not only contribute information on how urban and rural principals' attitudes towards programs for

the gifted compare, it will also provide comparative demographic profiles for these two groups that will contribute to the literature on principal characteristics.

#### Substantive Form of the Null Hypothesis

The null hypothesis in substantive form is as follows: The attitude of rural principals toward the educational needs of gifted students is equal to the attitudes of urban principals toward the educational needs of gifted students. The statistical form of the null hypothesis is  $H_0: \mu_r = \mu_u$ .

#### The Alternative Hypothesis Statement

There is a difference between the attitudes of rural principals toward the educational needs of gifted students and the attitudes of principals in urban areas toward the educational needs of gifted students.

#### Definition of Terms

Terms relevant to this research and some unique to the field of special education are defined below.

**TEACHER OF THE GIFTED:** A term used to describe a teacher who has certification in regular education plus graduate level certification in gifted education. This teacher's primary responsibility is for the educational program of identified gifted students.

**RURAL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM** for the purpose of this study is defined as follows: Class 3A school system or smaller, as outlined in the Kansas State High School Activities Associated Membership Directory (1986-1987), a school district located in a county whose largest town does not

exceed a population of 50,000.

URBAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM for the purpose of this study is defined as follows: A 6A school system as outlined by the Kansas State High School Activities Association Membership Directory (1986-1987), located in a county which contains a town with a population of over 50,000.

RURAL PRINCIPAL: An individual who is employed as a principal in a rural educational system.

URBAN PRINCIPAL: An individual who is employed as a principal in an urban educational system.

IEP: An abbreviation for an Individualized Educational Program. The state of Kansas requires that an IEP be written annually and reviewed quarterly for each special education student.

GIFTED STUDENT: A term used to describe a student in the state of Kansas who meets the following requirements: the student must score at the 97th percentile or above on an individual intelligence test and must score at the 95th percentile or above on a standardized achievement test.

PULL-OUT PROGRAM: A program used with gifted students which involves the gifted student being pulled out of the regular classroom for a portion of the day, on a regular basis, to attend a special class.

## CHAPTER 2

## Review of Related Literature

Significance of the Principal's Role in Success of Special  
School Programs

In addition to the studies cited on this topic in Chapter I, Leibfried (1984) also found that the building principal is significant in fostering positive attitudes toward special education. Other professionals share the view that the administrator decides what will or won't work within his building. Roeuche & Baker (1986) indicate that there is a direct link between school climate and administrative action. Administrator behavior signals values, sets the tone for the schools, and provides examples of concern. Sivage (1982) cites research which points out the crucial role that principals play in setting the tone and atmosphere in a school building. The principal can determine the success or failure of a program despite teacher effort. Leibfried (1984) adds two more elements of responsibility to the principal's role. She cites the need for effective public relations and sensitivity to the needs and realities of special education.

The Kansas State Mandate for the Education of the Gifted, effected in 1980, requires the principal to be included in the IEP meeting and staffing process. A study conducted in 1977 by Dunn (cited in Costley, 1982) indicates that most principals in Iowa did not take an active role in gifted education. One factor that may contribute to the

hesitancy of the Kansas principal to be more vocal in the IEP meeting may be lack of knowledge of special education and the complex social, emotional and academic facets of working with special children and their parents (Fineman, 1981). In a study by Morgan & Rhode (1983), special education teachers felt IEPs were too demanding of their time and that they received insufficient support from other school personnel, including administrators. If the IEP process can be better facilitated by the support of the building principal, it can lessen stress and produce a more viable educational plan for gifted students.

#### Surveys of Principals' Attitudes Toward Special Education

A review of the literature indicates that a lack of information exists on the attitudes of administrators toward either the gifted or the handicapped. Among the few studies that have been conducted, Costley (1982) found that educators have sympathy for the handicapped, but sympathy for the gifted is rare. Costley states that 47 percent of superintendents surveyed in southeast Kansas believe gifted children are bright enough to make it on their own. The superintendents believe gifted programs are not necessary because these children have been served for years in the regular curricula. Dettmer (1985) conducted a survey which studied the attitudes of the following groups toward the special needs of gifted children: principals, school psychologists, regular education teachers and gifted

teachers. (Results are reported in the next section). A study conducted by Prillaman (1984) found that principals had positive attitudes toward mainstreaming.

### Attitude Differences Between Principals and Teachers of the Gifted

Dettmer (1985) identified several areas in which the principal and the teacher of the gifted had statistically significant differences in attitudes. The first area involves the following statement: "Identifying students as gifted encourages elitist attitudes among their parents." Principals were in general agreement with the statement while the teachers of the gifted were in mild disagreement.

A second area of significant difference in attitudes between principals and teachers of the gifted concerned the following statement: "Gifted children should remain with their age peers for better social adjustment." Principals agreed with this statement while the teachers of the gifted were unsure. This difference would be very significant if parents advocate acceleration during an IEP meeting and the teacher of the gifted agrees but the principal does not.

A third area of significant difference in attitudes concerned the following statement: "Gifted programs should be mandatory in school districts." As can be expected, teachers of the gifted strongly agreed with this statement. Principals were also in agreement with the statement but not at the same level as were the teachers of the gifted.



A fourth area of significant difference in attitudes concerned the following statement: "Teaching methods and strategies appropriate for the gifted should be used regularly for all students." The teacher of the gifted was in agreement with this statement while all others (principal, regular education teacher and school psychologist) were unsure. Dettmer (1985, p.256) says, "This suggests a lack of positive valuing toward teaching practices for gifted students which might have positive ripple effects throughout all classrooms."

#### Rural and Urban Differences in Special Education

A number of sources have studied differences between rural and urban school systems in the area of special education services. Thomason (1981) states that the Council for Exceptional Children is concerned with the delivery of services to the rural gifted and has established a committee to focus on the unique needs of this group. Cole & Ranken (1981) point out that rural school districts are frequently cited for not providing high quality services to exceptional students. They indicate that the urban districts do a much better job. Horne (1985) indicates that urban educators may have more favorable attitudes toward exceptional students because of the greater contact and exposure.

"Most models for special education program implementation have been developed in urban areas" (Cole &

Ranken, 1981, p.2). These models are then put to use in the rural areas where all too often they prove unsuccessful. "The problems experienced by rural schools in trying to implement what is basically an urban school system are to a large degree related to size" (Nachtigal, 1982, p.11). The small school system is lacking in finances, facilities, and in staff numbers. These elements are essential for successful implementation of urban special educational models. The problem for the rural school is compounded as state and federal mandates must be carried out by the small, over-committed staff. Special Education guidelines and procedures have been designed primarily for the urban school system, and create an excessive work load for the rural staff (Sher, 1977).

The attrition rate for special education in general is 20 percent nationally while the attrition rate for the rural itinerant teacher is as high as 60 percent (McIntosh, 1986). Some rural areas report between 30 to 50 percent annual teacher turnover with 100 percent turnover every three years (Helge, 1981). In a survey of Central Kansas Special Education Cooperative Directors by Janzen (1985), teacher turnover was cited as one of the weaknesses of gifted programs.

Rural School Curriculum and Philosophy as Issues for Gifted  
Education

Adequacy of secondary curriculum for highly able

students is a major concern in rural schools (Barker, 1985-1986). The 1985 Richardson Study, a national survey of the status of education for highly able learners, found larger school districts provide more substantial programs and curriculum offerings for gifted students.

High achieving students in the small or rural school are at a disadvantage when preparing for admittance to a competitive college. For example, the National Commission on Excellence in Education recommends college-bound students take two years of foreign language and three years of social studies. Results of the Barker survey indicate that students in small or rural schools would have difficulty getting three years of social studies or two years of foreign language in high school, in many instances. Those classes, and Advanced Placement courses, were given a low rating by rural administrators as far as need for inclusion in the curriculum. A state wide study by Houseman (1987) reported a lack of curriculum options appropriate for gifted secondary students in Kansas. Of the rural schools surveyed, 88.5 percent had no test-out policy; 86 percent did not have honors programs and 99 percent had no Advanced Placement Classes.

A disturbing philosophy that appears in some rural elementary schools is expressed by Mercer & Hey (1981): if a student is enjoying what he is doing it must not be a valid learning situation...if the student is not enjoying

what he is doing then the teaching method employed must be good. This philosophy can become evident in the face of the gifted child's enthusiasm for learning. A rural teacher or administrator may be ill at ease when the gifted child is totally immersed in a project and is overjoyed by the learning that is taking place.

### Summary

A search of the literature on school principals' attitudes toward gifted education in particular, or special education more generally, showed little has been done in this area. No studies were found which compared attitudes of urban and rural principals or explored other differences between these groups. Yet the literature indicated that there are notable differences between urban and rural programs, curriculum and philosophy.

The review of the literature also indicates a scarcity of information about the characteristics and attitudes of the rural principal. Clark (1979) points out that attitudes are learned, and educators must be more cognizant of attitudes communicated toward the gifted. "The power of attitudes in society and...within the educational community may be a prime force in furthering or denying educational opportunities for our gifted children" (p.86).

## CHAPTER 3

## METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Target Population

The populations to be sampled for this study are Kansas rural and urban school principals. A survey of the literature on rural/urban schools did not produce a specific definition of "rural" or "urban." For purposes of defining the target populations for the study, two approaches to defining "rural" and "urban" have been combined. The first is a definition of urban/rural communities used by the U.S. Census Bureau: an urbanized area consists of "a central city or cities and surrounding closely contiguous territory that together have a minimum population of 50,000." Rural is "the population not classified as urban."

The second is a categorization of Kansas schools by size, determined by the system used in the Kansas State High School Activities Association Membership Directory. High schools classified as 3A or smaller (maximum number of students is 184) are considered to be rural. High schools classified as 6A (minimum number of students is 830) are urban schools. To insure against the inclusion of a principal of a 3A or smaller school located in a large city, or a 6A school located in a county whose largest town is less than 50,000, both the Census Bureau criteria and the KSHSAA classification system have been applied in identifying the target population.

For purposes of this study, a rural school district has a high school classification of 3A or smaller, and is located in a county whose largest community is less than 50,000. A principal in such a district is a rural principal.

Similarly, an urban school district has 6A high school classification and is located in a community of 50,000 or more. A school in such a district is an urban school. A principal in such a district is an urban principal.

#### Sample Population

A list of Kansas schools was obtained from the Kansas Educational Directory, (1986-1987). All Kansas public schools meeting the above defined criteria for rural or urban were identified. To select a rural sample, all rural school districts were consecutively numbered. (If any rural districts contained more than one elementary school, only the first school listed was included.) To select an urban sample, all urban schools were consecutively numbered. From both groups of schools (urban and rural), the schools whose principals would be surveyed were chosen by utilizing a random number chart found in Appendix F, Table 1 in Minimum (1978, p.547), which randomly selected 50% of each group.

#### Research Instrument

A research instrument in the form of a 21 item questionnaire (Appendix B) was designed and utilized. The first part of the instrument consisted of the demographic

The 298 surveys were mailed in groups of fifty surveys on six consecutive days. The first group was mailed on October 28, 1987. Returns were included until a cut off date of December 12, 1987. The response rate was: rural principals, 77 percent; urban principals, 67 percent. A 73 percent return rate was achieved for the total group.

Five of the principals who did not return the survey were randomly selected and contacted to check for bias in the survey instrument. The follow-up consisted of the question: "Why did you not return the survey?" Three individuals indicated a lack of time to complete the survey. One other individual indicated that he had just completed two surveys that same week and did not want to complete another one. The last individual questioned stated that he did not remember receiving the survey. Based on follow-up with these five principals, it seemed evident that nonresponse was not related to bias regarding the research issue or the survey instrument.

### Data Analysis

A two-tailed t-test for independent groups was calculated on each of the survey items. The t-test formula (Mueller, Schuessler, Costner, 1977) utilized was the following:

$$t = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{\sqrt{\frac{n_1 S_1^2 + n_2 S_2^2}{n_1 + n_2 - 2}} \sqrt{\frac{n_1 + n_2}{n_1 n_2}}}$$

### Limitations of the Study

The author realizes that survey responses measured by a Likert type survey instrument do not represent pure ratio type data. However, a survey of educational literature on the subject of attitudes showed it to be common practice to analyze this type data using a t-test. Colangelo & Kelly (1983) utilized this procedure in the study of parent and teacher attitudes toward gifted programs. Coleman & Gilliam (1983) made use of the same approach with teacher attitudes toward disturbing behaviors in the classroom. Dettmer (1985) also utilized the approach when she studied attitudes of IEP participants.



## CHAPTER 4

## PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

This chapter is divided into two sections, a Response Analysis and a Statistical Analysis. The Response Analysis presents the responses of the two groups of principals surveyed on 12 items of demographic information solicited by the survey instrument: age classification, years of administrative experience, sex, level of education, certification level, environment of origin, professional environment, teaching experience, special education training, parental status, and coaching experience. The Statistical Analysis section presents frequencies of responses to the twenty survey items and comparison of the mean responses of the two groups surveyed.

## RESPONSE ANALYSIS

There were 298 surveys mailed to a randomly selected group of principals in the state of Kansas. A total of 114 urban principals received surveys and 76 were returned (67 percent). There were 184 rural principals who received surveys; 141 responded (77 percent). A total of 217 surveys were returned with a response rate of 73 percent.

Of those responding to the survey, 55 percent were elementary principals, 8 percent were middle school principals, and 37 percent were secondary principals. Tables 1-12 summarize the demographic information solicited for the two groups of principals surveyed.

Teaching Experience

Table 1 summarizes responses to the item: "Years of teaching experience: (1) 1-5 (2) 6-10 (3) 11-15 (4) 16-20 (5) 20+."

TABLE 1

**TEACHING EXPERIENCE, IN YEARS, BY TYPE OF PRINCIPAL**

RURAL PRINCIPALS		
Teaching Experience	Frequency	Percent
1-5 years	10	7
6-10	21	15
11-15	23	17
16-20	20	14
20+	66	47
TOTAL	140	100
URBAN PRINCIPALS		
Teaching Experience	Frequency	Percent
1-5	7	10
6-10	13	19
11-15	9	13
16-20	10	14
20+	31	44
TOTAL	70	100

Nearly half of the rural principals surveyed have been teaching for twenty years or more, and less than ten percent report teaching experience of five years or less. The remaining respondents are evenly distributed across the intermediate intervals. Proportions are nearly the same for the urban principals.

Administrative Certification

Table 2 summarizes responses on the item:

"Administrative certification: (1) Elementary (2)Secondary  
(3) K-12."

TABLE 2

**CERTIFICATION LEVEL, BY TYPE OF PRINCIPAL****RURAL PRINCIPALS**

<u>Administrative Certification</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Elementary	18	13
Secondary	35	25
K-12	86	62
TOTAL	139	100

**URBAN PRINCIPALS**

<u>Administrative Certification</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Elementary	33	45
Secondary	9	12
K-12	31	43
TOTAL	73	100

On this item, differences between the rural and the urban principal can be noted. Sixty-two percent of the rural principals are certified K-12, while 43 percent of the urban principals are so certified. Thirteen percent of the rural principals are elementary certified as compared to 45 percent of the urban principals. Twenty-five percent of the rural principals are secondary certified compared to 12 percent of the urban principals.

Level of Education

Table 3 summarizes responses to the item: "Level of education: (1) Masters (2) Specialist (3) Doctoral."

TABLE 3

**EDUCATIONAL LEVEL, BY TYPE OF PRINCIPAL****RURAL PRINCIPALS**

<u>Educational Level</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Masters	108	77
Specialist	32	23
Doctoral	1	1
TOTAL	141	100

**URBAN PRINCIPALS**

<u>Educational Level</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Masters	42	58
Specialist	11	15
Doctoral	20	27
TOTAL	73	100

With regard to level of education, differences between the rural principal and the urban principal are apparent. Forty-two percent of the urban principals possess a specialist degree or higher, compared to 24 percent of the rural principals. Less than 1 percent of the rural principals possessed doctoral degrees, compared to 27 percent of the urban principals.

Administrative Experience

Table 4 summarizes responses to the item: "School administrative experience: (1) 1-5 (2) 6-10 (3) 11-15 (4) 16-20 (5) 20+."

TABLE 4

**ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE, IN YEARS, BY TYPE OF PRINCIPAL****RURAL PRINCIPALS**

Administrative Experience	Frequency	Percent
1-5	31	22
6-10	32	23
11-15	25	18
16-20	19	13
20+	34	24
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>100</b>

**URBAN PRINCIPALS**

Administrative Experience	Frequency	Percent
1-5	15	20
6-10	11	14
11-15	17	22
16-20	14	18
20+	19	25
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>100</b>

Similarity existed in the amount of administrative experience between the rural and urban principal. Thirty-seven percent of the rural principals had 16 or more years of administrative experience. Forty-three percent of the urban principals had 16 or more years of administrative experience.

Sex

Table 5 summarizes responses to the item: "(1) Male  
(2) Female."

TABLE 5  
SEX, BY TYPE OF PRINCIPAL

RURAL PRINCIPALS		
Sex	Frequency	Percent
Male	128	91
Female	12	9
TOTAL	140	100
URBAN PRINCIPALS		
Sex	Frequency	Percent
Male	53	73
Female	20	27
TOTAL	73	100

A notable difference exists between the groups of rural and urban principals in the area of gender. The rural schools had a much lower percentage of female principals—only 9 percent. The urban schools had a three times higher percentage of female principals (27 percent).

Age

Table 6 summarizes responses to the item: "Age:

(1) 25-35 (2) 36-45 (3) 46-55 (4) 55+."

TABLE 6  
AGE, BY TYPE OF PRINCIPAL

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RURAL PRINCIPALS

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Age	Frequency	Percent
25-35	14	11
36-45	42	32
46-55	50	38
55+	26	20
TOTAL	142	100

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URBAN PRINCIPALS

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Age	Frequency	Percent
25-35	5	7
36-45	25	29
46-55	24	35
55+	20	29
TOTAL	74	100

---

There does not appear to be a major age difference between the two groups of principals. Fifty-eight percent of the rural principals were 46 years old or older compared to 65 percent of the urban principals.

Coaching Experience

Table 7 summarizes responses to the item: "Athletic coaching experience: (1) yes (2) no."

TABLE 7

**COACHING EXPERIENCE, BY TYPE OF PRINCIPAL**

RURAL PRINCIPALS		
Coaching Experience	Frequency	Percent
yes	108	76
no	33	24
TOTAL	141	100

URBAN PRINCIPAL		
Coaching Experience	Frequency	Percent
yes	26	35
no	49	65
TOTAL	75	100

A major difference appears to exist between rural and urban principals on the variable of coaching experience. Seventy-six percent of the rural principals indicated they had coaching experience, compared with only 35 percent of the urban principals.



Parental Status

Table 8 summarizes responses to the item: "(1) Parent  
(2) Nonparent."

TABLE 8  
PARENTAL STATUS, BY TYPE OF PRINCIPAL

RURAL PRINCIPALS		
Parent	Frequency	Percent
yes	130	92
no	12	8
TOTAL	142	100
URBAN PRINCIPALS		
Parent	Frequency	Percent
yes	70	92
no	6	8
TOTAL	76	100

There were no differences for this variable; 92 percent of both groups were parents.

Environment of Origin

Table 9 summarizes responses to item: "Environment in which you were raised: (1) rural/farm (2) small town (3) suburban (4) urban."

Table 9

**ENVIRONMENT OF ORIGIN, BY TYPE OF PRINCIPAL**

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**RURAL PRINCIPALS**

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<u>Environment of Origin</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
rural/farm	69	49
small town	53	37
suburban	11	8
urban	9	6
TOTAL	142	100

---

**URBAN PRINCIPALS**

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<u>Environment of Origin</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
rural/farm	24	32
small town	23	31
suburban	9	12
urban	11	24
TOTAL	67	100

Some difference was noted between the rural and urban principals relating to environment of origin. Eighty-six percent of the rural principals were from rural/farm or small town environments. Sixty-three percent of the urban principals were from rural/farm or small town environments.

Professional Environment

Table 10 summarizes responses to item: "Environment in which you have had most of your professional experience:

(1) 3A school or smaller (2) 4A school or larger."

TABLE 10

**PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENT, BY TYPE OF PRINCIPAL**

## RURAL PRINCIPALS

Professional Environment	Frequency	Percent
3A school or smaller	108	77
4A school or larger	32	23
TOTAL	140	100

## URBAN PRINCIPALS

Professional Environment	Frequency	Percent
3A school or smaller	10	15
4A school or larger	56	85
TOTAL	66	100

There is a difference between the environment of professional service of the rural/urban principals. Seventy-seven percent of the rural principals, as compared with only 15 percent of the urban principals, indicate that most of their experience was obtained in the rural school.

Special Education Background

Table 11 summarizes responses to item: "Have you taken a survey course in special education? yes no."

Table 11

**SPECIAL EDUCATION BACKGROUND, BY TYPE OF PRINCIPAL**

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**RURAL PRINCIPALS**

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Special Education Background	Frequency	Percent
yes	72	54
no	62	46
TOTAL	134	100

---

**URBAN PRINCIPALS**

---

Special Education Background	Frequency	Percent
yes	46	62
no	28	38
TOTAL	74	100

A large percentage of each group of principals—46 percent of the rural group and 38 percent of the urban group—had not taken any special education classes.

## Professional Involvement

Table 12 summarizes the responses to item: "List professional organizations in which you are an active member."

TABLE 12

### PROFESSIONAL INVOLVEMENT, BY TYPE OF PRINCIPAL

#### RURAL PRINCIPALS

Professional Organizations	Frequency	Percent
1	12	9
2	40	31
3	44	34
4	20	16
5	9	7
6	3	2
7	1	1
TOTAL	129	100

#### URBAN PRINCIPALS

Professional Organization	Frequency	Percent
1	4	6
2	17	27
3	20	31
4	13	20
5	6	9
6	2	3
7	2	3
TOTAL	64	100

Three-quarters of the rural principals were involved in fewer than four professional organizations. Two-thirds of the urban principals were involved in fewer than four professional organizations.

## **AREAS OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE RURAL & URBAN PRINCIPAL**

On six items of demographic information solicited by the study, major differences were apparent between the groups of rural and urban principals.

### **1. ADMINISTRATIVE CERTIFICATION**

Sixty-two percent of the rural principals were certified K-12, while only 43 percent of the urban principals were so certified. Thirteen percent of the rural principals were certified elementary, while 45 percent of the urban principals were certified elementary.

### **2. LEVEL OF EDUCATION**

Forty-two percent of the urban principals had a specialist degree or higher, compared to only 24 percent of the rural principals. Twenty-seven percent of the urban principals had attained the doctoral level, compared with less than 1 percent of the rural principals.

### **3. SEX**

Nine percent of the rural principals were female compared with 27 percent of the urban principals.

### **4. COACHING EXPERIENCE**

Seventy-six percent of the rural principals, compared with only 35 percent of urban principals, indicated they had coaching experience.

### **5. ENVIRONMENT OF ORIGIN**

Eighty-six percent of the rural principals indicated the major part of their life environment had been farm or small town; compared to 63 percent of the urban principals.

## 6. PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Seventy-seven percent of the rural principals, compared with only 15 percent of the urban principals, indicated that most of their professional experience had been in the rural school.

### STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The rural and urban principals' attitudes were compared utilizing the mean and standard deviation for each of the 20 items in the survey. A t-test for independent group mean differences was used to test for significance.

Table 13 presents the wording of each of the items contained on the questionnaire. Columns two through five contain the means and standard deviations for the rural/urban principals. Column six contains the t-value for each individual item.

Figure 1 graphs the means of the rural (illustrated by a solid line) and urban responses (illustrated by a broken line).

The Likert type scale was placed on the vertical axis. The value 5 represents "strongly disagree" and is located at the top of the scale. At the opposite end of the scale the value 1 represents "strongly agree." The midpoint of the scale is represented by the value 3 which indicates "undecided."

TABLE 13  
 ANALYSIS OF MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF  
 RURAL & URBAN PRINCIPALS' ATTITUDES

Item	Rural		Urban		t
	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	
1. Gifted children should remain with their age peers for better socialization.	1.90	.901	1.90	.982	-0.045
2. Since gifted children learn rapidly, they should produce more of regular school work than children of average ability.	3.23	1.214	3.37	1.300	-0.045
3. If tests indicate that a gifted student has acquired the basic skills, it is acceptable to omit usual assignments and alter the requirements.	2.57	1.196	2.02	1.119	3.27*
4. Identifying students as gifted encourages elitist attitudes among their parents.	2.44	0.971	2.55	1.183	-.712
5. A mentor arrangement is the most effective plan for the education of gifted students.	2.74	.683	3.09	.943	-3.30*
6. Teaching methods and strategies appropriate for gifted should be used regularly for all students.	2.46	.934	2.65	1.309	-1.200
7. Building principals' attitudes toward the gifted determine the effectiveness of the schools' gifted program.	2.10	.946	2.01	1.116	.055



Item	Rural		Urban		t
	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	
8. Gifted programs should be mandatory in school districts.	3.13	1.063	2.13	1.140	6.44*
9. Principals should attend all IEP meetings for the gifted.	2.53	1.153	3.19	1.316	-3.80*
10. Principals should lead the preassessment process for gifted students.	3.02	1.100	2.56	1.254	2.80*
11. Regular screenings should be conducted to identify gifted students.	2.40	.851	1.88	.943	4.10*
12. I support the gifted program in my school.	2.17	.901	1.40	.774	6.16*
13. Students' involvement in activities for the gifted should be limited to other than regular school hours.	3.68	.942	4.08	1.03	-2.85*
14. Teachers of the gifted keep principals informed as to the program objectives.	2.29	1.003	2.03	1.08	1.69
15. Gifted students will succeed regardless of special programs for the gifted.	2.80	1.094	3.22	1.239	-2.55*
16. Acceleration is a viable option for gifted students.	2.55	.910	2.60	1.013	-.37
17. Grade skipping produces emotional and social problems for gifted students.	2.37	.858	2.64	1.026	-2.27*

Item	Rural		Urban		t
	X	SD	X	SD	
18. Early graduation for gifted students should be encouraged when appropriate curriculum needs for the gifted can not be met at the secondary level.	3.16	.945	3.00	1.032	1.14
19. Advanced Placement classes are a good way to help meet the educational needs of gifted students.	2.28	.730	2.13	.869	1.34
20. Principals could benefit from more special education preparation in college administration programs of study.	2.58	.870	2.41	.973	1.34

\* null hypothesis is rejected.  
critical value of t 1.972,  
df= 200, alpha level .05.

TABLE 14

## RESPONSE FREQUENCY PER QUESTION, BY TYPE OF PRINCIPAL

1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=uncertain, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree

Item	Response	Rural frequency	%	Urban frequency	%
1. Gifted children should remain with their age peers for better socialization.	1	49	35	29	38
	2	72	51	34	45
	3	9	6	6	8
	4	10	7	5	6
	5	2	1	2	3
	TOTAL	142	100	76	100
2. Since gifted children learn rapidly, they should produce more of regular school work than children of average ability.	1	13	9	6	8
	2	31	22	18	24
	3	28	20	9	12
	4	49	34	24	33
	5	21	15	17	23
	TOTAL	142	100	74	100
3. If tests indicate that a gifted student has acquired the basic skills, it is acceptable to omit usual assignments and alter the requirements.	1	22	16	30	39
	2	65	46	28	37
	3	17	12	6	8
	4	25	18	10	13
	5	12	8	2	3
	TOTAL	141	100	76	100

1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=uncertain, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree

Item	Response	Rural frequency	%	Urban frequency	%
4. Identifying students as gifted encourages elitist attitudes among their parents.	1	21	15	17	23
	2	57	41	19	26
	3	44	32	23	31
	4	12	8	10	13
	5	5	4	5	7
	TOTAL	139	100	74	100
5. A mentor arrangement is the most effective plan for the education of gifted students.	1	3	2	3	4
	2	41	31	13	18
	3	77	58	35	49
	4	9	7	14	20
	5	2	2	6	9
	TOTAL	132	100	71	100
6. Teaching methods and strategies appropriate for the gifted should be used regularly for all students.	1	15	11	15	20
	2	71	51	28	37
	3	27	19	8	11
	4	25	18	16	21
	5	1	1	8	11
	TOTAL	139	100	75	100

1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=uncertain, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree

Item	Response	Rural frequency	%	Urban frequency	%
7. Building principals' attitudes toward the gifted determine the effectiveness of the schools' gifted programs.	1	36	26	27	36
	2	71	51	33	45
	3	19	13	4	5
	4	11	8	6	8
	5	3	2	5	4
	TOTAL		140	100	74
8. Gifted programs should be mandatory in school districts.	1	6	4	27	35.5
	2	38	27	27	35.5
	3	43	30	10	13
	4	39	28	9	12
	5	15	11	3	4
	TOTAL		141	100	76
9. Principals should attend all IEP meetings for the gifted.	1	22	16	10	13
	2	65	46	17	22
	3	18	13	9	12
	4	26	19	28	37
	5	9	6	12	16
	TOTAL		140	100	76

1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=uncertain, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree

Item	Response	Rural		Urban	
		frequency	%	frequency	%
10. Principals should lead the preassessment process for gifted students.	1	9	6	17	23
	2	45	32	26	35
	3	31	22	10	13
	4	45	32	17	22
	5	11	8	5	7
	TOTAL	141	100	75	100
11. Regular screenings should be conducted to identify gifted students.	1	10	7	26	34
	2	85	60	41	55
	3	31	22	2	3
	4	12	8	3	4
	5	4	3	3	4
	TOTAL	142	100	75	100
12. I support the gifted program in my school.	1	27	19	51	69
	2	83	59	20	27
	3	12	8	1	1
	4	20	14	0	0
	5	0	0	2	3
	TOTAL	140	100	74	100

1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=uncertain, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree

Item	Response	Rural frequency	%	Urban frequency	%
13. Students' involvement in activities for the gifted should be limited to other than regular school hours.	1	4	3	4	5
	2	13	9	2	3
	3	26	19	7	9
	4	74	54	33	44
	5	21	15	29	39
	TOTAL	138	100	75	100
14. Teachers of the gifted keep principals informed as to the program objectives.	1	26	19	27	36
	2	76	54	32	42
	3	13	9	7	9
	4	24	17	7	9
	5	2	1	3	4
	TOTAL	141	100	76	100
15. Gifted students will succeed regardless of special programs for the gifted.	1	14	10	5	7
	2	54	38	22	29
	3	22	16	14	18
	4	46	33	21	28
	5	4	3	14	18
	TOTAL	140	100	76	100

1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=uncertain, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree

Item	Response	Rural		Urban	
		frequency	%	frequency	%
16. Acceleration is a viable option for gifted students.	1	8	6	11	15
	2	75	54	25	33
	3	30	21	23	31
	4	23	17	15	20
	5	3	2	1	1
	TOTAL	139	100	75	100
17. Grade skipping produces emotional and social problems for the gifted.	1	18	13	10	14
	2	69	49	23	31
	3	37	26	27	36
	4	17	12	11	15
	5	0	0	3	4
	TOTAL	141	100	74	100
18. Early graduation for gifted students should be encouraged when appropriate curriculum needs for the gifted student can not be met at the secondary level.	1	2	1	3	4
	2	34	24	25	33
	3	57	41	23	30
	4	35	25	19	25
	5	13	9	6	8
	TOTAL	141	100	76	100



1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=undecided, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree

Item	Response	Rural		Urban	
		frequency	%	frequency	%
19. Advanced Placement classes are a good way to help meet the educational needs of gifted students.	1	13	9	17	23
	2	85	60	38	50
	3	33	24	16	21
	4	10	7	8	11
	5	0	0	1	1
	TOTAL	141	100	76	100
20. Principals could benefit from more special education preparation in college educational administration programs of study.	1	7	5	12	16
	2	69	49	32	42
	3	44	31	21	28
	4	17	12	8	11
	5	4	3	2	3
	TOTAL	141	100	75	100

TABLE 15

## ITEMS OF STATISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE, BY TYPE OF PRINCIPAL

ITEM	3	5	8	9	10	11	12	13	15	17
mean for rural	2.57	2.74	3.13	2.53	3.02	2.40	2.17	3.68	2.80	2.37
mean for urban	2.02	3.09	2.13	3.19	2.56	1.88	1.40	4.08	3.22	2.64
mean for total group	2.29	2.91	2.63	2.86	2.79	2.14	1.78	3.88	3.05	2.50

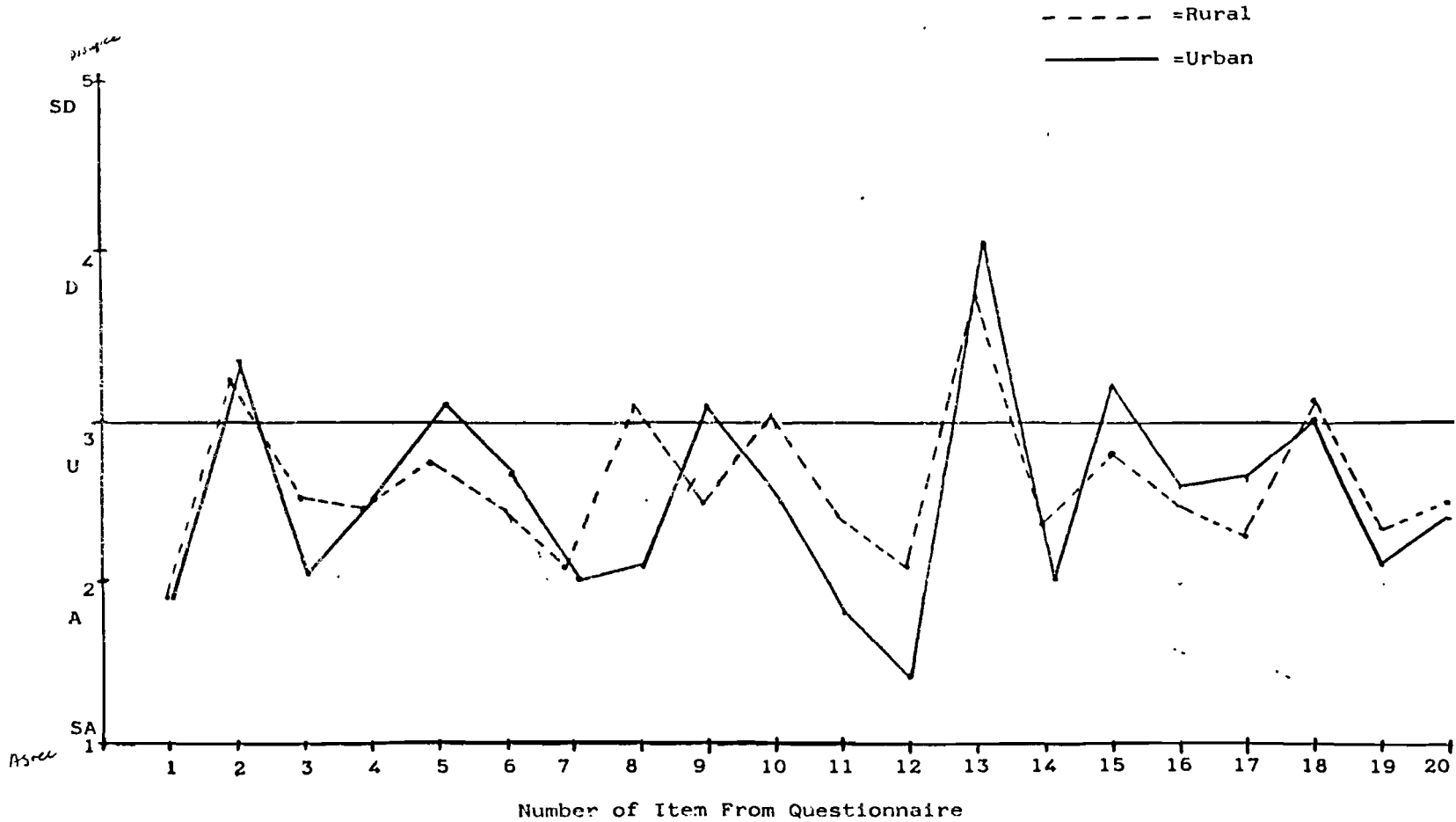
TABLE 15

## ITEMS OF STATISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE, BY TYPE OF PRINCIPAL

ITEM	3	5	8	9	10	11	12	13	15	17
mean for rural	2.57	2.74	3.13	2.53	3.02	2.40	2.17	3.68	2.80	2.37
mean for urban	2.02	3.09	2.13	3.19	2.56	1.88	1.40	4.08	3.22	2.64
mean for total group	2.29	2.91	2.63	2.86	2.79	2.14	1.78	3.88	3.05	2.50

FIGURE I

GRAPH OF MEANS FOR RURAL PRINCIPALS AND URBAN PRINCIPALS



### Analysis of Means

Figure I graphs the pattern of mean differences of rural and urban principals' attitudes. Ten items of the questionnaire resulted in closely plotted variables (items 1, 2, 4, 7, 14, 16, 18, 19, and 20). Ten items of the questionnaire were not as closely plotted (items 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 17). The mean response to item 8 for the rural principals fell on the disagreement side of the graph while the mean response of the urban principals fell on the agreement side. Mean responses to item 9 indicate the opposite, with urban principals in disagreement and rural principals in agreement.

Closer examination of Figure I, reveals that both groups tended to agree or disagree on the same items (other than item 8 and 9). However, the level of intensity was more significant on items 3, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 17.

Figure I shows several points plotted closely to the middle or "uncertain" section of the graph. There were three items of uncertainty for the urban principals (items 5, 9, and 18). The rural principals also had three items of uncertainty (items, 8, 10, and 18).

### Analysis of Hypothesis

The data from Table 13 indicate that the calculated t-values from items 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, and 17 yielded a value higher than the critical t-value of 1.972 at

the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, for all of those items the null hypothesis ( $H_0: M_r = M_u$ ) was rejected.

The remaining items (1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 14, 16, 18, 19, and 20) had a calculated t-value of less than the critical value; consequently, for all of those items the null hypothesis ( $H_0: M_r = M_u$ ) was accepted.

#### Survey Item 21

Survey Item 21 was an open-ended item asking respondents to state "additional concerns or comments". Five urban (7 percent) and 21 rural (15 percent) principals responded with comments. A list of these appears as Appendix E. They are discussed in the final chapter as a source of ideas for further research.

## CHAPTER 5

## SUMMARY, CONCLUSION &amp; DISCUSSION

## SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to assess the attitudes of Kansas public school principals toward gifted education, and to see if any attitudinal differences were obtained between urban and rural principals on the issues studied. A review of the literature revealed that no such study had been undertaken. Studies of differences between urban and rural approaches to education have been made, but none have asked whether urban/rural differences could be discovered in the attitudes of principals toward the differential or "special" educational needs of the gifted within their schools.

A survey instrument was designed which contained 16 demographic items and 20 statements to which the respondents were asked to express an opinion of agreement or disagreement. A Likert-type scale was employed for the answers. Item 21 was an open-ended request for comments. The surveys were mailed to 298 randomly selected Kansas public school principals-142 rural and 76 urban responses were received. Responses to the demographic items were summarized as frequencies. The responses to the 20 questionnaire items for the urban/rural principals were tested for significance at the .05 alpha level, using a t-test for independent groups.

## CONCLUSIONS

On ten of the twenty survey items, statistically significant differences (at the .05 level) were found between the two groups of principals studied. This appears to support the following conclusions:

1. Support of the Mandate:

Survey item 8, which asked the respondents to indicate their agreement or disagreement that gifted programs in school districts should be mandatory, was the item revealing widest disparity between urban and rural principals: 71 percent of urban principals indicated agreement, compared with only 31 percent of the rural principals. Further analysis of the item indicated urban elementary principals seemed to be the strongest supporters (as indicated by level of agreement) of the mandate, and rural secondary principals were least supportive.

2. Support of local programs for the gifted:

Item 12, "I support the gifted program in my school," was the item receiving highest support over all from urban principals-96 percent agreed with the statement. Only 76 percent of the rural principals were in agreement. There appears to be stronger support of local programming for the gifted from both groups of principals than there is for the mandate. Again, urban support for both items is significantly stronger than rural. Items 9 and 10 dealt with the principal's role vis-a-vis the local program.



Sixty-one percent of the rural principals agreed that they should attend all IEP meetings while only 35 percent of the urban principals agreed. The urban principals indicated that their designee could attend the IEP meetings. A reversal of responses was noted in respect to item 10, "Principals should lead the preassessment process for gifted students." Thirty-eight percent of the rural principals agree and 58 percent of the urban principals agree. This may indicate that the urban principal is more involved in the initial stages of identification of the gifted and then prefers to designate someone else to represent the administration during the actual IEP meeting. The rural principal, it would appear, is not as involved in the identification process, but prefers to be involved in the actual IEP process.

3. Area of greatest uncertainty:

Item 5, which asked about appropriateness of mentor programs for the gifted, was the item eliciting strongest uncertainty from both groups of principals: 58 percent of the rural group and 49 percent of the urban group were uncertain about this issue. Of the 20 issues presented in the survey items, it appears this is the one about which principals have least awareness.

4. Attitudes toward philosophy of education for the gifted:

Both groups of principals appeared to agree that regular screenings should be conducted to identify gifted

students (Item 11). Again, urban agreement (89%) exceeded rural (67%). Urban principals (76%) also agreed more strongly than rural (62%) that "if tests indicate a gifted student has acquired the basic skills, it is acceptable to omit usual assignments and alter requirements" (Item 3). Neither group appeared to support the statement, "student's involvement in activities for the gifted should be limited to other than regular school hours" (Item 13). Disagreement with this item was indicated by 83 percent of the urban principals and 69 percent of the rural principals.

Rural principals (48%) agreed more strongly than urban (36%) that "gifted students will succeed regardless of special programs" (Item 15). Rural principals (62%) also agreed more strongly than urban (45%) that "grade skipping produces emotional and social problems for the gifted" (Item 17).

##### 5. Items of agreement from the urban/rural groups:

On the remaining ten survey items (1,2,4,6,7,14,16,18 and 20) no statistically significant differences were found between the mean responses of the urban and rural principals. Three of these items (7,14 and 20) pertained to principal's role. Urban principals (81%) agreed slightly more often than rural (77%) that effectiveness of a school's gifted program is determined by principal's attitude. Principals also agreed (urban, 78%; rural, 73%) that "teachers of the gifted keep principals informed of program

objectives." As to whether principals could benefit from taking more special education courses, 58 percent of the urban group agreed and 28 percent were uncertain; 54 percent of the rural principals agreed and 31 percent were uncertain.

Items 1,2,4 and 18 pertained to philosophy of gifted education. Both groups (rural, 86%; urban 83%) agreed gifted children should remain with their age peers for better socialization. Only 31 percent of the urban and 31 percent of the rural principals agreed that gifted children should produce more regular school work than children of average ability. Rural principals (56%) were slightly more likely than urban (49%) to agree that "identifying students as gifted encourages elitist attitudes among their parents." Only 25 percent of the rural principals and 37 percent of the urban agreed that "early graduation for gifted students should be encouraged when appropriate curriculum needs of the gifted cannot be met at the secondary level."

The remaining items (6,16 and 19) dealt with curricular issues. Both groups agreed (rural, 62%; urban, 57%) that teaching methods appropriate for the gifted should be used regularly for all students. The level of agreement that "acceleration is a viable option for gifted students," was nearly as high (rural, 60%; urban, 48%). Agreement was stronger (urban, 73%; rural, 69%) that AP classes are a good way to meet the needs of the gifted.

## DEMOGRAPHIC COMPARISONS

In terms of demographic variables, the total group of principals surveyed seemed fairly homogeneous in regard to: years of teaching and administrative experience, age, parental status and involvement in professional organizations. As was noted in chapter 4, discrepancies between rural and urban principals appeared on six of the demographic items.

1. Administrative Certification:

The urban administrators surveyed were more highly specialized. A larger percentage of rural administrators were certified K-12. The predominant specialization for the urban principal was elementary. This outcome may be attributable to the research design which resulted in proportionately more elementary than secondary schools being included in the urban sample. The question then arises whether the stronger support for gifted education indicated by the urban principals could be attributable to elementary/secondary differences (not urban/rural differences). However, when the data were analyzed to control for this factor, by comparing the mean response to each item of the elementary and secondary groups, only 2 items showed a difference significant at the .05 level. Elementary principals seemed to support the state mandate more strongly and to feel principals should be involved in the preassessment process--this latter outcome may be

attributable to the fact that most assessment of gifted children occurs at the elementary level. Secondary principals' lack of enthusiasm for the state mandate may indicate that gifted programs in Kansas are more difficult to implement at the secondary level, an issue that needs to be explored in further study.

2. Level of Education:

That the urban principal is more highly educated than the rural principal, suggests higher educational level may be a factor in more positive attitudes and stronger support for gifted programs in the schools.

3. Sex:

That the female principals were three times more prevalent in the urban schools than in the rural, suggests female administrators may be more supportive of gifted education.

4. Coaching Experience:

The rural principal came from a coaching background in over three-quarters of the sample. Only 35 percent of the urban principals reported coaching background. This item was the variable which showed widest discrepancy between the groups of principals.

5. Environment of Origin and Professional Experience:

The rural principal was almost exclusively from a rural/farm or small town background with only 14 percent from suburban or urban backgrounds. The same rural/farm or small town background was cited by 63 percent of the urban

principals. Although both groups of principals came from primarily the same origin, the differences occurred in teaching experience. The urban principals tended to obtain most of their professional experience in the urban environment with only 15 percent indicating predominantly rural experience. In contrast, 77 percent of the rural principals stayed in the rural environment for their teaching experience. This may be a major factor which contributes to the rural principals' attitude toward the gifted. The lack of exposure to the exceptionalities of a population may inhibit growth, understanding and acceptance of those exceptionalities.

#### RESPONDENTS' COMMENTS

The final item in the survey was an invitation to state "additional concerns or comments." Responses to the final question were given by 5 urban and 21 rural respondents. The rural respondents seemed more concerned with the basic philosophy of education of the gifted. Roughly one half did not agree with the need to provide special education for the gifted, or were unhappy with their program model. Some argued that implementation of gifted programs was more difficult in the rural areas. Others felt that teachers were not adequately prepared to meet the needs of the gifted. One rural principal felt that more attention should be given to gifted students. The urban concerns were few in comparison, and related to program model and curriculum. These responses may be viewed in Appendix E.

## DISCUSSION

This survey of Kansas public school principals' attitudes toward gifted education resulted in findings that Kansas urban principals have a demographic profile that differs from their rural counterparts on six variables. These two groups of principals also had statistically significant differences on 10 of 20 items included in this survey of attitudes toward gifted education. The items of divergence are summarized on Tables 16 and 17.

TABLE 16

**RURAL/URBAN DIFFERENCES ON DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES**

Rural Percent		Urban Percent	
<b>ADMINISTRATIVE CERTIFICATION</b>			
Elementary	13	Elementary	45
Secondary	25	Secondary	12
K-12	62	K-12	43
<b>EDUCATIONAL LEVEL</b>			
Masters	77	Masters	58
Specialist	23	Specialist	15
Doctoral	1	Doctoral	27
<b>SEX</b>			
Male	91	Male	73
Female	8	Female	27
<b>COACHING EXPERIENCE</b>			
Experienced	76	Experienced	35
No Experience	24	No Experience	65
<b>ENVIRONMENT OF ORIGIN</b>			
Rural/Farm	49	Rural/Farm	32
Small town	37	Small town	31
Suburban	8	Suburban	12
Urban	6	Urban	24
<b>PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE</b>			
Rural school	77	Rural school	15
Urban school	23	Urban school	85



TABLE 17

## RURAL/URBAN DIFFERENCES ON ATTITUDES TOWARD GIFTED EDUCATION

Survey Items with Significant Difference			
Rural Percent		Urban Percent	

3. If tests indicate that a gifted student has acquired the basic skills, it is acceptable to omit usual assignments and alter the requirements.

Agree	62	Agree	76
Disagree	26	Disagree	16
Uncertain	12	Uncertain	8

5. A mentor arrangement is the most effective plan for the education of gifted students.

Agree	33	Agree	22
Disagree	9	Disagree	29
Uncertain	58	Uncertain	49

8. Gifted programs should be mandatory in school districts.

Agree	31	Agree	71
Disagree	39	Disagree	16
Uncertain	30	Uncertain	13

9. Principals should attend all IEP meetings for the gifted.

Agree	61	Agree	35
Disagree	25	Disagree	53
Uncertain	13	Uncertain	12

10. Principals should lead the preassessment process for gifted students.

Agree	38	Agree	58
Disagree	40	Disagree	29
Uncertain	22	Uncertain	13

11. Regular screenings should be conducted to identify gifted students.

Agree	67	Agree	89
Disagree	11	Disagree	8
Uncertain	22	Uncertain	3

TABLE 17  
continued

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Survey Items with Significant Difference

Rural Percent	Urban Percent
---------------	---------------

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12. I support the gifted program in my school.

Agree	78	Agree	96
Disagree	14	Disagree	3
Uncertain	8	Uncertain	1

13. Students' involvement in activities for the gifted should be limited to other than regular school hours.

Agree	12	Agree	8
Disagree	69	Disagree	83
Uncertain	19	Uncertain	9

15. Gifted students will succeed regardless of special programs for the gifted.

Agree	48	Agree	36
Disagree	36	Disagree	46
Uncertain	16	Uncertain	18

17. Grade skipping produces emotional and social problems for the gifted.

Agree	62	Agree	45
Disagree	12	Disagree	19
Uncertain	26	Uncertain	36

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## IMPLICATIONS FOR GIFTED PROGRAMS IN KANSAS

## AND RELATED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Kansas rural principals, unlike their urban counterparts, are not strong supporters of the state's mandate for gifted education. This finding suggests that those groups desiring to maintain and increase legislative support for the mandate should target rural administrators as a group whose support must be increased. A further study is needed to discover and document why most rural principals do not support the mandate.
2. Rural principals' support for local programs, though it is strong, needs to be improved in the districts (approximately 24% of the total) where it does not exist. Responses to Item 7 indicate that 19% of urban principals and 24% of rural principals do not realize how necessary administrative support is for effective programs. Both those responsible for gifted programming at the local level and those responsible at the state level should respond to these findings and attempt to raise administrator awareness.
3. Some Kansas principals to be exposed to empirical research on these issues:
  - a. The need for acceleration of the highly gifted (as evidenced by responses to Items 1, 16, 17, and 18).
  - b. Gifted children, who learn more rapidly than their peers, should not produce more regular schoolwork than their average peers (Item 2), but should be allowed to alter

the usual assignments and requirements (Item 3) to do work at a level appropriate with their cognitive level and characteristics.

c. Many Kansas principals seem to fear gifted programs lead to elitist attitudes among the parents of gifted. This concern should be addressed by Kansas advocates for the gifted. This issue should be a subject for further empirical investigation, as well.

d. Many Kansas principals need to be made aware of the body of research which indicates gifted students will not achieve their potential nor be prepared to make significant contributions to our society if their educational needs are ignored (Item 15).

e. Nearly half of the respondents had no special education survey course in college (urban 38%; rural 46%). Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that these Kansas principals may know little about meeting educational needs of gifted children. Principals' responses to Item 20 indicate the majority are aware that more special preparation is needed. It is imperative that special educators work closely with the administration to supply information concerning the educational needs of gifted children, in order that appropriate philosophies and programs may be developed that accurately reflect the needs of the gifted. This information indicates university trainers of the state's administrators and certification officials should address this need.

4. This study found six demographic differences between Kansas rural and urban principals. Do those six areas identified help to provide a reason or reasons for the less positive rural attitudes or the more supportive urban attitudes toward gifted education?

The typical rural principal is a male from a farm home environment with K-12 certification, coaching background a Master's degree, and teaching experience predominantly in the rural school system. This profile may be conducive to a narrowed perspective on education and more specifically, special education. First, the K-12 certification, male, and coaching combination would indicate that interests lie at the secondary level with extracurricular involvement in the form of coaching. Secondly, teaching experience limited to rural environments combined with a rural upbringing would not expose an educator to a large number of special students such as gifted, educable mentally handicapped, learning disabled, or trainable mentally handicapped. Finally, other studies of educators indicate high correlation between educational level and positive attitude toward giftedness. Higher educational levels of urban principals may help to explain the more positive attitudes of the urban group.

It may be that principals' attitudes toward the educational needs of the gifted could be improved if the demographic profile changed in the following ways:

1. Higher educational levels were obtained.
2. There was more exposure to exceptional children.
3. More females became principals.
4. More special education preparation was available for principals.

As for the coaching variable: is a coaching background indicative of a negative mind set toward academics or the academically talented? This is another factor that should be explored in further research.

The rural response to Item 21 of the survey may indicate that gifted education in the rural schools is not effective in its present form. The delivery model and teacher training for the rural areas appears to be a specific concern for some rural principals. Has the apparent ineffectiveness of some rural programs for the gifted been a contributing factor in the development of negative attitudes by rural administrators toward the educational needs of gifted students? Conversely, have the negative attitudes of rural principals been a major factor in the ineffectiveness of some rural programs? This study does not provide the answers to these questions. They are issues that should be explored in another study.

Other items to study: are elementary principals more positive toward the gifted than secondary principals? Is

any specific geographic area of the state more supportive of gifted education? As long as attitudes affect educational climate and programming, it is imperative to study attitudes to gifted education. Programs for the gifted will improve when awareness of the characteristics and educational needs of the gifted is increased.

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APPENDIX A

LETTER TO KANSAS PRINCIPALS

TO: Kansas Principals

RE: Educational Research

From: Phoebe Janzen, Consultant  
Marion County Gifted Education  
Marion County Special Education Cooperative  
601 East Main  
Marion, Kansas 66861  
(316)382-3705

October, 1987

As a part of my master's thesis at Emporia State University, I am conducting research concerning gifted education issues relevant to principals in Kansas.

The enclosed survey will take 10 minutes to complete. Please return the survey in the self addressed stamped envelope. Your participation will be greatly appreciated.

enclosures

APPENDIX B  
PRINCIPAL SURVEY INSTRUMENT



## Principal Survey/Education of the Gifted

Please circle the appropriate answer to the following questions.

Size and level of school in which you are presently employed:

(1) 1A (2) 2A (3) 3A (4) 4A (5) 5A (6) 6A

(1) elementary (2) middle school or junior high (3) high school

Years of teaching experience: (1)1-5 (2)6-10 (3)11-15 (4) 16-20 (5) 20+

Teaching field(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Administrative certification: (1) Elementary (2) Secondary(3) K-12

Level of education: (1) Masters (2) Specialist (3) Doctoral

Have you ever worked in a 4A school or larger? (1) yes (2) no

School Administrative experience: (1) 1-5 (2) 6-10 (3) 11-15  
(4) 16-20 (5) 20+

(1) Male (2) Female Age: (1) 25-35 (2) 36-45 (3) 46-55 (4) 55+

Athletic coaching experience: (1) yes (2) no

(1) Parent (2) Nonparent

Environment in which you were raised: (1) rural/farm (2) small town  
(3) suburban (4) urban.

Environment in which you have had most of your professional experience  
(1) 3A school or smaller (2) 4A school or larger

List professional organizations in which you are an active member.  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have you taken a survey course in special education?      yes      no

PLEASE CIRCLE THE RESPONSE THAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR OPINION

(1) strongly agree; (2) agree; (3) uncertain; (4) disagree  
(5) strongly disagree

1. Gifted children should remain with their age peers for better  
socialization.      1      2      3      4      5

2. Since gifted children learn rapidly, they should produce more of  
regular school work than children of average ability.  
1      2      3      4      5

3. If tests indicate that a gifted student has acquired the basic  
skills, it is acceptable to omit usual assignments and alter the  
requirements.      1      2      3      4      5

4. Identifying students as gifted encourages elitist attitudes among their parents.      1   2   3   4   5
5. A mentor arrangement is the most effective plan for the education of gifted students.      1   2   3   4   5
6. Teaching methods and strategies appropriate for the gifted should be used regularly for all students.      1   2   3   4   5
7. Building principals' attitudes toward the gifted determine the effectiveness of the schools' gifted programs.      1   2   3   4   5
8. Gifted programs should be mandatory in school districts.  
1   2   3   4   5
9. Principals should attend all IEP meetings for the gifted.  
1   2   3   4   5
10. Principals should lead the preassessment process for gifted students.      1   2   3   4   5
11. Regular screenings should be conducted to identify gifted students.  
1   2   3   4   5
12. I support the gifted program in my school.      1   2   3   4   5
13. Students' involvement in activities for the gifted should be limited to other than regular school hours.  
1   2   3   4   5
14. Teachers of the gifted keep principals informed as to the program objectives.      1   2   3   4   5
15. Gifted students will succeed regardless of special programs for the gifted.      1   2   3   4   5
16. Acceleration is a viable option for gifted students.  
1   2   3   4   5
17. Grade skipping produces emotional and social problems for gifted students.      1   2   3   4   5
18. Early graduation for gifted students should be encouraged when appropriate curriculum needs for the gifted student can not be met at the secondary level.      1   2   3   4   5
19. Advanced Placement classes are a good way to help meet the educational needs of gifted students.      1   2   3   4   5
20. Principals could benefit from more special education preparation in college educational administration programs of study.  
1   2   3   4   5
21. Additional concerns or comments: \_\_\_\_\_

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE.**

APPENDIX C  
RANDOM SELECTION OF URBAN SCHOOLS

RANDOM SELECTION ORDER  
 URBAN SCHOOLS IN KANSAS

Mill Creek Elementary  
 Shawnee Mission

Allen Elementary  
 Wichita

Quincy Elementary  
 Topeka

L'Ouverture Elementary  
 Wichita

Woodman Elementary  
 Wichita

South Park Elementary  
 Shawnee Mission

Marshall Elementary  
 Wichita

Linwood Elementary  
 Wichita

Beech Elementary  
 Wichita

Rolling Ridge Elementary  
 Olathe

Quindaro Elementary  
 Kansas City

Fairview Elementary  
 Olathe

Havencroft Elementary  
 Olathe

Hyde Elementary  
 Wichita

Northwest Middle School  
 Kansas City

Douglass Elementary  
 Kansas City

McEachron Elementary  
 Topeka

Argentine Middle School  
 Kansas City

Nieman Elementary  
 Shawnee

Kelly Elementary  
 Wichita

Ray Marsh Elementary  
 Shawnee

Welborn Elementary  
 Kansas City

Noble Prentis Elementary  
 Kansas City

Parker Elementary  
 Kansas City

Whittier Elementary  
 Kansas City

Central Middle School  
 Kansas City

D. D. Eisenhower Middle School  
 Kansas City

Frances Willard Elementary  
 Kansas City

Tomahawk Elementary  
 Olathe

Ridgeview Elementary  
 Olathe

Olathe North High School  
 Olathe

Silver City Elementary  
 Kansas City

Black Bob Elementary  
 Olathe

Shawnee Mission South  
 Shawnee Mission

URBAN SCHOOLS IN KANSAS  
RANDOM SELECTION ORDER  
(continued)

Wyandotte High School Kansas City	Meadow Lane Elementary Olathe
Shawnee Mission West High Shawnee Mission	Prairie Center Elementary Olathe
Wichita South High Wichita	Price Elementary Wichita
Mayberry Elementary Wichita	Cresview Elementary Topeka
South Park Elementary Shawnee Mission	Prairie Elementary Prairie Village
South Hillside Elementary Wichita	Hudson Elementary Topeka
Pleasant Valley Elementary Wichita	Highland Park Central Elementary Topeka
Harris Elementary Wichita	Jardine Junior High Wichita
Harry Street Elementary Wichita	White Church Elementary Kansas City
Quindaro Elementary Kansas City	Morse Elementary Kansas City
Central Elementary Kansas City	Roosevelt Elementary Kansas City
W. A. White Elementary Kansas City	J. C. Harmon Elementary Kansas City
Eugene Ware Elementary Kansas City	Tomahawk Elementary Olathe
Pioneer Trail High School Olathe	Oregon Trail High School Olathe
Roeland Park Elementary Shawnee Mission	Northwest High School Kansas City
East Antioch Elementary Overland Park	Arrowhead Middle School Kansas City
Mark Twain Elementary Kansas City	Banneker Elementary Kansas City

URBAN SCHOOLS IN KANSAS  
RANDOM SELECTION ORDER  
(continued)

Bethel Elementary  
Kansas City

McKinley Elementary  
Kansas City

Grant Elementary  
Kansas City

M.E. Peason Elementary  
Kansas City

Wichita North High  
Wichita

College Hill Elementary  
Wichita

Irving Elementary  
Wichita

White Elementary School  
Whichita

Franklin Elementary School  
Wichita

McCollow Elementary  
Wichita

Cherokee Elementary  
Overland Park

Highlands Elementary  
Mission

Shawnee Mission West High  
Shawnee Mission

Corinth Elementary  
Prairie Village

Washington Elementary  
Olathe

Mission Valley Middle  
Shawnee Mission

Brookridge Elementary  
Overland Park

Brookwood Elementary  
Shawnee Mission

Banneker Elementary  
Kansas City

Stanley Elementary  
Kansas City

West Junior High  
Kansas City

Shawnee Mission North High  
Shawnee Mission

Park Elementary  
Wichita

Wichita Heights High  
Wichita

Washington Elementary  
Wichita

Benton Elementary  
Wichita

Carter Elementary  
Wichita

Santa Fe Trail Junior High  
Olathe

Olathe South High  
Olathe

Westview Elementary  
Olathe

Indian Hills Middle School  
Shawnee Mission

Arrowhead Elementary  
Overland Park

Comanche Elementary  
Shawnee Mission

Flint Elementary  
Shawnee

URBAN SCHOOLS IN KANSAS  
RANDOM SELECTION ORDER  
(continued)

Shawnee Mission Northwest High Shawnee Mission	Crestview Elementary Shawnee Mission
Trailridge Middle School Shawnee Mission	Indian Woods Middle School Shawnee Mission
Briarwood Elementary Prairie Village	D. Moody Elementary Overland Park
Shawanoë Elementary Lenexa	Nieman Elementary Shawnee
Robinson Middle School Topeka	Highland Park South Elementary Topeka
Lafayette Elementary Topeka	Chisholm Elementary Wichita
Stout Elementary Topeka	Black Elementary Wichita

APPENDIX D  
RANDOM SELECTION OF RURAL SCHOOLS



RANDOM SELECTION ORDER  
RURAL SCHOOLS IN KANSAS

Osborne 2A	Rossville 3A
Cherryvale 3A	Erie 3A
Douglass 2A	Lyons 3A
Johnson Stanton County 3A	Osage City 3A
Ellis 3A	Alma-Wabaunsee 3A
Ellsworth 3A	Wellsville 3A
Moran-Marmaton Valley 2A	Gypsum-Southeast of Saline 3A
Lakin 3A	Troy 2A
Lincoln 2A	Elkhart 3A
Meade 2A	Lyndon 2A
Oswego 2A	Blue Rapids-Valley Heights 2A
Chetopa 2A	Claflin 1A
Seneca-Nemaha Valley 3A	Garden Plain 2A
Humbolt 3A	Clifton-Clyde 2A
Phillipsburg 3A	Hillsboro 3A
Silverlake 3A	Ellingwood 3A
Moundridge 2A	Centralia 2A
Kiowa-South Barber 2A	Sterling 3A
Inman 2A	Cimarron 3A
Little River 2A	McLouth 2A
Leoti-Wichita County 3A	Pleasant Ridge 3A
Onaga 2A	Medicine Lodge 3A
Langdon-Fairfield 3A	Eureka 3A
Arma-Northeast 2A	Centre-Lost Springs 2A
Moscow 1A	Wakeeney-Trego Comm. 3A
Pratt-Skyline 1A	Gorham 1A

RANDOM SELECTION ORDER  
RURAL SCHOOLS IN KANSAS  
(continued)

LaCrosse 2A	Yates Center 3A
Argonia 1A	Leon-Bluestem 3A
Hartford 1A	Allen-Northern Heights 3A
Satanta 2A	Wilson 1A
Kinsley 2A	Healey 1A
Halstead 3A	Solomon 2A
Rolla 1A	Hesston 3A
Spearville 1A	Logan 1A
Burlingame 2A	Caldwell 1A
Sublette 2A	Attica 2A
Oakley 2A	Valley Falls 2A
Westmoreland 1A	Howard 2A
Coldwater 1A	Denton-Midway 1A
Cedarvale 1A	Goessel 1A
Pleasanton 2A	Stafford 1A
Atwood 2A	Bird City-Cheylin 1A
Horton 3A	Natoma 1A
Stockton 2A	Thayer 1A
Protection 1A	Wathena 2A
Colony-Crest 1A	Tribune-Greeley County 1A
Burr Oak-White Rock 1A	Morrowville-North Central 1A
Elwood 1A	Lenora-West Solomon Valley 1A
Minneola 1A	

APPENDIX E  
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM PRINCIPALS

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM PRINCIPALS**

## URBAN ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS

1. "I would like to see IEP's written which are an extension of the classroom program, not just enhancement objectives."
2. "Pull-out programs continue to present a problem. Many times regular classroom activities and field trips are more inviting to our gifted students than attendance at the gifted sessions."
3. "Gifted programs need to work closely with classroom programs."
4. "Emotional maturity should be a real concern, not just advancement of grade level."
5. "I do not have a gifted program in my building."

## RURAL ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS

1. "Lack of well trained teachers is a major concern."
2. "Does not work well in small schools with pupils less than 100."
3. "I have some problems with pull out programs: I tend to think Gifted people should serve as resources for regular classroom teachers."
4. "The criteria for placement into gifted is too low - we have high achievers being placed, NOT GIFTED. The program is poorly structured and not benefiting much of anyone."
5. "Gifted programs as the norm are poorly done. They do not meet the need of the bright child."
6. "Too many gifted programs are not well identified, often understaffed and poorly supported financially because it is considered a 'frill' by many and time allotment is a ??? and or schedule tends to make regular classroom teacher loath to let gifted students free."
7. "Our gifted students are moved through curriculum at their own pace. I have one in algebra while in 8th and another in 4th reading while in 3rd for social times."
8. "As a whole gifted education is not as productive as it could be."

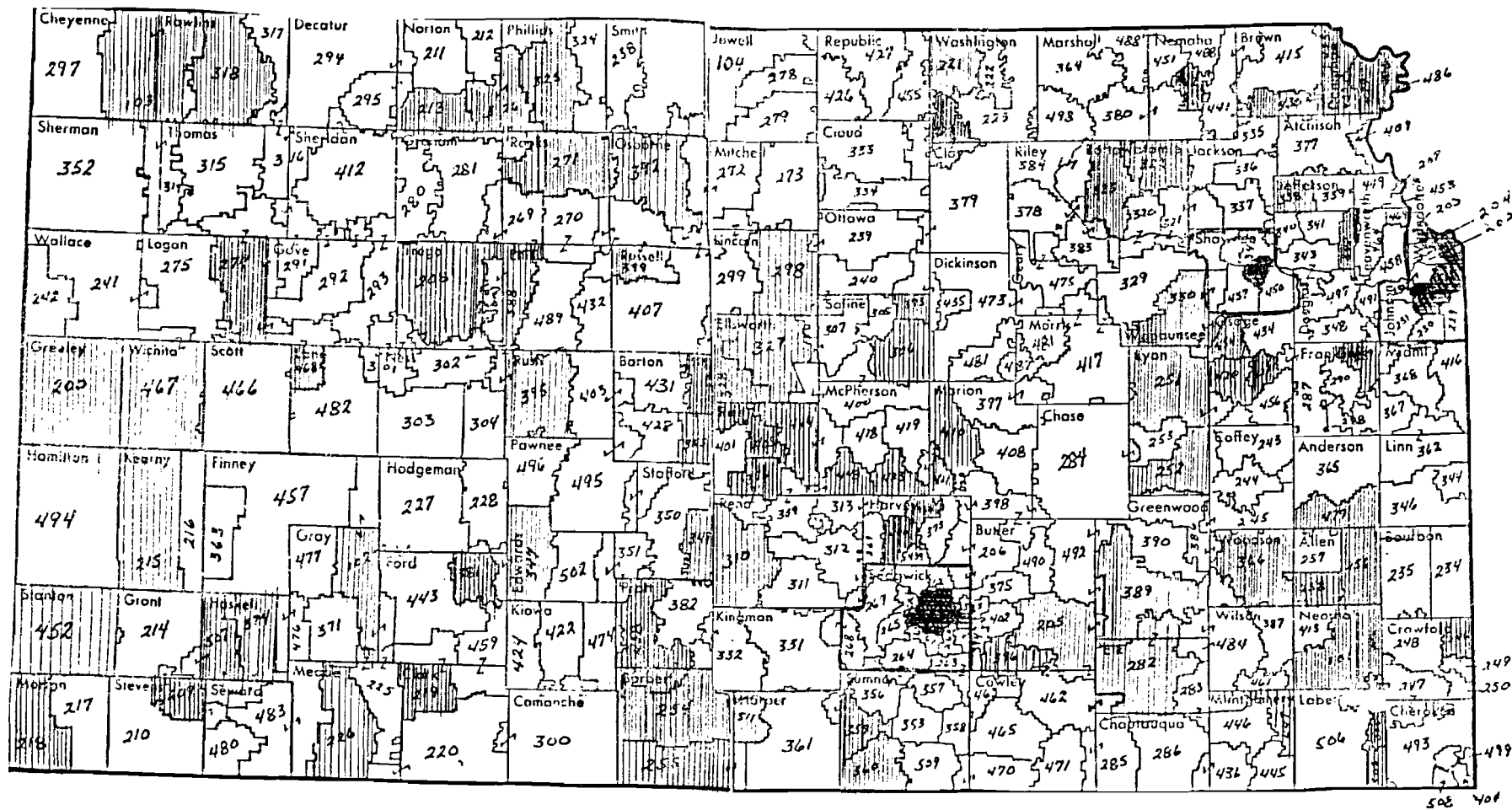
9. "Money could be better spent on the average and below students at the elementary level."
10. "In elementary, I firmly believe if you have good classroom teachers, you do not need a gifted program"
11. "The gifted classification is much too large. Needs to be broken up into two groups: IQ 128-140 and IQ 140 and above."

#### SECONDARY RURAL PRINCIPALS

1. "Gifted Education theory is very difficult to put into practice in rural areas."
2. "Do not use a 'Pull Out' program for the 'Gifted.' Make it a class offering for credit."
3. "If the EL Program does not provide services outside of what is and can be offered through the regular curriculum, then I see no need for them"
4. "More attention should be given to the gifted."
5. "Principals in smaller schools only have so many hours in the day. Why do we still load them up?" (In response to IEP attendance.)
6. "I believe in the average Kansas High School. The course selection will allow the above average student to be challenged."
7. "Gifted instructors need to be better prepared and educated in the aspects of program development for each student."
8. "It would be ideal if ALL students gifted or regular or special education had an IEP. Also, if each teacher and student had the same teacher/student ratio as special education. Plus, the same amount of dollars spent on regular education as special education."
9. "Gifted students are taken from regular classes to attend other activities way too much."
10. "Program a failure at most high schools."

APPENDIX F  
UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN KANSAS 1987

### UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN KANSAS 1987



|||| RURAL DISTRICTS INCLUDED IN THE SAMPLE

508 401