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A Comparison of the Academic Achievement and Perceptions of Leadership Skills and Citizenship Traits of JROTC, Student Athletes, and Other Students in an Urban High School Setting

by

Carmen Williams-Bonds

A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Doctor of Education
School of Education

A Comparison of the Academic Achievement and Perceptions of Leadership Skills and Citizenship Traits of JROTC, Student Athletes, and Other Students in an Urban High School Setting

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Carmen Williams-Bonds

This dissertation has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

at Lindenwood University by the School of Education

11/1/13

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Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to compare three groups: JROTC students, student athletes, and other students, to determine if there were differences in academic achievement. Gaining an understanding of the necessary skills required to become academically successful and make healthy life choices, could provide educators working within an urban environment insight for student success.

The study was conducted within a Midwest urban high school in which, 98.5% of the students were African American. Student performance data in the areas of reading and math for the past three years had been trending downward and caused the high school to be placed in a negative performance status. To investigate the possible difference between 11th-grade students in terms of academic achievement and perceptions of leadership skills and citizenship traits, the researcher utilized a mixed methodology design. Participants with similar GPAs were identified from the total 11th-grade population and 30 student participants from each of the three student groups were randomly selected. A comparison of the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) and ACT assessment results, in addition to self-perceptions of leadership and citizenship traits through a Likert-scale survey were examined. Questionnaires were given to a random sample of 10 participants from each of the three student groups to gain a deeper understanding of the perceptions and attitudes of the participants. An ANOVA and *z*-test for difference in means was conducted, as necessary, on each of the three PSAE assessment areas. The open-ended questionnaires were coded and analyzed to uncover categories and themes, which provided further insight into student self-perceptions of their leadership and citizenship skills.

The results of this study did not support a significant difference in academic achievement using standardized assessments measured by the PSAE, between 11th-grade JROTC students, student athletes, and other students. The statistical analysis for the Leadership Skills Inventory and the Citizenship Scale, resulted in a lack of support by data for a significant difference in student perceptions of their leadership Skills, defined and measured by the Leadership Skills Inventory, and the Citizenship Scale, between the three groups of 11th-grade students.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Background and Purpose of the Study

When discussing academic achievement and college and career readiness with urban high school students, many recognize the great importance of getting an education and graduating. When asked about the particular skills they had acquired to reach this goal, the same group of students stared blankly, leaving the researcher to question how students could have a defined goal, yet lack knowledge of the underlying skills necessary to reach it. According to Russell and Bakken (2002), "One of the most important tasks for all adolescents is learning the skills that will help them manage their own lives and make positive, healthy choices" (para. 2). Although only a limited number of studies have shown how leadership and citizenship skills actually influence goal setting and student achievement, discussions have occurred that recognize the importance of these skills. Research conducted by Robinson and Horne (1993) and Davies (2002) suggested that students with leadership and citizenship skills perform better academically and socially, and are "more likely to become responsible, active citizens in their community, nation and the world" (Davies, 2002, para. 5).

Leadership and character skills should be taught in school (Davies, 2002; Guidoccio, 2010) however, many urban schools lack the financial means to promote these skills (Gushue, Scanlan, Pantzer, & Clark, 2006). High schools located in urban settings face numerous challenges when it comes to meeting the academic needs of its students (Bell, 1979; Billet & Rand Corp, 1978; Chung, n.d; Lee, 2005; Sheppard, 2006). One major challenge facing urban schools has been a lack of resources that provide students with an awareness of the fact that their level of performance in high school will impact their lives beyond high school (Anderson & Kim, 2009; Baldwin, 2001). School programs that offer role models and mentors to provide emotional support, including conversations about success and achievement, strongly influence “the academic and career development of …youth” (Constantine, Erickson, Banks, & Timberlake, 1998). Without guidance and advice from role models and mentors, many students go through high school without academic encouragement (Butler, 2003). Students in urban settings are “less likely to have the family structure, economic security, and stability that are most associated with desirable educational outcomes” (Lippman et al., 1996, para.11). These students “report[ed] feelings of anonymity, of being just one person among thousands of other youth without an adult in their lives to help negotiate problems and provide support” (Baldwin, 2001, p. 24). It was further stated, “Many students do not have a relationship in their schools [and lack the support of a] caring adult who knows them personally and participates significantly in their development” (Baldwin, 2001, p. 24). The researcher of this study has often witnessed the lack of family support and strong school-home relationships in the students within the researched school experience.

Schools in urban areas have continually faced a number of distinct problems that negatively impact students’ abilities to succeed. “Urban schools in large measure reflect the characteristics of the environment in which they are located” (Lee, 2005, p. 185). These characteristics often consist of mismanaged political governance, concentrated poverty, violence, and non-community involvement (Lee, 2005; Mohamed & Wheeler, 2001). “The intense clustering of poor people in neighborhoods leads to a concentration of other deleterious social and economic circumstances associated with poverty” (Massey, Gross, & Shibuya, 1994, p. 426). Cohen and Dawson (1993) reported that

African Americans living in poverty-stricken neighborhoods do not participate within "political and economic networks" (p. 298). Further discussion revealed that a lack of participation leads to limited "social contacts that can sometimes provide political access" (p. 298). Marschall and Shah (2005) conducted interviews requesting that participants discuss three challenges of urban schools. Interview responses were placed into distinct categories, including political governance problems and statements that school boards and city government involvement were major challenges to urban school progress (Marschall & Shah, 2005). Further providing insight into the governance of urban schools, Marschall and Shah (2005) reported that decisions pertaining to urban schools were being made by local politicians and businesses, without the collective agreement of school stakeholders (p. 164). "Urban education stakeholders…include parents, school administrators and educators, and community groups" (Marschall & Shah, 2005, p. 164). All key stakeholders must have the "concept of civic capacity [which] requires that within these groups, key decision makers: (1) recognize their role…, and (2) become visible and identifiable to other stakeholders" (Marschall & Shah, 2005, p. 164). It was the researcher's belief that, at the time of this study the researched school had a deep disconnect with stakeholders and lacked the civic capacity needed for urban school success.

The focus of this study, a public co-ed high school located in a Midwest urban city, was populated by numerous communities with a total population of 26,708 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). The researched high school had an enrollment of 1,752 students, of which 98.5% were Black (Illinois School Report Card, 2012). Student performance data in the areas of reading and math for three consecutive years on the Prairie State

Achievement Examination (PSAE) and failure to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) placed the school in a negative status as detailed in Table 1 (Leadership Team, 2011; Illinois Interactive Report Card, 2010). The assessment scores for the 2008 and 2012 school years within Table 1 revealed an observable difference between the test scores of the school under investigation and the state test scores.

Table 1

PSAE School Percentage Scores Compared To Illinois State PSAE Percentage Scores

	2008	2012
State Reading Scores	53	50
School Reading Scores	12	10
State Math Scores	53	51
School Math Scores	11	4

Note: Adapted from Illinois Interactive Report Card 2012b and Illinois School Report Card 2008 and 2012.

In addition to student underachievement, the high school faced many challenges, including low parental involvement, chronic behavior issues, and a high percentage (52.6%) of students with special needs (Illinois School Report Card, 2012; Leadership Team, 2011). The high school encompassed four surrounding communities, each with individual identities that merged at the local high school. Several of the surrounding communities were plagued with territorial youth gang issues, which oftentimes were brought into the district's schools (Leadership Team, 2011). A mandated school uniform dress code had been in place in the district since 1998 to help deter gang activity and disruptive behavior. In 2001, in an effort to provide students with additional electives, the high school established a branch of the Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFJROTC). Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) courses were available to students from their freshman through senior years. The JROTC program focused on leadership, citizenship, and a disciplined work ethic to promote development of students' character (Ayers, 2006; Bartlett & Lutz, 1998; Blair, 1999; Bulach, 2002; Pema & Mehay, 2009). According to the JROTC Department Chair for this high school, there were two retired Air Force military instructors and 224 student participants financially supported by the Air Force and the local school district (Department Chair, personal communication, 2011). The JROTC program prepares students to be better, more career-oriented citizens (Gallagher, 2007; Pema & Mehay, 2009). After graduation, students who decide to enlist in the Armed Services are given a certificate of completion and the appropriate rank prior to entering the military. The program previously gifted over 15 of this high school's participants with full college scholarships funded by the United States Air Force.

During this study, the researched high school was a member of the Illinois High School Association (IHSA) Southwestern Conference for sports. The IHSA "provide[s] leadership for the development, supervision and promotion of interscholastic competition and other activities in which its member schools engage" (Illinois High School Association, 2010, p. 10). One of the objectives of the IHSA was to provide "eligible students experiences in an educational setting, which may provide enrichment to the educational experience" (IHSA, 2010, p. 10). The high school's interscholastic athletic program offered its students a variety of sport participation, from boys' and girls' basketball, baseball, bowling, volleyball, track, cross country, and tennis, to wrestling and football. In this high school and community, football and track were the most recognized sports (Voegele, Patterson, & Collins, 2009). The researcher found that students in the school district viewed sports as a means to success, and sometimes as a motivator for students to attend school (Voegele et al., 2009). The city and its high school were home to three Olympic gold medalists and other sports notables. Voegele et al. (2009) posited that succeeding in sports can "give… young people a sense of historical greatness and community membership … and an insight into the necessary skills, such as leadership, needed to succeed in college and the job market" (para. 1). While some students within this community used sports as a tool to achieve greater accomplishments, the researcher found that the continuous stagnation and underperformance on the PSAE brought morale to a low for all of the high school stakeholders.

Not only had the school underperformed on the PSAE for numerous years, the administrator turnover rate was the highest, with six building principals from 2008 -2013 (Leadership Team, 2011). Non-highly qualified teachers taught 1.3% of classes (Illinois School Report Card, 2010), and the staff received yearly professional development training (Illinois Interactive Report Card, 2010; Leadership Team, 2011). However, the researcher witnessed ineffective implementation and progress monitoring. And, reports from district school board meetings noted questionable resource allocation; "Untold amounts of resources [were] spent on professional development that …yielded no measurable outcomes" (Leadership Team, 2011, para. 5). The district's student academic performance, ineffective management, and wasteful spending led to "Parents and other community stakeholders having felt disenfranchised and disconnected from the high school in their community" (Leadership Team, 2011, para. 5). The researcher observed that many of the fights and student behavior issues at the high school overwhelmed the School Resource Officers, regularly resulting in negative reports in the local news. To compound these existing issues at this high school, the district found it necessary to decrease staffing by 175 certified teachers and 168 non-certified teachers (Leadership Team, 2011; School Board Minutes, 2011). Eighty (80) of the certified staff and twenty-five (25) of the non-certified staff who were dismissed came from the study high school, and a large number of the remaining cuts occurred in the area of special education (Leadership Team, 2011; School Board Minutes, 2011). The staff cuts within the special education department limited how the school could, “effectively provide the services and meet state and federal compliance” (Leadership Team, 2011, para. 6).

The Leadership Team (2011) reported a “disconnect between the effectiveness of district policy, practices, protocols and the identifiable, measurable, and sometimes, critical needs of the high school community” (para. 6). School and government officials at the local and state levels held discussions about accountability and compliance; however, these discussions led to inaction, causing the state superintendent, Christopher Koch, to “intervene in the District in order to establish stability and improve student achievement” (Illinois State Board of Education, 2011, p. 105). Due to the high school’s failing and ineffective instructional and operational infrastructures, the school was not in compliance with the following goals set forth by the Illinois State Board of Education (2011); (1) “Every student will demonstrate academic achievement and be prepared for success after high school” and (2) “Every student will be supported by highly prepared and effective teachers and school leaders” (p. 105). On April 13, 2011, the Illinois State Board of Education (2011) notified the district that state intervention was underway.

This study investigated how one high school, previously ineffective in reversing negative achievement trends and having lost a significant number of its education staff, turned to existing programs to promote student leadership and citizenship skills in the hopes of increasing student achievement. The purpose of this research was to measure the difference between three groups of 11th-grade students in an urban setting in terms of their academic achievement, perceptions of leadership skills, and perceptions of citizenship. The three groups were JROTC students, student athletes, and other students, with similar grade point averages. Academic achievement was measured by the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE), which was comprised of the American College Test (ACT) and the WorkKeys assessment. Student perceptions of leadership were measured by the Leadership Skills Inventory (Townsend & Carter, 1981), while perceptions of citizenship were measured by the Citizenship Scale (Narvaez, Bock, Endicott & Lies, 2004; Narvaez, 2008). A measurable difference between the three groups could possibly lead to a redesign in student enrollment and participation practices in an effort to increase student success.

Statement of the Problem

Since 2005, the high school under study failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress on the state standardized test of academic measurement (Illinois Interactive Report Card, 2012b). Budget cuts for the school district resulted in the high school loss of teachers and support staff, and students chronically participated in disruptive acts and truancy (Illinois State Board of Education, 2011; Leadership Team, 2011). These ongoing challenges left students with minimal options to develop leadership skills, citizenship traits, and self-esteem, each linked to academic success (Brannon, 2008; Daniels & Leaper, 2006; Lickona, 1993; Robinson & Horne, 1993; Whitehead, 2009).

Professional Significance

Research studies investigating leadership skills and citizenship traits within urban high schools were limited at the time of this study. However, the few existing studies presented strong evidence that resulted in a positive correlation between student participation and student achievement (O'Brien, Rollefson, & Policy Study Associates, 1995). Participation in a JROTC program within the Denver Public Schools positively impacted student academic success (Gallagher, 2007), while research conducted by Pearson, Crissey, and Riegle-Crumb (2009) concluded that "sports continue to be an important component of the school institution that is associated with students' academic performance in high school" (p. 533). A review of the literature on leadership revealed a focus on adults working in urban educational settings and other institutions (Karbula, 2009; Teasley, Tyson, & House, 2007), leaving a void in the research on leadership skills, citizenship traits, and the academic achievement of secondary students in urban settings. The results of this research study could increase the awareness of educational leaders about possible differences between those who participate in the JROTC and sports programs and non-participants in terms of their academic achievement and perceptions of leadership skills and citizenship traits. This awareness could lead to a redesign of student enrollment practices and opportunities for student participation in in-house programs, which could increase student success.

Methodology

The researcher investigated possible differences between 11th-grade students (JROTC students, student athletes, and other students) in a secondary urban setting in terms of academic achievement and perceptions of leadership skills and citizenship traits.

The researcher utilized a mixed methodology design. Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2012) recommended such a design noting, “that using both methods provides a more complete understanding of research problems than does the use of either approach alone” (p. 557). The researcher developed a convergent parallel design “to obtain different but complimentary data on the same topic” in order to “compare[e] and contrast quantitative statistical results with qualitative findings for corroboration and validation purposes” (Creswell, 2011, p. 77). Qualitative research included surveys and questionnaires to determine how the 11th-grade JROTC students, student athletes, and other students perceived their participation or non-participation related to academic achievement and perceptions of leadership skills and citizenship traits.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The following questions were addressed in the study:

RQ1: Do differences and/or similarities exist in perceptions of student leadership among groups of JROTC students, student athletes, and other students?

RQ2: How do students perceive their participation in JROTC or sports as a contribution to their development of leadership skills?

RQ3: How do students perceive their participation in JROTC or sports as a contribution to their development of citizenship traits?

Hypothesis 1: A difference will exist in academic achievement, as measured by the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE), between 11th-grade JROTC students, student athletes, and other students with similar GPAs in an urban setting.

Hypothesis 2: A difference will exist in student self-perceptions of leadership skills, defined and measured by the Leadership Skills Inventory, between 11th-grade

JROTC students, student athletes, and other students with similar GPAs in an urban setting.

Hypothesis 3: A difference will exist in student self-perceptions of citizenship traits, defined and measured by the Citizenship Scale, between 11th-grade JROTC students, student athletes, and other students with similar GPAs in an urban setting.

Definition of Terms

Cadet - A “student who was enrolled in a military high school program and actively participates in the JROTC program” (Gallagher, 2007, p. 16).

Citizenship - “the character of an individual viewed as a member of society; behavior in terms of the duties, obligations, and functions of a citizen” (Citizenship, n.d.).

Citizenship Scale - A self-analysis, Likert-type scale that measured student perceptions of “issues of honesty, trustworthiness, rule following and conscientiousness” (Character Education Partnership, 2010, para.12).

Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (JROTC) - A federal program sponsored by the United States Armed Forces offered at public and private high schools. The program was established by the National Defense Act of 1916 and expanded under the 1964 ROTC Vitalization Act (Pema & Mehay, 2009).

Leadership Skills - “actions and behaviors that support your leadership—your ability to influence, motivate, and direct others” (Sterrett, 2011, para.1).

Leadership Skills Inventory - A self-analysis survey that measured students’ perceptions of “working with groups, understanding self, communicating, making decisions, and leadership” (Townsend & Carter, 1981, p. 1).

Similar Grade Point Average (GPA) – For the purposes of this study, “similar” was defined as a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 or above. The researcher incorporated the term "similar GPA" throughout the paper.

Sports - "an athletic activity requiring skill or physical prowess and often of a competitive nature" (Sports, n.d.,2011, para.1). For the purpose of this study, sport was defined as a non-gender athletic activity in the four areas of basketball, baseball, track, and volleyball.

Student Athletes – For the purpose of this study, student athletes referred to students who participated in an interscholastic competitive high school program.

Other Students – For the purpose of this study, "other students" referred to students who did not participate in JROTC or an interscholastic competitive high school program.

Limitations of the Study

This research study included underage participants, so parental permission and student willingness to participate presented a challenge. Receiving self-reported data in the form of surveys and questionnaires was also a limitation due to issues with honesty, accuracy, and the researcher's inability to independently verify the responses. And, additional limitation of the study was that the researcher altered the research design by replacing face-to-face interviews with written questionnaires, due to the relocation of the secondary school counselor to a satellite building.

Summary

The high school under study faced many challenges, including low-test scores, low parental involvement, chronic behavior issues, a high percentage of special needs students, a lack of funding, and a shortage of teachers. The researcher believed that this school had lost specific resources that would provide its students with necessary skills to become productive citizens and make healthy choices. This high school faced numerous challenges and a continuing need to provide students with programs that increase leadership skills and character traits correlated with academic achievement. To help overcome these challenges and identify more opportunities for student success, this study attempted to measure the difference between three groups of 11th-grade students (JROTC students, student athletes, and other students) in an urban setting with similar GPAs in terms of their academic achievement and perceptions of leadership skills and citizenship.

Chapter One presented evidence that students with leadership and citizenship skills performed better in school and that these skills should be taught within the school (Davies, 2002; Guidoccio, 2010). Urban schools faced challenges in providing students the opportunity to acquire these skills. These challenges included a lack of funds, inadequate test scores, low parental involvement, and student behavior problems, all of which were evident at the high school under study. Chapter One also presented an overview of the school’s JROTC and sports programs, along with overall program mission and goals in terms of increasing achievement and self-esteem. Chapter Two will review the existing literature on the ways in which JROTC and sports programs affect student academic achievement, as well as the importance of leadership and citizenship skills for student success. Chapter Three will address and elaborate on the study’s methodology. Chapters Four and Five will present the data analysis and interpretation, along with conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature

"Academic achievement is connected to one's academic identity, or the personal commitment to a standard of excellence, the willingness to persist in the challenge, struggle, excitement and disappointment intrinsic in the learning process" (Welch & Hodges 1997, p. 37, as cited in Graham & Anderson, 2008, p. 475).

Overview

The purpose of this literature review was to provide the reader with exploratory insight into the challenges of urban schools and their students, with regards to academic achievement and its relationship to the development of leadership and citizenship skills. This literature review examined information pertaining to the Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) and the reputation of the program for promoting academic achievement, self-worth, and discipline (Pema & Mahay, 2009). The review of literature also included the often debated topic of student athletic participation and its relationship to academic achievement. This literature review included background information of various interventions for success within urban schools and included research on character and citizenship education. Additionally, student leadership development and the relationship to academic achievement along with overall adolescent development of students into successful adults was examined.

History of JROTC

Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps consists of a high school program whose focus has been on improving academic achievement and character development, while promoting self-worth and self-discipline. JROTC is funded by the individual school district and federal funds (Pema & Mehay, 2009). Created in 1916, the JROTC program was a part of the National Defense Act, established in preparation for the United States' entry into World War I (Anderson, 2009; Gallagher, 2007). One of the provisions of the National Defense Act of 1916 was to "authorize high schools the loan of federal military equipment and the assignment of active or retired military personnel as instructors" (Gallagher, 2007, p. 26). The initial start of the JROTC program was small while under the sole umbrella of the Army (Anderson, 2009; Pema & Mehay, 2009). With the Vitalization Act of 1964 the program grew to include all four branches of the military (Pema & Mehay, 2009) and "by 2007 the JROTC program enrolled roughly 525,000 students in 3,400 high schools" (Pema & Mehay, 2009, p. 3). The perception of JROTC by those outside the program viewed JROTC as a recruitment station; while those within the program viewed the limitations towards greater recruitment, evident in the actual program participants who enlisted in the military measured as low (Anderson, 2009; Barlett & Lutz, 1998; Pema & Mehay, 2010).

The JROTC original's mission and vision, was "to motivate young people to be better citizens" (Gallagher, 2007, p. 25) and to instill values of "citizenship, service to the United States, personal responsibility, and a sense of accomplishment" (Gallagher, 2007, p. 25). JROTC participants had an increase in their confidence, motivation and academic skills (Blair, 1999; Bulach, 2002; Elliott, Hanser, Gilroy, & National Defense Research Institute, 2001; Polson, 1987; Schmidt, 2003). The program accepted all students regardless of "race, gender, income level, or past educational performance" (Gallagher, 2007, p. 27). JROTC included challenging academic elements; the latest educational practices along with study skills and career planning that led to higher education

(Gallagher, 2007). The curriculum promoted high school graduation, and good citizenship (Gallagher, 2007; Pema & Mehay, 2009).

Many schools with JROTC programs were located in the rural south and inner-city, high proportioned minority, schools (Anderson, 2009; Anderson, 2001 Ayers, 2006; Bartlett & Lutz, 1998; Galaviz, Palafox, Meiners, & Quinn, 2011; Pema & Mehay, 2010). “Nationwide, 54 percent of JROTC cadets have ‘minority status” (Bartlett & Lutz, 1998, p. 126) and 40 percent are females” (Pema & Mehay, 2010). JROTC programs had a reputation for providing discipline and instilling a work ethic responsibility to at-risk students. A concern for this at-risk label was that “many educators have noted, the ‘at-risk’ label was a racially coded” (Bartlett & Lutz, 1998, p. 126); a term that has been “applied to students (often black and male) … without specification of what risk the student runs” (Bartlett & Lutz, 1998, p. 126).

JROTC and Academic Achievement

When looking at evidence to support the effectiveness of JROTC on academic performance the research was limited, yet reports reviewed for this study were in favor of JROTC programs. In a study completed by Elliott et al. (2001), as cited in Gallagher (2007), the focus was on 27,490 students in urban high school JROTC programs, academies, and magnet schools. The study found that, “students had better attendance, grades, and graduation rates than students in a general academic track” (Elliott et al., 2001, p. 15). Gallagher (2007) reported on a study within the Denver Public Schools; which showed that students within JROTC programs were stronger leaders, good communicators, goal oriented, disciplined, and more focused and successful academically (Gallagher, 2007, p. 10). Another study of 154 high school JROTC students, which compared them with 142 ROTC college seniors, found that having JROTC and ROTC training at the high school and college levels was meaningful and worthwhile concerning academic focus and leadership skills among both groups of participants (Demoulin & Ritter, 2000). The study reported traits such as maturity; character development, and respect for our country's democracy increased through the implementation of JROTC and ROTC programs (Demoulin & Ritter, 2000). The increased skill level within these areas, reportedly, had positive academic and personal growth outcome for the participants (Demoulin & Ritter, 2000). Further results suggested these skills were often lacking in the public school system (Demoulin & Ritter, 2000). The review of literature indicated JROTC program effectiveness led to steady increase of these programs within schools. Parents wanting an alternative form of education enrolled their children in military style high schools and schools that offered JROTC (Gahr, 1999). "The majority of military high schools claimed that 95% of their graduates continue on to college" (Gallagher, 2007, p. 37).

The National Guard created the Youth ChalleNGe Program in 1993, for at-risk youth between the ages of 16 through 18 (Price, 2008). The National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program functions as a 17-month residential education and training program geared towards youth who have not been successful in a traditional high school setting (Bloom, Gardenhire-Crooks, & Mandsager, 2009; Millenky, Bloom, & Dillon, 2010). The operation of military style training, from various military branches such as the National Guard and JROTC's Air Force, have partnered with schools (Bloom et al., 2009). Military-style drills and discipline, along with the promotion of leadership and citizenship development, has been a component of the program intention (Bloom et al. , 2009). The program reports practices as being beneficial to young people in the areas of academics, social transition into adulthood, leadership capacities, and overall healthy well-being (Bloom et al., 2009; Millenky, Bloom, & Dillon, 2010). Eighty percent of the program participants are male youth who have been expelled from, or dropped out of, school (Bloom et al., 2009). Twenty-seven states facilitated the ChalleNGe program, at the cost of $14,000 per participant in tax dollars (Bloom et al., 2009; Millenky, Bloom, & Dillon, 2010).

The National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program was developed to include three phases: phase one is an intensive two-week introduction to the program; phase two is a 20-week residential activity, which consisted of a quasi-military experience with focus on GED completion or high school course work (Bloom et al., 2009; Millenky, Bloom, & Dillon, 2010). The third and final year phase was a structured, mentored period, which prepared the participants with skills and mindset for success upon re-entry into their communites (Bloom et al., 2009; Millenky, Bloom, & Dillon, 2010). The ChalleNGe Program reported, “7,000 graduates, roughly 58 percent were employed, and 26 percent returned to high school or enrolled in vocational school or college” (Price, 2008, p. 30). Military-style education, along with training had the reputation for being able to reach and teach students that were not successful in traditional school settings (Price, 2007, 2008). Programs such as JROTC and the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program shared similar components of belonging, teamwork, motivation and self-discipline, along with education of the whole child, which led to participant and program success (Price, 2007).

There are critics who disagreed with positive reports of the effectiveness of JROTC programs. In the article “Racism and Conscription in the JROTC,” Berlowitz (2000) rejected the claim that JROTC promotes academic success. The article reported that no quantifiable data exists to support the claim that JROTC programs improved student academic achievement (Berlowitz, 2000). It has been the opinion of this author that many students within urban school settings rate their school low. Many of these students do not believe they are attending a school with a positive climate. When JROTC programs were offered within school settings, students viewed JROTC as the only positive program within the school that provided them with a structured system to be successful after high school (Berlowitz, 2000).

Lutz and Bartlett (1995) also criticized the JROTC program for its lack of providing quantifiable data to explain the programs reported effectiveness (Jordan, 2003). Lutz and Bartlett reported while there are claims that state the program “prepare[s] minority and low-income students for adult success, neither dropout rates nor adult job attainment and wage levels have been measured and compared” (para.7). According to Bartlett and Lutz (1998), three of the military branches have not collected data on high school dropout rates and job attainment. Further concern was given to the program curriculum and instructional practices, which were written and facilitated by JROTC instructors, who may not be required to have the same certification as a content area classroom teacher (Anderson, 2009; Bartlett & Lutz, 1998; Lutz & Bartlett, 1995). The military holds the status of “a federal institution” (Lutz & Bartlett, 1995, para. 19) and the JROTC curriculum due to the label of “nationally validated curriculum” (Lutz & Bartlett, 1995, para. 19) has not been under the same review and governing by school districts as regular content area curriculum (Bartlett & Lutz, 1998; Lutz & Bartlett, 1995). Military drill required 33 instructional hours while American history has been written into the curriculum for less than 10 hours (Bartlett &Lutz, 1998).

Other critics look to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001(NCLB), which grants in Section 9528, military recruiter access to secondary schools as a way in which education reform can be used to guide students into the recruitment cycle (Anderson, 2009; Anderson, 2011; Jordan, 2003). According to Section 9528 of NCLB, budget cuts in federal funding to non-compliant public schools could occur (Anderson, 2009; Anderson, 2001). Furthermore, school based recruiters, in the past, have glamorized military life with flashy vehicles, entertainment, and travel, yet delayed the truth about the risk and reality of military life (Anderson, 2001 Jordan, 2003). Million dollar marketing strategies have developed and filtered through military schools and JROTC programs, with a sole purpose for potential recruitment of participants into the military (Galaviz et al., 2011). The contribution of JROTC recruits into the military entering a branch of government was close to 45% (Lutz & Bartlett, 1995).

Current public education systems, more specifically urban low-income schools, have experienced challenges and threats to the academic achievement of students (Bemak, Chung, & Siroskey-Sabo, 2005; Price, 2008). A spokesperson for Intel Corporation, a leading company in technology innovation stated, “the biggest ticking time bomb in the U.S. is the sorry state of our K-12 education system” (Price, 2007, p. 1). The structured framework of systems delivered in military style within JROTC programs contributed to student participant success (Berlowitz, 2000). “Educators must be open to new methods that have succeeded with young people in other settings” (Price, 2008, p.

34). The military has developed ways to re-direct and uncover the hidden potential within student participation within JROTC programs. JROTC programs are not public education reform tools, however these programs do provide a nurturing environment that is becoming less evident in the public school environment (Elliott et al., 2001).

Student Athletic Participation and Academic Achievement

An often debated and researched topic has been that of athletic participation and its relationship to academic achievement (Hartmann, 2008). A vast body of research, suggested athletic participation promoted positive academic achievement, (Barron, Ewing, & Waddell, 2000; Broh, 2002; Fox, Barr-Anderson, Neumark-Sztainer, & Wall, 2010; Hartmann, 2008; Jordan, 1999; Klesse & D'Onofrio, 2000; Marsh, 1993; Miller, Melnick, Barnes, Farrell, & Sabo, 2005; Rehberg & Schafer, 1968; Tracy & Erkut, 2002; Videon, 2002) while the opposition argued that athletic participation was a barrier to optimum academic success (Hartmann, 2008; Hartzell & Picou, 1973).

Although research on sports participation within schools and the positive relationship on academic achievement are abundant, there are critiques of this view. Hartzell and Picou (1973) reported, critics of sports participation within schools argue, the "activities have negative consequences for educational pursuits" (p. 12), and participation has been "thought to be detrimental to the academic development of the individual" (p.12). "The time, energy, and finances allocated…are criticized for subverting the basic goals of education" (Hartzell & Picou, 1973, p. 12). On average, the "student athletes spend up to 20 hours every week" (Cutler, 2009, p. 6) mastering and developing their athletic ability, however the average student spends only four hours a week on academic development (Swanbrow, 2004). Similarly, Coalter (2005) stated, "there is no definitive evidence of a positive, causal relationship between physical activity/sport and academic achievement" (p. 15).

In Coleman's (1961) work titled *The Adolescent Society*, he discussed sports activities among students being a diminishing factor towards academic success and the academic mission of the institution of education. The time and effort which student athletes devoted to athletic development become secondary to their academic pursuits (Coleman, 1961; Dawkins, Braddock, & Celaya, 2008). Research has revealed the positive and negative effects of sports participation in correlation to academic achievement among urban students (Fisher, Juszczak, & Friedman, 1996). According to one study, "no specific relationship [exist] between sports participation and academic performance" (Fisher et al., 1996, p. 333). Results of the study revealed, time devoted to sports participation did not "detract from homework or studying, nor did it enhance motivation" (Fisher et al., 1996, p. 333).

Goldberg and Chandler (1995) reported on the lack of social interactions that athletes have, due to their rigorous practice schedule commitments. Student-athletes face developmental issues due to inadequately being able to "balance conflicting roles [of student and athlete], values, and expectations" (para. 6). Many high school student athletes fall under the "make –believe world where normal rules don't apply" (Bissinger, 2000, p. xiv) spell or engage in the myth that sports and playing professionally has been the only option for success (Lapchick, 1989; Parmer, 1993). "Student athletes are only engaged in academics for the sole purpose of keeping academically eligible to play" (Dawkins et al., 2008). High school athletes, in particular African –American and other minorities, are enrolled into classes, which keep them eligible to play (Lapchick, 1989).

Students who are not academically engaged, display insignificant participation, apathy, and lack the motivational interest that has been required for “active involvement, commitment, and concentrated attention” (Newman, 1992, p. 12) needed for a purposeful and meaningful educational experience. The lack of active involvement by some student athletes transfers over into a lack of preparedness for the academic rigors of college and life beyond (Baldwin, 2001; Goldberg & Chandler, 1995). Confirmation of the inadequacy for being academically prepared, is when “the illiteracy rate for high school football and basketball players was estimated to be... 25 to 30 percent” (Lapchick, 1989, p. 12).

Evidence of this behavior was within the Participation in Sports-Impedes-Mobility Hypothesis, which states, “involvement in athletics decreases interest in academic engagement and reduces aspirations for pursuing success through educational attainment” (Dawkins et al., 2008, p. 52). The professional sports career aspirations for African American student athletes was dependent upon being in compliance with mandated rules and regulation, which required the athlete “to (a) maintain eligibility to play, (b) graduate from high school and (c) meet college entrance requirements” (Dawkins et al., 2008, p. 54). The pursuit of athletic eligibility and the retreat from academic empowerment drove young athletes falsely to “the dream that they will beat the 10,000 to 1 odds and become pro” (Lapchick, 1989, p. 5). Realizing that this perspective limits a true indulgence within the academic experience, the only intent has been to have the student “excel as an athlete” (Dawkins et al., 2008, p. 55). Defined by Parmer (1993), “The athletic dream is the desire of African American [youth] to pursue super stardom through athletics, [and] provides an easy and quick path to success and mobility” (p.

132). For African American students to gain the fruitful benefits of being a solid student-athlete, a stable bridge must exist between academics and athletics (Dawkins et al., 2008). Much of the research supporting sports participation's relationship to positive academic performance, have been reactive responses to Coleman's (1961) discussions of the negative correlations.

> Developmental theorist argue that athletic participation contributes to better academic performance by developing skills, habits, and values transferable to the classroom; integrating students into a prosocial network of adults and peers; providing tangible incentives to stay in school and get good grades; and increasing commitment to school. (as cited in Miller et al., 2005, p.187)

A study analysis conducted by Broh (2002), in which 24,599 students were surveyed in the eighth grade and then again in the 10th and 12th grade revealed data related to student participation in sports and the effect on academic achievement. Broh noted that, "playing school sports boosts student's achievement in the classroom" (p. 81). According to Broh, student involvement in extracurricular sports activities, leads to leadership and character development, which, as reported by Rehberg (1969), increased "competitive spirit and desire to win which is learned on the playing field [and] is carried over into the classroom" (p. 69). Acquisition of character and leadership development skills was due in part to the athletes' exposure to role models and coaches within leadership roles (Dobosz & Beaty, 1999).

Athletes who are team captains or lead game starters take on leadership roles when motivating and encouraging team members to perform for the greater good of the team (Dobosz & Beaty, 1999). This "competitive spirit and desire" (Rehberg, 1969, p.

69) transfers into the classroom, “in the form of a desire for better grades, [and] a better education” (p. 69). Broh (2002) further reported that student participation in sports leads to “a strong work ethic, respect for authority, and perseverance” (p. 71). The skills gained from sports participation “are consistent with educational values and thus helps students achieve” (Broh, 2002, p. 71). The association between sports participation and academic performance has been positive (Fox et al., 2010; Hartmann, 2008; Jordan, 1999; Nail, 2007). “Educators … argue that athletic participation develops many basic values such as self-esteem and self-respect and denying the opportunity to participate…[is] denying a valid educational opportunity” (Burnett, 2001, p. 2). Student engagement has been the basis for effective learning, and extracurricular sports activities are the magnets for keeping school relevant to students for continued attendance (Burnett, 2001; Eccles & Barber, 1999; Samel, Sondergeld, Fischer, & Patterson, 2011). The development of “self-confidence, self-respect, self-esteem and competitive spirit” (Burnett, 2001, p. 5) “was a vital part of the educative process…[which led to the] education of the ‘whole child” (Burnett, 2001, p. 2).

A study conducted by Grissom (2005) concluded that students, which were physically fit and active in a physical education program, showed improvement on standardized achievement test. This study suggested, “participation in sports may build self-confidence, assertiveness, and critical-thinking skills” (Anderson, 2001, p. 11), contributing factors that are transferable to the classroom and could lead to an improvement of the athletic student’s academic achievement even beyond high school (Miller et al., 2005). Documented data existed stating participation in physical activity was beneficial to a mental and physical well-being, and adolescents that engage in sports recreation have healthier mental health and self-esteem development (Darling, 2005; Eccles & Barber, 1999; Jordan, 1999; Nail, 2007; Tracy & Erkut, 2002). This increase in self-esteem was credited to the skills and habits that emerged from athletic involvement and sports participation, further leading to an increase in academic achievement and career goals (Barron et al., 2000; Broh, 2002; Hartmann, 2008; Jordan, 1999; Klesse & D'Onofrio, 2000; Marsh, 1993; Miller et al., 2005; Rehberg & Schafer, 1968; Tracy & Erkut, 2002). It has become increasingly apparent through research, that these students "perform better academically than their non-athletic peers" (Hartmann, 2008, p. 5) and sustain this academic performance throughout their education (Miller et al., 2005).

Researchers have proposed reasons as to why participation in high school sports leads to better academic success. Maintaining academic eligibility in order to play sports along with a greater involvement among coaches, school staff, and parents, are at the forefront of student athletes performing better academically (Jordan, 1999; Pearson et al., 2009; Snyder & Spreitzer, 1990). With the establishment of the no pass-no play policy, (Lapchick, 1989) requiring student athletes to maintain a certain grade point average to be eligible for athletic participation, "Rules about 'no pass, no play' may further motivate school athletes to do well" (Pearson et al., 2009). Burnett (2001) added, the "no pass, no play" policy functions as "a motivational tool, providing the incentive for students to 'pull up' their grades" (p. 2). Another suggestion as to why student athletes perform better academically was the report of students enrolling within non-demanding courses in exchange for higher grades (Lapchick, 1989; Marsh, 1993; Otto, 1982; Pearson et al., 2009). Requiring academic eligibility as a prerequisite to play encourages student athletes to attend school regularly and earn better grades (Burnett, 2001; Jordan, 1999;

Lapchick, 1989; Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1986). In addition, participants in high school sports, “are better ‘connected’ to school when involved in activities” (Showalter, 2008, p. 9), and are surrounded by supportive mentors and coaches that “make a good connection” for building healthy relationships with the students” (Showalter, 2008, p. 9). Healthy supportive connections among student athletes, teachers, coaches, and mentors create a supportive base for sustained academic achievement (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Hawkins et al., 1992; Jordan, 1999).

Rehberg (1969) discussed the notion of a high school “leading crowd” (p. 77) and stated that some high school students were often times validated when they become members of this crowd (as cited in Steven, 1978, p. 437). Being looked upon as an athlete, gains entry, and membership into the leading crowd (Rehberg, 1969; Steven, 1978). When indoctrination into this crowd occurred, “athletes [were] somewhat more likely than non-athletes to receive higher grades and have higher educational expectations because athletes [were] more likely than non-athletes to gain membership in the achievement –oriented leading crowd” (Rehberg, 1969, p. 77). If a struggle occurred among the high school athlete to choose between “groups with different sets of value expectations or between immediate popularity and activities that will lead to achieving long-term goals” (Goldberg & Chandler, 1995), the onset of identity confusion and success of entry into the leading crowd could be threatened (Rehberg, 1969).

When examining the findings for Caucasian and African American student athletes, a study done by Hartzell and Picou (1973) revealed a positive athletic and academic relationship between both student groups. African American and Caucasian female and male participants of interscholastic sports reported to “have positive consequences for educational values and ambition" (Hartzell & Picou, 1973, p. 13) for continuing throughout high school (Hartzell & Picou, 1973). The distinction to this finding was that Caucasian student athletes ambition for advanced degrees were based on both involvement and achievement, and the ambition for African American student athletes was limited to achievement only (Hartzell & Picou, 1973). However, Pearson et al. (2009) reported a difference among African American and Caucasian students. Caucasian students that participated in sports had stronger academic outcomes when compared to African American students (Eitle, 2005; Pearson et al., 2009). "This difference may be due in part to differential access to sports as well as divergent educational opportunities and contexts for adolescents of different racial/ethnic backgrounds" (Pearson et al., 2009, p. 520). Research has not suggested, participation in different sports genres may produce different academic and beneficial outcomes for both race and gender (Eitle, 2005). In addition, research exists providing support in favor of constructive extracurricular sports, other activities and the benefits in which high school students' gain from participation (Barber, Eccles, & Stone, 2001; McNeal, 1988; Samel et al., 2011).

The Urban High School, Student, Academic Achievement

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) defined urban school districts as "territory inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city with [a] population of 250,000 or more" (Office of Management and Budget, 2000). The urban school, according to Bell (1979), was described as a cyclic energy drain that led to a feeling of powerlessness and frustration of those within. Kozol (1991), in *Savage Inequalities* described American's public urban schools as crumbling infrastructures that were inadequately resourced, surrounded by a dilapidated unsafe and unhealthy environment. The challenges which urban schools face are a result of external community conditions, such as “racial segregation, unemployment, high crime rate, large number of families on welfare, … substandard housing, numerous communication problems with agencies such as the police, school, social welfare, employment and health and family services” (Bell, 1979, p. 66). These challenges are experienced daily and become “cumulative” (Sheppard, 2006, p. 612). Billet and Rand Corp (1978), on the existence of poverty stricken urban schools stated, “The education, or rather the un-education, of black children from low-income families [was] undoubtedly the greatest disaster area in public education and its most devastating failure” (p. 27).

The excuse of shifting blame to external entities was often used by urban schools, “instead of systematically assessing their programs and modifying them to meet the needs of students” (Bell, 1979, p. 67). Meeting the needs of students within an urban setting has been a challenging commitment and many urban schools lacked “the expertise needed to respond adequately to present conditions” (Bell, 1979, p. 69). Along with increasing student achievement, many urban schools were under the pressure of No Child Left Behind (NCLB Act of 2001) to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), along with closing the achievement gap. AYP, which is defined by NCLB, requires districts and their schools to meet the requirements of “yearly targets, known as annual measurable objectives (AMOs), set by their state for the percentages of students scoring proficient on state tests and other performance indicators” (Usher, 2012, p. 2). During the 2010-2011 school year the state of Illinois, the study’s researched state, 67% of its 3,807 schools failed to meet AYP (Usher, 2012). Again, in the 2009-2010 school year, Illinois schools had more than 50% of its schools miss the mark for meeting AYP (Usher, 2012). The achievement gap was defined as, “The difference between how well low-income and minority children perform on standardized tests as compared with their peers” (Achievement Gap, 2004). Yearly consistent findings in research literature reports, minority low-income students continue to academically fall behind non-minority students (Belluck, 1999; Fram, 2007; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Rojas-LeBouef & Slate, 2012) and lack high expectations from teachers for academic success (Belluck, 1999; Fram, 2007; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Samel et al., 2011; Steele, 2004). According to research, “compared to schools in more affluent neighborhoods, the urban schools where Black students are often concentrated tend to have... classes taught by less experienced...instructors” (Griffin, 2006, para. 8), “less well-credentialed teachers” (Fram, 2007 p. 316) and inconsistent support and encouragement from adults within the school (Samel, Sondergeld, Fischer, & Patterson, 2011; Sandy & Duncan, 2010; Steele, 2004). Research showed in order to close the achievement gap between groups of students; highly qualified teachers must be employed by urban schools (Rojas-LeBouef & Slate, 2012). Highly qualified teachers meet the criteria of, securing an undergraduate degree, being state certified in the location they teach, and having the skills and competency in their subject and content area (NCLB Act of 2001). A “study found that measures of teacher preparation and certification were by far the strongest correlates of student achievement in reading and mathematics” (Darling-Hammond, 2002a, p. 47). Teachers who have more experience and stronger qualification, in line with the NCLB definition of a highly qualified teacher, lead to improved student learning and increased student achievement (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, Rockoff, & Wyckoff, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2002a).

The ability to attract and retain quality teachers who are effective in the delivery of, “instructional strategies to motivate and interest [urban] students” (Bell, 1979, p. 69) has been a constant challenge for urban schools (Lee, 2005; Swanson, 2004; Truscott & Roden, 2006). Securing certified teachers that are committed to the urban student, continues to “reach monumental proportions” (Truscott & Roden, 2006, p. 102) when “nearly half of the teachers leave within three years” (Truscott & Roden, 2006, p. 102). Teacher turnover rate has been high among urban school settings due to ineffective and inconsistent professional development in “being prepared to teach children from culturally and economically impoverished environments” (Bell, 1979, p. 69). The ability to relate to the racial cultural and economic differences between student and teacher has been challenging for the teacher who comes from outside of the urban setting (Darling-Hammond, 2002a; Truscott & Roden, 2006). A predicted need for an increase in urban teachers was reported by Truscott and Roden (2006), “Urban districts [will] need to hire 700,000 new teachers in the coming decade to maintain current class sizes, given projected enrollments” (p. 102).

Various research defined the urban student as one, challenged by many obstacles which lead to a “lack [of] motivation to learn” (Chung, n.d.), has fewer opportunities for acquiring purposeful and meaningful academic skills, and live within an environment where the quality of life and overall health is horrifically low (Bell, 1979; Constantine et al, 1998; Noguera, 2011; Samel et al., 2011; Sandy & Duncan, 2010; Scanlon et al., 2008; Sirin, Diemer, Jackson, Gonslaves, & Howell, 2004; Storer et al, 2012; Uwah, McMahon, & Furlow, 2008). Toxic community environment, disruptive family life, dysfunctional school environment, and ineffective transitioning periods from one grade to the next, constitute the urban student (Cooper & Liou, 2007; Samel et al., 2011). Urban students have entered the pillars of education with a pre-existing achievement gap, often a three-year gap, prior to elementary school and enter high school reading at elementary levels of third and fourth grade (Bell, 1979; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Talbert, 2011). African American low-income students entered kindergarten "on average already far behind their more advantaged peers in reading and math readiness" (Haskins & Rouse, 2005, p. 1). It is further reported, the achievement gap was first detected in preschool, the Early Childhood Education Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Cohort, noted minority students entered kindergarten with a much lower I.Q test score than non-minority kindergarten students (Haskins & Rouse, 2005). This gap continues to be evident upon students entering the first grade though the third grade (Rojas-LeBouef & Slate, 2012). Using the California Achievement Test (CAT) to analyze the math performance of first and third grade students (Rojas-LeBouef & Slate, 2012) researchers found, African American students underperformed Caucasian students by 6 points in math while in the first grade, and by 14 points during the third grade year (Rojas-LeBouef & Slate, 2012). Researchers have found, the achievement gap between minority and non-minority students to be "as large in better-funded schools as in poorly funded schools" (Steele, 2004).

Urban students have been enveloped within a community that is ineffective and deficit of providing supportive role models that students can view as positive mentors and motivators (Kozol, 1991; Scanlon et al., 2008). This lack of support has led the urban student to being incapable and unclear about making advantageous career and life choices (Honora, 2002; Scanlon et al., 2008). Research revealed, students that come from economically unstable communities and socially disconnected families, "avoid planning their future or exhibit uncertainty regarding the future" (Honora, 2002, p. 303) due to their need to focus on surviving the present (Honora, 2002), often filled with distractions. Students within an urban setting focus on immediate needs relevance (Bell, 1979). For these students, the needs are becoming "independent, self-reliant and survival oriented, early in life" (Bell, 1979, p. 66). "Therefore like suburban students who attend schools in a safe and pleasant environment, where learning is the only priority; learning is not the primary concern for urban students" (Chung, n.d., "Conclusion," para. 4).

Addy and Wight (2012), writing for The National Center for Children in Poverty, reported 24 million adolescents within the population age of 12 through 17 with close to 10 million living in low-income families, and 4.5 million living in poor families (Addy & Wight, 2012). According to The Condition of Education report in 2011, a 15 to 19% increase of adolescents living in poverty occurred from 2000 to 2009, with the largest increase occurring from 2008 to 2009 with a 2% increase within a year (Aud et al., 2011).

The state of Illinois reported a 4.6% increase for families living in poverty from 13.4% in 2000 to 18% in 2009 (Aud et al., 2011). As shown in Figure 2, to support a family of four with basic needs, a needed income of $44,700 was required; however the poverty level income for a family of four was $22,350 (Addy & Wight, 2012).

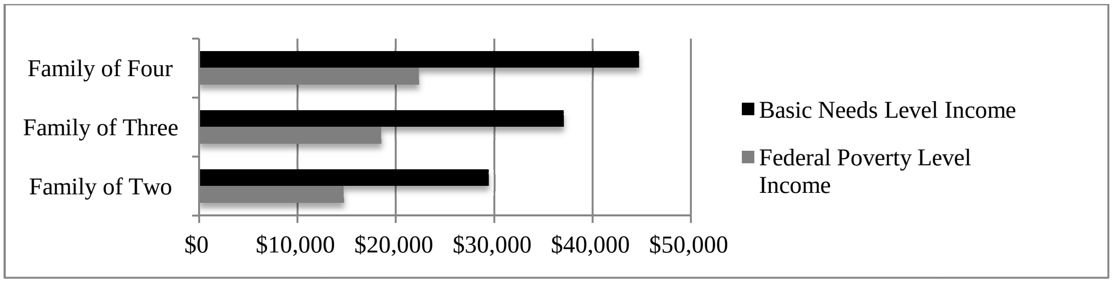

Figure 1. Comparison of Basic Needs Income to Poverty Level Income.
Note: Adapted from "Basic Facts About Low-income Children, 2010: Children Ages 6 Through 11," by S. Addy, S. D., & Wight, V. 2012, *National Center for Children in Poverty*, p. 2.

Urban schools and rural schools had the highest number of students who have received free or reduced lunches (Lippman et al., 1996). "The percentage of students receiving free or reduced price lunch in school is the measure of school poverty" (Lippman et al., 1996, p. 7) and the "measure of the economic well-being of children is the socioeconomic status...of their families" (Lippman et al., 1996, p. 6).

The literature linking successful academic achievement with high levels of parental school involvement was bountiful (Deslandes, Royer, Turcotte, & Bertrand, 1997; Furger & George Lucas Educational Foundation, 2006; Henderson, Mapp, & Southwest Educational Development Lab, 2002; LaRocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011; Marcon, 1999; Sanders, Epstein, & Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk, 1998; Stevenson & Baker, 1987; Westmoreland, Rosenberg, Lopez, Weiss, & Harvard Family Research, 2009; Zellman & Waterman, 1998). What is not bountiful was the frequency of involvement, in which low-income urban parents display with regards to their child's education (Benson & Martin, 2003; Trotman, 2001). The more education a parent obtains the less likely the child will be raised within poverty; and experience low education expectations from their parents (Akee, Copeland, Keeler, Angold, & Costello, 2010; Bumpers et al., 2005; Duncan, Morris, & Rodrigues, 2011;

Kiernan & Mensah, 2011; Rojas-LeBouef & Slate, 2012; Samel et al., 2011; Storer et al., 2012). High poverty rates were a contributing factor to low parent involvement in a students' academic experience, however increased parental involvement heightens academic achievement among urban students (Benson & Martin, 2003; Trotman, 2001). A generalization for the low-income parent has been the lack of not having anything of significance to contribute to the discussion on students' academic achievement due to not valuing education (Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006; Trotman, 2001).

The numbers for parents of adolescents living in poverty were severe, "81 percent of adolescents with parents who have less than a high school degree…live in low-income families [and] 58 percent of adolescents with parents who have no more than a high school degree…live in low-income families (Addy & Wight, 2012, p. 5). Educational expectations and involvement from parents were predictors of how well students will academically perform in school (Bridgeland, DiIulio, & Morison, 2006; Hayes, 2011; Trotman, 2001). Educational engagements for students were relatively high when a parent has completed education beyond high school (Addy &Wight, 2012; Samel et al., 2011). "Despairingly, some teachers and school administrators equate the parents' level of education to the amount of time parents will invest in their child's education" (Trotman, 2001, para. 22). Parents of students within urban schools exercised lower expectations when compared to suburban students parental expectations, however when urban students parental expectations were compared to rural parent expectations, the former experienced higher expectations (Lippman et al., 1996). The expectation of a child finishing high school and attending college was low with the child living in a high poverty family structure, and to further this concern, the high poverty family structure was less engaging on topics of school nature (Bumpers et al., 2005; Lippman et al., 1996).

Few studies reported high parental involvement resulting in high student academic success in urban communities; what was reported were the parental aspirations for their child (Halle & Kurtz-Costes, 1997; Hayes, 2011; Trotman, 2001). A study among urban African American families with varying socioeconomic levels, to determine parental involvement in home and school, revealed parent level of involvement and educational aspirations were not disengaged due to socioeconomic status (Hayes, 2011). Research showed the levels of involvement in which African American urban families displayed were low when compared to others, however expectations that parents have for their children were high in number and level (Halle & Kurtz-Costes, 1997; Trotman, 2001). The study further uncovered, “ that all parents, regardless of their background, have the ability to actively engage their high school adolescents ” (Hayes, 2011, p. 164), when discussing expectations (Hayes, 2011). Overstreet, Devine, Bevans, & Efreom (2005) conducted a similar study of urban African American parents and determined those parents with consistent employment and educational aspirations for themselves, in turn had higher school involvement practices and educational aspirations for their own children.

According to Stillwell, Sable, Plotts, and National Center for Education Statistics (2011), throughout the United States “3,039,015 public school students received a high school diploma in 2008-09” (p. 3) the percent being 75.5 (Aud et al., 2011; Chapman, Laird, Ifill, KewalRamani, & National Center for Education Statistics, 2011; Stillwell et al., 2011). Greene and Forster (2003), using the Greene Method for graduation rate with data collected by the U.S. Department of Education’s Common Core of Data (CCD), a data clearinghouse from the state departments of education containing student enrollment per grade and diplomas given each year, conducted a study of public high school 2001 graduation rates nationwide. The research focused on three areas, the graduation rate, completion of college requirement courses and college readiness skills (Greene & Forster, 2003). Greene and Foster estimated, the “graduation rate for the class of 2001 to be 70%...with 32% of those graduating being qualified to attend college (pp. 8-9). The graduation rate for Caucasian students was 72% and 51% for African-American students (Greene & Forster, 2003). Of the 70%, that graduated, 39% of Caucasian students had received a regular diploma and had completed college requirement courses, comparing only 25% of African American students that had met both criteria (Greene & Forster, 2003). When looking at students who met these criteria, receiving a diploma, completion of college requirement courses and college readiness skills, the national rate was 32% for students having met all three criteria (Greene & Forster, 2003). Comparing this national rate to Caucasian and African American students the numbers are cause for concern with 37% for the former above the national rate and 20% for the latter below the national rate (Greene & Forster, 2003). Similar studies done in 2001, report over 75% of Caucasian students graduate from high school with a diploma and only 50% of African American students graduate with a diploma (Orfield, Losen, Wald, & Swanson, 2004; Swanson, 2004).

The 2008 report titled, “Closing the Graduation Gap,” documents “55.3 percent of African-Americans graduate with a regular diploma. Of those students who do graduate one-third, are unprepared for college-level academics” (Youth Transition Funders Group, 2008, p. 4). It was further noted, in addition to students exiting without a diploma, many of these students leave “in earlier grades and at lower skill levels — some even too low to be able to take the GED” (Youth Transition Funders Group, 2008, p. 4). Disturbingly these same students “often become ‘disconnected youth’ with low literacy skills and few employment opportunities” (Youth Transition Funders Group, 2008, p. 24). In a research study conducted by Orfield et al. (2004), it was found that for the year 2001 the state of Illinois, had a graduation rate of 75% which was above the 68% national average (Orfield et al., 2004, p. 34). When looking at the graduation racial gap, the numbers take a drastic decline with 82.9% for Caucasian students and 47.8% for African American students (Orfield et al., 2004, p. 34).

Research does exist uncovering inconsistencies within reports supporting the low graduation rates and high dropout rates of African American students. Mishel and Roy (2006) referred to the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) which estimated between 69% -75% of African American students received a high school diploma and the dropout rate for this group of students to be 25% instead of the debated 50%. They further reported the racial gap among Caucasian and African American students for high school completion through diploma or GED, between the years of 1980-2004 had closed from, 10.3% to 5% (Mishel & Roy, 2006, p. 4). Within their findings they concluded the minority graduation rates to be closer to 75 %, rather than the numerously reported 50% claimed by other researchers (Mishel & Roy, 2006).

The National Center for Education Statistics reported in 2009 on the percentage of 18-24 year old students who left high school in 2007 and completed the degree or obtained a General Educational Development (GED) certificate (Cataldi, KewalRamani,

& National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). The completion for Caucasian students was 93.5% degree or equivalent and 88.8% for African American students (Cataldi et al., 2009, p. 8). The same study looked at the percent of 16-24 year old students who were not enrolled in school, dropped out of high school, and did not have high school credentials. It was reported that 5.3% Caucasian students left school without completion and 8.4% African American students left school without completion (Cataldi et al., 2009, p. 7).

However consistent or inconsistent the data, the reality exists through numerous studies which supports; students attending urban schools have been exiting out of school early, graduating lower than the national rate, not graduating at the rate of their peers in suburban schools, and not graduating with the same skill and content knowledge for postsecondary education (Baldwin, 2001; Bridgeland et al., 2006; Greene & Forster, 2003; Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; Lippman et al., 1996; Orfield et al., 2004; Patterson, Hale, & Stessman 2007; Roderick, Nagaoka, & Coca, 2009; Samel et al., 2011; Storer et al., 2012; Swanson, 2004; Venezia, Kirst, & Antonio, 2004).

Graduation percentage gap inconsistencies exist between Caucasian and African American students depending on the data source and methods used for determination, the numbers can range “from 50 to 85 percent” (Heckman & LaFontaine, 2010, p. 3). Consistent, has been the many research documents reporting a lower graduation rate for African Americans when compared to Caucasians (Baldwin, 2001; Bridgeland et al., 2006; Cataldi et al., 2009; Greene & Forster, 2003; Heckman & LaFontaine, 2010; Mishel & Roy, 2006; Orfield et al., 2004; Patterson et al., 2007; Sloan et al., 2011; Swanson, 2004; Tapscott, 2008; Youth Transition Funders Group, 2008). Leaving high school without a diploma leads to a downward spiral for potential unemployment, low socioeconomic level of living, “and relying on public assistance...severe health problems and increased criminal activity” (Plank, DeLuca, & Estacion, 2008).

The economic returns of education are evident when research shows, “high school dropouts earn $9,200 less per year than high school graduates” (Bridgeland et al., 2006, p. 2) and college graduates earn “$23,00 more than a high school graduate” (Scanlon et al., 2008, p. 161). The median income for those not obtaining a high school degree is $24,000 (Cataldi et al., 2009, p. 1). Significantly larger salaries have been seen when an individual has obtained an associate’s degree, the salary is $30,774, and an individual with the completion of a college degree has the potential to earn over $40,000 (Cataldi et al., 2009; Malone, 2006; Venezia et al., 2004). Within the urban community these low graduation, high dropout rates, along with low wage earnings have become the normality within its high schools (Patterson et al., 2007) and a solid foundation for postsecondary educational opportunities for urban high school students is disconnected (Cooper & Liou, 2007; Venezia et al., 2004). Establishing a bridge to transition and connect these students that have “had their education ‘interrupted,” (Youth Transition Funders Group, 2008, p. 10) is a challenge for the already systemically fragmented urban school (Kozol, 1991; Venezia et al., 2004). Urban high schools lack relevant coursework and connections to the world of work (Baldwin, 2001). A pattern continues to emerge which research supports explaining why students exit school early. A lack of engagement, lack of relevancy to real world, boredom, and environmental factors along with a paradigm shift in how students respond to learning were the reason students are leaving school before graduation (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Tapscott, 2008).

Tapscott (2008) in his work titled *Grown Up Digital*, discussed two generations of youth, “Net Geners” (p. 122) those that are a part of the most technologically advanced and educated generation that have grown up digital and those who have also grown up digital but are a part of the 33% high school drop-out rate (Tapscott, 2008). They use and manipulate technology and gadgets with no difficulties, while engaging in social media outlets, face time, and instant messages for communicating. These are the same students who can create, customize, and “change the media world around them” (Tapscott, 2008, p. 34), they influence the purchasing of products through recommendations instead of print marketing and advertising (Tapscott, 2008). Yet the Net Geners are a “shallow, distracted generation that can’t focus on anything” (Tapscott, 2008, p. 3). “They don’t read and are poor communicators...time online is reflected in the schools...where they perform badly” (Tapscott, 2008, p. 3).

In Tapscott’s (2008) remembrance of a speech given by Amherst College president Anthony Marx, with regards to the “re-segregation” (p. 125) of schools, “by race, class, and outcomes”(p. 125), Marx made relevance to the reality of urban school funding inadequacies and the urban student being inadequately prepared educationally for college. Evidence of this was noted with the disturbing graduation rate gap in 2004 between “57.8%” African American students graduating and “76%” Caucasian students graduating (Tapscott, 2008, p. 126). Furthermore, “both the number and content of courses taken in high school make a difference in the performance in college entrance examinations, college participation, and college success for...minority and low- income students” (Bumpers et al., 2005, p. 1).

Deepening concern “is that approximately half of the students entering college take remedial courses; 40 percent of students in four-year institutions take some remedial education as compared with 63 percent at two-year institutions” (Venezia et al., 2004, p. 8). The reading level of an African American 12th grade student was equivalent to an eighth grade Caucasian student. This by itself creates reasons for college remedial courses due to the student being inadequately prepared for postsecondary education. Research tells us, “remedial courses (particularly in math or reading) negatively influences the chance that one will obtain a bachelor’s degree” (Venezia et al., 2004, p. 10).

Tapscott (2008) offered insight into a possible solution for the re-engagement of high school students. The new generations of students as Tapscott termed Net-Geners, want to be a part of the conversation, “they want a choice in their education, in terms of what they learn...and how” (p. 126) with the teacher playing the role of facilitator, and not lecturer. Students that have their education tailored to their needs and style of learning are more confident and motivated to do well in school and not drop out (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Tapscott, 2008).

Students within urban high schools lean on the administrators, teachers, and counselors to provide them with reliable and credible information and guidance to prepare them for post-secondary education or work (Cooper & Liou, 2007; Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009). Unfortunately these same students have no guidance than the school, due to their parent’s lack of post- secondary education or knowledge for guidance and planning (Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009). The disturbing reality has been, the same institution these students look to for assistance, “are less likely to have access to the human and material resources that are critical for college preparation" (Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009, p. 25) or information, which allows students to make empowering decisions (Cooper & Liou, 2007).

Rigor of classroom instruction, advanced placement courses, dual credit classes, and the development of relationships with supportive staff responsible for ensuring graduation and career planning beyond high school had been deficient within a large number of urban schools (Cooper & Liou, 2007; Griffin, 2006; Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; Pringle, Lyons, & Booker, 2010; Samel et al., 2011; Steele, 2004; Venezia et al., 2004). Students within urban schools were connected to the educational purpose intended, when social relationships between the student and adult are strengthened and genuine (Cooper & Liou, 2007; Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; Patterson et al., 2007; Samel et al., 2011). The relationships that exist between students and adults within successful urban schools must be supportive, caring, and ones in which hold students to high expectations in order for valid maturation and graduation to be achieved (Cooper & Liou, 2007; Heyman & Vigil, 2008; Patterson et al., 2007; Samel et al., 2011). Supportive teachers provide the encouragement needed for academic improvement (Samel et al., 2011). Teachers who "took time to develop relationships with students and consistently communicated high expectations," (Patterson et al., 2007, p. 9) were the ones in which students felt most connected with and felt cared about them (Pringle et al., 2010).

Students perform according to teacher expectations, beliefs, and attitudes (Bumpers et al., 2005; Lacy & Middleton, 1981). The impact of negative and positive expectations were entrenched within educational research (Feldman & Thesis, 1982;

Harris Interactive, 2001; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Lacy & Middleton, 1981; Merton, 1948; Rubie-Davies et al., 2010; Speybroeck et al., 2012). Surprisingly according to the Harris Interactive (2001), 39% of secondary teachers were reported having high expectations for their students, and "less likely ... to strongly agree that if teachers have high expectations, students will rise to meet them" (p.8). Success in the classroom weighs heavily on the subtle messages that teachers communicate to students, on their students' academic capabilities (Lacy & Middleton, 1981). Moreover, "teachers' attitudes toward particular groups ...expectations regarding ...performance will affect the teachers' behavior towards these groups and may influence the actual performance of the students" (Lacy & Middleton, 1981, p. 88). Research supports teachers having higher academic expectations for non- minority students rather than minority students (Jencks & Phillips, 1998).

Merton (1948) conceived the term "self-fulfilling prophecy" (SFP), which he described as "a situation (prophecies or predictions) [which] become an integral part of the situation and thus affect subsequent developments" (Merton, 1948, p. 175). "The self-fulfilling prophecy is, in the beginning, a false definition of a situation evoking a new behavior, which makes the originally false conception come true" (Merton, 1948, p. 175). This concept was later introduced into the realm of education by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) through the Pygmalion study, when they studied the "effect of expectations on students' academic progress" (as cited in Speybroeck et al., 2012, p. 1) and "concluded that students whose teachers expected a high increase of learning ability... indeed had ... at the end of the school year" (Speybroeck et al., 2012, p. 1). Critics of the Pygmalion study found its results filled with overstated, inconsistent, and inadequate data (Brophy &

Good, 1972; Rist, 1987; Snow, 1995). However, the study continued to be of interest and discussed within education research (Feldman & Thesis, 1982). Current research continued looking to the studies of Merton (1948) and Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) when discussing teacher expectations of students (Rubie-Davies, 2010; Rubie-Davies et al., 2010; Speybroeck et al., 2012). Much of the literature indicated, when these terms were embedded within education it refers to a student's expected performance by the teacher, and the student meeting that expectation (Feldman, 1982; Rubie-Davies et al., 2010; Speybroeck et al., 2012). Due to the student developing a "strong belief in their ability to achieve a particular goal" (Rubie-Davies et al., 2010, p. 36) once the expectation has been communicated by the teacher and internalized by the student (Feldman, 1982; Rubie-Davies et al., 2010; Speybroeck et al., 2012).

A review of the literature, suggested the potential for a student to be academically successful diminished when the teacher made generalized assumptions on the students' academic abilities (Rojas-LeBouef & Slate, 2012). These generalizations are based on negative stereotypes, which were often time exaggerated, inaccurate, and offensive (Brauer, Judd, & Jacquelin, 2001). Research has shown that negative stereotypes "undermine minority students because such stereotypes may influence the manner in which they are judged or treated by others, especially teachers" (Chang & Demyan, 2007, p. 92). Urban African American students see stereotyping of their academic abilities based on ethnicity, negative images, and first appearance impressions by teachers, to be a bias and barrier in regards to how teachers respond to their educational needs (Knight, 2003; Patterson et al., 2007; Pringle et al., 2010).

According to Steele (1997) the existence of a stereotype threat occurs when an individual who is a member of a specific group, “is in a situation or doing something for which a negative stereotype about one’s group applies” (p. 2). The individual is in fear of fulfilling the stereotype based on the situation or predicament (Steele, 1997; Uwah et al., 2008). The onset of a stereotype threat leads to academic underperformance (Rojas-LeBouef & Slate, 2012; Steele, 2004) and feelings of anxiety (Steele, 1997). When teachers’ expectation of a student is low, the student in turn develops a low expectation for himself or herself, and the potential to learn is decreased, leading to a chain of educational remediation, enrichments, and accommodations (Miller, Heafner, & Massey, 2009). Low expectations of African American students due to cultural misunderstanding and socio-economic status (SES) have been one of the many contributing factors of the groups’ academic under-development (Bumpers et al., 2005; Uwah et al., 2008).

Minority students “often are viewed by educators as unsuccessful due to socialization influences from outside the school” (Miller et al., 2009, p 123). The decrease in student potential has been brought on by resistance to learn, due to not feeling connected and welcomed by the school (Miller et al., 2009; Pringle et al., 2010). When students “resist becoming engaged in their studies, teachers misinterpreted this resistance as a further indicator of an inability to learn and emphasize a basic skills curriculum” (Miller et al., 2009, p. 123). “This mismatch between the potential to learn and expectations for learning inadvertently limits students’ ability” (Miller et al., 2009, p. 123). Student interest and active learning increased when they received positive feedback and praise for their academic attempts (Miller et al., 2009; Pringle et al., 2010). Ultimately, “teachers beliefs about the student, student hopes for the future, and students beliefs about their eventual success indeed influences students’ eventual success” (Samel et al., 2011, p. 98). African American students expressed the need to have friends that hold high expectations for themselves as well as each other (Sheppard, 2006). Positive feedback, encouragement, and expectations from peers along with being academically prepared and active, contributed to academic success (Sheppard, 2006). Moreover, educators along with students must take head that, “High expectations breed high performance” (Pringle et al., 2010, p. 39)

There are those who described the urban school as a place where, “The students are unteachable,” “the parents don’t care,” [and] ”the kids are dumb” (Bell, 1979, p. 67). Urban schools consist of “chaos, noise, and tension” (Bell, 1979, p. 68). “In many high schools today, particularly urban high schools that predominately serve low-income students... students navigate their school day by selectively cutting class” (Fallis & Opotow, 2003). Urban schools experience the greatest, low attendance and high truancy rates (Bell, 1979). When students do decide to attend, very little instruction and learning takes place, due to the inappropriate behavior among classmates, nonexistent classroom behavior management and the lack of teacher organization (Bell, 1979).

Teachers often lack “the skills, knowledge and expertise needed to adequately respond to inner-city students, meet their needs and educate them” (Bell, 1979, p. 69). Students within urban schools felt as though the teachers had low expectations and lacked the ability to motivate and encourage (Pringle et al., 2010). The existence of a healthy climate and culture within urban schools was often lacking (Butler, 2012; Lee, 2005).

High expectations for students start with the culture and climate of the school being positively enhanced and healthy (Butler, 2012; Hoy, 1990; Samel et al., 2011;

Shaunessy & McHatton, 2009). When discussing school culture, Hoy (1990) suggested effective schools should share common beliefs and values, along with traditions of celebrations. These commonalities give the school “its identity and standard for expected behaviors” (Tableman & Herron, 2004, p. 1). Healthy school culture was prominent within suburban schools rather than urban schools (Butler, 2012). Teachers within suburban schools “have strong academic focus, teachers work collaboratively with shared decision making and teamwork” (Butler, 2012, p. 123). Principals within suburban schools provide vision, goals and expectations, which are clearly communicated to parents, students and staff (Butler, 2012). They provide supportive leadership towards teamwork and collegiality, which increases effective school development so that teachers feel supported, which leads to students being supported (Butler, 2012). O’Brien, Rollefson, and Policy Studies Associates (1995) reported, “Indicators of successful participation in school include consistent attendance, academic achievement, and aspirations for continuing education beyond high school” (para. 2). High poverty, low performing schools lack these system components and indicators (Butler, 2012; O’Brien et al., 1995).

Hoy (1990) defined school climate as the “enduring quality of the school environment that is experienced by participants, affects their behavior, and is based on the collective perceptions of behaviors in school” (p. 152). The characteristics, perceptions and experiences shared within a school “distinguish one school from another” (Butler, 2012, p. 104). According to Tableman & Herron (2004) school climate refers to the “feel” of the school, “that provide the preconditions necessary for teaching and learning to take place” (p. 2). “Degrading slurs, jokes, and epithets are pervasive in the hallways, cafeterias, buses, locker rooms, and even classrooms" (Wessler, 2008, p. 45). The topic of harassment can be "appearance, behavior, clothing, friends, home and family. 'Running the dozens' is the name of the game, depreciation is the guiding rule" (Bell, 1979, p. 68). Many of these jokes and slurs stem from stereotypes and often lead to violence (Wessler, 2008). Tableman & Herron (2004) emphasize the importance of caring and safety being the forefront of attention in order for genuine and orderly learning to take place. Schools having a positive and safe climate with a caring atmosphere experienced academic achievement of its students at a higher rate than those schools without (Basch, 2011; Bell, 1979; Butler, 2012; Hoy; 1990; Shaunessy & McHatton, 2009; Tableman & Herron, 2004). In order for this to be achieved the school must have a strong task and achievement oriented leader who "maintains high standards of performance," and teachers within "are committed to teaching and learning" (Hoy, 1990, p. 155).

In order to determine the "effectiveness of classroom interactions between a teacher and student" (Meyer, 2011, p. 1) a report from American Institutes for Research was developed after classroom observations were conducted within the researched high school. The observers focused on the three domains of 1) emotional support; 2) classroom organization; 3) instructional support, all reported to be components of student academic success (Meyer, 2011). When looking at the results of domain 1 and 2, domain 1, which focused on positive and negative climates along with teacher sensitivity, the observed classrooms were ranked 4.42 on a scale of 1-7 for having a positive climate (Meyer, 2011). This rating was interpreted as, a general presence of support being evident, however the supportive interactions were inconsistent among all students and the teacher (Meyer, 2011). The rating for domain 2, which described behavior management, and classroom productivity, the rank in the area of behavior management, was 5.08 on the same 1-7 scale (Meyer, 2011). This mid -range score was due to the rules and expectations being “inconsistently enforced” (Meyer, 2011, p. 8) and ineffective approaches to correct inappropriate behavior being practiced (Meyer, 2011). A rate of 5.28 for productivity, which focused on classroom instruction, came about due to limited learning taking place because of disruptions, uncertainty, and disorganization throughout the class period (Meyer, 2011). This report further strengthened the literature review, which supports, positive school climate contributing to academic achievement along with the unfortunate reality of urban schools having a lower level of climate health (Basch, 2011; Bell, 1979; Butler, 2012; Hoy; 1990; Pringle et al., 2010; Shaunessy & McHatton, 2009; Tableman & Herron, 2004). When teachers are committed to teaching and students are committed to learning, the culture and climate of the school are said to be healthy (Butler; 2012; Hoy, 1990; Tableman & Herron, 2004).

African American Students’ Perception of Themselves

“An individual’s perception of one’s strengths and weaknesses affects their overall level of self-esteem” (Saunders, Davis, Williams, & Williams, 2004, p. 83). A child understanding that they are more skilled in academics, rather than sports or just the opposite, was recognized by the time that child reaches adolescence (Saunders et al., 2004). The ways in which African American youth view themselves had a major impact on academic intentions and academic outcomes (Saunders et al., 2004). When looking at student perceptions of themselves among African American youth, the focus was on self-worth and self-esteem as it related to racial identity (Bemak et al., 2005; Saunders et al., 2004). For some African American students, positive racial self-esteem has been an influencer on academic performance (Saunders et al., 2004). Self-esteem can be two fold, racial self-esteem and personal self-esteem. Racial self-esteem relates to how the individual identifies with their cultural group and personal self-esteem relates to the individual self (Porter & Washington, 1979). Oyserman, Grant, and Ager (1995) suggested that how African American youth relate to, connect with and value the African American race has been an indicator of their self-esteem and their academic achievement. Increased feelings of connectivity and positive feelings towards one's racial group were "essential to the academic performance of ethnic minority students" (Graham & Anderson, 2008, p. 474) which "can be instrumental in …student academic achievement" (Carter, 2008, p. 22).

Historically, African Americans have been "viewed in this society as a member of a devalued group" (Ward, 2005, p. 262), "perceived as being academically disengaged and intellectually inferior" (Carter, 2008, p. 12) and have viewed themselves as others have viewed them (Ward, 2005). During the Supreme Court decision in Brown v. Board of Education, the court cited the "Doll Test" study conducted in the May 17, 1954, by Kenneth and Mammie Clark supported the unanimous decision for desegregation in education (Bergner, 2009). This test determined the psychological effects of segregation on African American children, and racial preference (Bergner, 2009). The study consisted of inviting African American children to either choose a white or brown doll in reference to positive and negative association. When asked which of the dolls resembled themselves, the children chose the brown dolls, however when asked which doll they viewed as being nice or good, the white doll was preferred (Bergner, 2009). The study concluded that the injustices and discriminations of society had caused these children to have low perceptions of themselves and thus the Supreme Court affirmed, “African American children could never get an education equal to white children’s in a segregated school” (Bergner, 2009, p. 299).

“Transmitted daily to black children are messages that black people are undesirable, inadequate, and inferior” (Ward, 2005, p. 262). Reis, Colbert, and Herbert (2005) through their research found that some African American students use this negative stereotyping as a means of developing “strengths and resilience” (p. 115) which have “prepared them with a more realistic view for the future” (p. 116). Previous studies suggested that for some “African American youth to take on a ‘prove them wrong’ attitude”(Carter, 2008, p. 13), leads to perseverance, motivation and drive towards academic success (Carter, 2008; Reis et al., 2005). Recent research supports racial self-esteem among African Americans had increased in part due to positive role models and a move from negative societal stereotypes (Hughes & Demo, 1989). For African American youth in order to achieve healthy psychological growth and development, there had to be “a stable concept of self both as an individual as well as group member (black)” (Ward, 2005, p. 261).

“Positive racial self-esteem has been found to enhance academic performance for some African American youth” (Saunders et al., 2004, p. 83) and increase positive perception (Carter, 2008; Oyserman et al., 1995; Porter & Washington, 1979; Ward, 2005).

A study conducted in 2010, researched an academically successful high school with African American male students, in relationship to their experiences and perceptions of mattering to others at school (Tucker, Dixon, & Griddine, 2010). “Mattering to others in our lives is the experience of moving through life being noticed by and feeling special to others who also matter to us” (Tucker et al., 2010, p. 135). The investigators uncovered, after conducting a nine-participant focus group, that mattering to others was imbedded within the support systems of the school. The participants within the study stated that, teachers, counselors, administration and peers had set and committed to clear and high expectations for students success, whether it was college or career readiness (Tucker et al., 2010). “Feeling as if they mattered to others at school likely helped these young men build a strong foundation of self-efficacy and self-confidence” (Tucker et al., 2010, p. 141), which leads to a purposeful and motivational “drive for continued school engagement and academic success” (Tucker et al., 2010. p. 141). Mattering to others within a school setting correlated to high student academic achievement (Tucker et al., 2010). A positive school setting has a school climate, which is safe, healthy, and nurturing both intellectually and emotionally; its presence is critical for the academic successes among struggling African American students (Tucker et al., 2010). High expectations for academic success, has been cultivated within a school rich in culture and climate components (Butler, 2012; Hoy, 1990; Shaunessy & McHatton, 2009). Creating “ a nurturing, accepting environment within the school system is important for students in order to achieve and maintain academic success” (Tucker et al., 2010. p. 136).

Standardized Test and The Urban High School Student

The focus of education heads in a different direction when a new presidential administration takes office. Educational and social reform initiated with Brown v. Board of Education in 1954, started the equity in education awareness (Rojas-LeBouef & Slate, 2012; Steele, 2004). In 1965 with President Johnson's enactment of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the allocation of Title 1 funding for educational programs to underprivileged students began (Rojas-LeBouef & Slate, 2012). During the 1970's the education reform effort transferred to competency testing in public schools (Amrein & Berliner, 2002). The 1970's shift moved from equity in education to the potential privatization of public education during the 1980's with President Reagan's Nation at Risk (1983) report. The National Commission On Excellence in Education (NCEE) published the report which "claimed that American students were plummeting academically, that schools suffered from uneven standards, and that teachers were not prepared" (Ansary, 2007, para.11). The report further stated, currently eroding conditions of education would ultimately lead to a nation, vulnerable to outsiders (Hillocks, 2002). Additionally, the report brought forth the awareness of 23 million illiterate Americans and the realization of 40% of minority youth being illiterate. (Hillocks, 2002)

The education reform changed course to the federal mandated standardized testing for all students with President Bush's No Child Left Behind (NCLB Act of 2001) law, which was intended to close the achievement gap by holding school districts to a higher accountability for student performance (Phillips, 2006; Rojas-LeBouef & Slate, 2012; Sheppard, 2006). Under NCLB, schools are required to meet standards that are set by their states and test students yearly to determine Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) progress against those standards (Rojas-LeBouef & Slate, 2012). Many of the schools failing to make their AYP goals had a higher population of students from minority and low socio-economic status (SES), it has been reported that SES and ethnicity are determinates in education equality (Rojas-LeBouef & Slate, 2012). President Obama's Race to the Top (R2T), was a reform movement focused on competition among states to improve education and receive monetary awards to assist with increasing academic performance. The R2T initiative called for states to adopt standards that prepare students for success in the areas of college and career readiness, turn around lowest performing public schools, recruit, reward and retain effective teachers, and use multiple measures to analyze student academic growth (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Standardized test scores reflect of how well students have been performing academically within a school (Hillocks, 2002; Morris, 2011; Phillips, 2006; Zucker, 2003). With standardized testing being used as a measurement of district, school and student performance (Lemke, Hoerandner & McMahon, 2006; Morris, 2011; Zucker, 2003), minorities and urban public school districts have reported the lowest test scores for its schools and students (Green & Griffore, 1980; Pringle et al., 2010; Sandy & Duncan, 2010; Sheppard, 2006). The original intended purpose of standardized testing was to assess, "what students should know and be able to do" (Darling-Hammond, 2002b, p. 1) while also enhancing the curriculum of the school tied to the standards of an individual state (Darling-Hammond, 2002b). The most common format of standardized test questions has been multiple choice (Hillocks, 2002). This test format provides a correct answer in addition to other choices, which are incorrect (Hillocks, 2002; Zucker, 2003). The additional choices are known as "distractors or foils intended to draw test takers' attention from the correct answer. (In test making, distractors that do not draw responses are eliminated and replaced with others that do)" (Hillocks, 2002, p. 5). Critics of multiple-choice questions claim they cannot measure complex higher order thinking skills and are limited in measuring student ability (Hillocks, 2001; Zucker, 2003).

Green and Griffore (1980) discussed unfairness in standardized testing when they reported test bias among different groups of students. The first form of test bias is “bias due to content factors” (Green & Griffore, 1980, p. 240) this refers to test items being recognized and understood by different socio-economic status groups (Green & Griffore, 1980). Researchers pointed out, writers of the test questions, sample reference group representing testing population, along with test language and question relevancy could all be related to test bias (Green & Griffore, 1980; Phillips, 2006). Green and Griffore described their second bias as “ bias due to norms” (p. 243). This occurred when testing groups are compared to the national testing group participant’s scores, which has been known as the national norm. The concern rose when the national norm group was not reflective of the testing group’s participants (Green & Griffore, 1980). The third testing bias centered around, “test-wise-ness” (Green & Griffore, 1980, p. 244), which is a basic knowledge of test taking skills, that minority students lack and non-minority students have an advantage of (Green & Griffore, 1980). Not only do minority students experience environmental and cultural difficulties that spill over in the classroom, these same students were victim to testing policies and practices (Green & Griffore, 1980; Hillocks, 2002; Lomax, West, & Harmon, 1995; Phillips, 2006).

The effects of living in low SES communities attribute to low performance on standardized test, due to (1) personal stress (Green & Griffore, 1980; Massey, 2006), (2) cultural difference (Fram, 2007; Jencks & Phillips, 1998), (3) lower cognitive skills upon entering school, (4) low teacher expectations (Belluck, 1999; Jencks & Phillips, 1998),

(5) parenting practices (Belluck, 1999; Jencks & Phillips, 1998), and (6) cultural stigmatization from peers (Belluck, 1999). The existence of cultural attitude towards testing played a role as to how students perform (Phillips, 2006). With minority students experiencing the lowest performance scores on standardized test, it was unsettling that this group would have the least concern with greater achievement (Phillips, 2006). Academic performance has been valued more by some cultures over others, especially those cultures "more focused on family and personal values" (Phillips, 2006, p. 52). Values play an important role in the overall academic success of students, "in a home where school is not important, that child's view on testing and the desire or lack of desire to pass the test will effect the resulting score" (Phillips, 2006, p. 52).

Research reports, standardized testing forces teachers to "push instruction towards lower order cognitive skills, while narrowing the curriculum" (Darling-Hammond, 2002b, p. 3) and has " caused schools to concentrate more on raising test scores and less on student learning" (Chung, n.d., para. 1). Focusing on test content, rather than complex thinking, analysis and application, has become common practice for teachers in order to meet the requirements set forth by state mandates (Hillocks, 2001; Lomax et al., 1995). Schools that are unable to reach students in an effort for increased test scores, often time may use special education classes as a holding place for low testing students, while other practices include retention or dropping students as a way of test exclusion (Darling-Hammond, 2002b; Lemke et al., 2006; Lomax et al., 1995).

The Illinois assessment entitled Prairie State Achievement Examination, measures performance in three component areas that are "Illinois-based items aligned to Illinois standards" (Venezia et al., 2004) and administered to students within the 11th grade. The first component, the American College Testing (ACT) assessment, which is a multiple-choice test in reading, English, mathematics, and science. The second component of the PSAE, “a science assessment developed by Illinois teachers and curriculum experts working with the Illinois State Board of Education” (Illinois Interactive Report Card, 2012b). The third WorkKeys components consist of Reading for Information, Applied Mathematics, and Locating Information (Illinois Interactive Report Card, 2012b; Lakes, 2011). The WorkKeys assessment has been useful to employers in determining real-world skills, which are needed for workplace success (Illinois State Board of Education, 2012b; Lakes, 2011). The WorkKeys portion of the PSAE offers “a high predictive value of someone’s ability to do a job” (Madden, 2008, para. 4), and “will show if the person is job-ready” (Madden, 2008, para. 4). In an effort to provide the work force with career ready workers, business leaders and policy makers supported this form of job skill assessment (Lakes, 2011). PSAE scores were calculated by combining day 1 and day 2 of student performance. Overall the combined ACT and WorkKeys reading scores determine PSAE reading scores. The combined math ACT and WorkKeys score is the PSAE math score. The science PSAE score is determined in the same manner; with the combination of the ACT science and ISBE science scores (Illinois Interactive Report Card, 2012b). The results of the PSAE scores are published annually within individual school’s report cards, which detail student performance on the assessment (Lemke et al., 2006).

For the 2009 school year, Illinois schools had 57% of the students meeting and exceeding in reading, 52% meeting and exceeding in mathematics, and 51% meeting and exceeding in science (Illinois Interactive Report Card, 2012b). During this same year, African American students met or exceeded in reading 28% compared to 68% for non-minority students (Illinois Interactive Report Card, 2012b). Performance by income for this same school year indicated 33% of low-income students met or exceeded on the PSAE as compared to 68% of non-low income students meeting or exceeded on the assessment (Illinois Interactive Report Card, 2012b). In 2011, Illinois school performance slightly dropped to 51% of the states' students meeting and exceeding in reading and mathematics, and 49% in science (Illinois Interactive Report Card, 2012b). For this school year, 25% of African American students met or exceeded in mathematics and 64% for non-minority students (Illinois Interactive Report Card, 2012b). Two years later, the data again reflected a gap among low-income students test scores of 30% compared to 65% for non-low income students (Illinois Interactive Report Card, 2012b). The school that was being researched for this study, had been a low performing school since 2001, which is reflected in Figure 3 (Illinois Interactive Report Card, 2012b).

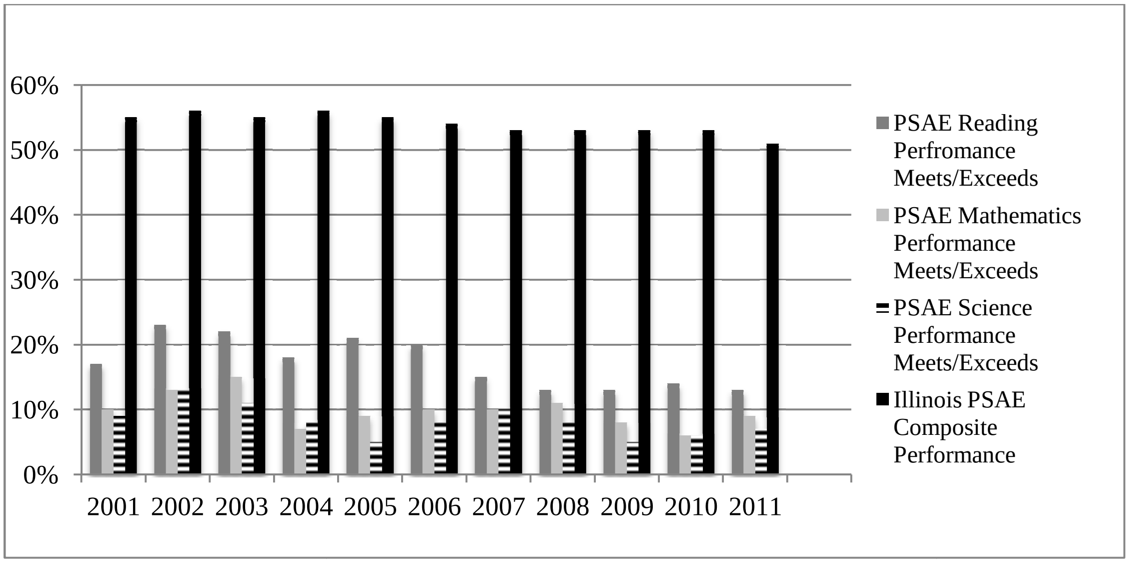

Figure 2. Researched School PSAE Data Compared to State PSAE Data.
Note: Adapted from Illinois Interactive Report Card, 2012b and Illinois School Report Card 2008 and 2012.

Illinois school districts, which are under-performing, can implement interventions such as improvement of curriculum and instruction, professional development for teachers, to more severe interventions of replacement of staff or school closure to assist with strengthening the academic performance of its students and schools (Lemke et al., 2006). Other strategies implemented fall under the umbrella of educational and social programs for motivation, increasing self-esteem, and academic improvements (Darling-Hammond, 2002b; Greene & Griffore, 1980; Steele, 2004).

Urban High Schools and Interventions For Success

Supplemental Educational Services. "Education is traditionally viewed as a leveler of opportunity" (Fram, 2007). However, for many urban learners, this leveler has been off balance well before young minority students enter educational institutions (Bell, 1979; Haskins & Rouse, 2005; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Talbert, 2011). In an effort to even or close the achievement gap between groups of students, different programs, initiatives, and services have been created and implemented for the diminishment of disproportionate representation of urban academic underachievers. One of these initiatives under NCLB was the provision of Supplemental Educational Services (SES) (Burch, 2007; Sunderman, 2006). The intended purpose of SES was to provide educational services to supplement learning within poorly performing public schools and raise student achievement (Burch, 2007; Sunderman, 2006).

According to the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement (2009), SES is defined as "additional academic instruction designed to increase the academic achievement of students from low-income families attending Title I schools in their second year of school improvement, in corrective action, or in restructuring" (p. 60). SES providers offered services in the areas of "tutoring, remediation and other supplemental academic enrichment services that are consistent with the content and instruction used by the local educational agency (LEA) and are aligned with the State's academic content and achievement standards" (U. S. Department of Education, 2009). The shortcomings of SES programs are multiple, with the first being that services were "offered outside of the regular school day...which discourages coordination between the teacher and the supplemental service provider" (Sunderman, 2006, p. 119). Secondly SES redirect Title I funds away from school-based services to SES providers (Burch, 2007; Sunderman, 2006). When this occurs, schools loose funds, which would benefit the entire academic achievement of the district, to only those individual SES qualifying school's students (Burch, 2007; Sunderman, 2006). Another requirement of SES is that the instructional practices be "researched-based, and designed to help eligible children attain proficiency in meeting the state's academic achievement standards" (Sunderman, 2006, p. 119). This requirement, although of great benefit for ensuring integrity of services, provided no additional supports to monitor accountability, reliability and effectiveness of program performance of student achievement (Burch, 2007; Sunderman, 2006). Growth and effectiveness of student achievement within SES programs was measured based on individual performance on standardized test, which as research has consistently reported, deficit for minority students (Burch, 2007; Sunderman, 2006). Information pertaining to the curricula of SES programs was limited to broad terms such as "literacy skills" and "problem solving skills" (Burch, 2007, p. 23), which again limits the integrity of the services (Burch, 2007; Sunderman, 2006). SES providers were encouraged to align their curriculum practices with school state standards, however the school may not create and impose a curriculum framework for the SES to follow (Burch, 2007). Overall, limited research exists on student performance gains as it relates to their involvement with SES programs (Burch, 2007) or the academic improvement of minority students (Sunderman, 2006).

Career and Technical Education. The disengagement of urban students from high school due to, learning disconnection, disinterest, internal and external factors, leads to numerous students leaving school unprepared for real world encounters (Cooper & Liou, 2007; Venezia et al., 2004). Urban high schools offer other routes for students bordering on at-risk academic performance (Gray, 2004). Options existing for students choosing not to continue on with post-secondary college institutions were limited to trade school, the military, or entry-level work force (Ryken, 2006; Wai-Ling- Packard, Leach, Ruiz, Nelson, & DiCocco, 2012). One offering of some high schools has been Career and Technical Education (CTE), which for some students, offers relevance and purpose for attending high school (Plank et al., 2008). “CTE is the program of study taken by most of the students who are defined as being at risk of not persisting to high school graduation” (Gray, 2004, p. 132), or an alternative to a traditional post-secondary degree (Wai-Ling Packard et al., 2012). Many students enrolled within a CTE program when compared with students taking college preparatory classes, have a lower socioeconomic background status (Laird, Chen, & Levesque, 2006). Characteristically, CTE programs have been offered more within rural communities over both suburban and urban communities (Levesque et al., 2008).

The CTE program’s task is preparation for students to gain education and job skills which will allow them to be occupation or career employment ready after high school graduation (Lynch, 2000; Levesque et al., 2008). According to Ryken (2006) high school students often have unattainable career ambitions due to misinformation, poor planning, or education deficiencies. To assist educational alignment to career goals, CTE programs are designed to create “life plans and integrate curricular experiences” (Ryken, 2006, p. 50) and bridge academics with applied workplace experiences (Ryken, 2006).

Research supports CTE programs being responsible for lowering the dropout rates (Gray, 2004; Plank et al., 2008) and providing high school students with “college-level technician training” (Gray, 2004, p. 134). Graduates of CTE programs finish with job related work experience, and trade certification due to cooperative educational opportunities (Wai-Ling Packard et al., 2012).

Critics of CTE programs found fault with the less rigorous curriculum offerings as compared to college preparatory curriculum (Laird et al., 2006; Plank et al., 2008; Ryken, 2006). CTE programs have been labeled as being “a dumping ground in which unmotivated youths encounter low expectations and outdated training” (Plank et al., 2008, p. 348). Students enrolled within CTE programs have been less likely to enroll in advanced math courses and less likely to enroll in a four-year college and complete a degree (Adelman, Daniel, & Berkovits, 2003; Laird et al., 2006; Levesque et al., 2008). Less than half of high school students enrolled within a CTE program began college within a four-year institution, more than half enter a community college (Laird et al., 2006; Levesque et al., 2008). Of students having a background in CTE, the highest degree received was an associate’s degree in a career or industry field as opposed to core degree post-secondary areas of study (Laird et al., 2006; Levesque et al., 2008). The most discerning reality were students who had an interest in medicine, science, and technology careers that tended to gravitate to programs within those areas which offer graduation or certification in less than two years, which led to education delays or career choices being compromised (Laird et al., 2006; Packard & Babineau, 2009). This practice has been common among students from low-income backgrounds due to the urgency within themselves and pressure from family to become employed (Packard & Babineau, 2009).

In spite of criticisms, according to the research, CTE programs provide at-risk and less motivated students with a supportive tool to continue with high school completion (Levesque et al., 2008). A clearer understanding on the importance and purpose of acquiring the skills needed in academic classes in order to perform effectively within careers of interest had been a supportive component of CTE programs (Plank et al., 2008).

Summer School. Another alternative for low performing students has been attending summer school. Summer school affords economically disadvantaged students the opportunity to "reverse summer learning loss, achieve learning gains, and ... master material that they did not learn during the previous school year" (Cooper, Charlton, Valentine, & Muhlenbruck, 2000; Sloan et al., 2011, p. xvii). Research offered numerous explanations as to why urban students do not master academic skills during the school year. These explanations range from internal school inadequacies to external community and home inadequacies (Bell, 1979; Billet & Rand Corp, 1978; Cooper & Liou, 2007; Sheppard, 2006;Venezia et al., 2004). A lack of school-wide systemic structure combined with unstable family structures, economic instability, and toxic communities leads to less desirable educational outcomes (Kozol, 1991; Lippman et al., 1996; Venezia et al., 2004).

Summer school “provides students additional instruction that could help close local achievement gaps and give struggling students additional time on task so they can master material already learned by their peers” (Sloan et al., 2011, p. 2). The inequitable proportions were evident when there are reports of, low-income students below basic reading levels 49% when compared to 20% of non low-income students performing below basic in reading (Sloan et al., 2011). The same gap exists in the area of mathematics, with 30% of low-income students performing below basic levels for math and 9% of non low-income students with a below basic performance in math (Sloan et al., 2011). These numbers are troubling due to numerous research studies that suggested a correlation to low performance in school, increasing the likelihood of a student existing from school prior to degree completion (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Sloan et al., 2011; Tapscott, 2008; Youth Transition Funders Group, 2008).

Students from low-income families loose academic skills within the summer months at a higher rate than non low-income students (Cooper et al., 2000; Sloan et al., 2011). Research indicated, this summer learning loss has been cumulative and “contributes substantially to the achievement gap” (Sloan et al., 2011, p. xiii). Supporters of summer school programs reported, students attending school in the United States received anywhere from 62- 280 less instruction hours when compared to other countries (Sloan et al., 2011). American students spend nine months in school and of those, only 180 days are instructional (Sloan et al., 2011). With these numbers, summer learning loss is evident and higher among economically disadvantaged students (Cooper et al., 2000; Sloan et al., 2011).

A possible explanation for this summer achievement gap between low-income and high-income students, is the “non- school environment of low- income students [that] does not support educational growth to the same extent as it does for students with higher family income levels” (Sloan et al., 2011), and opportunities for additional education enrichment has been limited (Cooper et al., 2000). To increase academic performance among low-income students, extended instructional time was recommended and participation from this group of students was encouraged (Sloan et al., 2011). According to the research, attendance in summer school offers additional benefits to students such as decreased delinquency and disciplinary infractions, improved attendance during regular school session, increased self-esteem, and likelihood of graduation (Sloan et al., 2011). Research supported long-term academic advancement and a decrease in academic loss over the summer months for students participating within summer school programs, which ultimately leads to high school degree completion and graduation (Cooper et al., 2000; Sloan et al., 2011).

Mentoring. One of the most reported intervention strategies for providing support to disaffected youth is the practice of mentoring (Malone, 2006). Mentoring consist of a relationship described as a person, which is the mentor advising, advocating, supporting, and contributing to the creation of a positive life of another person, which is the mentee (Broussard, Mosely-Howard, & Roychoudhury, 2006; Gordon, Iwamoto, Ward, Potts, & Boyd, 2009; Malone, 2006; MENTOR, 2006; Rhodes, Spencer, Keller, Liang, & Noam, 2006; Schwartz, Lowe, & Rhodes, 2012; Slicker & Palmer, 1993). Baker and Maguire (2005) defined the mentor as, “someone with greater experience or wisdom than the mentee” (p. 3). The mentor was further defined as someone who “offers guidance or instruction that is intended to facilitate growth and development of the mentee” (Baker & Maguire, 2005, p. 3).

Mentoring relationships often exist between a non-parental adult and a young adult (Baker & Maguire, 2005; MENTOR, 2006; Rhodes et al., 2006; Schwartz et al., 2012; Slicker & Palmer, 1993; Werner, 1995). The relationship, which exists between the mentor and mentee, consist of a bond, which is natural, emotional, and trusting (Baker & Maguire, 2005; MENTOR, 2006; Schwartz et al., 2012; Slicker & Palmer, 1993) with the sharing of “reliable information, reasonable goals, decisions, and options”(Gordon et al., 2009, p. 280). Research suggested mentoring program effectiveness relies on “frequent contact; sufficient interaction time together; and the mentee achieve[ing] their objectives and accept[ing] the collaborative experience” (Gordon et al., 2009, p. 279). For mentoring relationships to be effective, they need to be long in duration and on a consistent basis (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008; Schwartz et al., 2012). It has been reported “the average mentoring relationship last 9 months, 38% last at least one year” (MENTOR, 2006, p. iv). The pairing of mentoring relationships has not always been successful (Schwartz, Rhodes, Chan, & Herrera, 2011). The effectiveness of the mentoring relationship has been dependent on the personalities, past experiences, and characteristics of the individual receiving the mentoring (Rhodes & Spencer, 2010; Schwartz et al., 2011). Youth, who have close relationships with parents and other adults, have a higher response of successful pairing than those youth who struggle with insecure adult-youth relationships (Rhodes & Spencer, 2010; Schwartz et al., 2011).

Schools which partner students with mentoring programs reported positive outcome of motivation along with academic improvement among student participants (Butler, 2003; MENTOR, 2006; Rhodes & DuBois, 2008; Somers, Owens, & Piliawsky, 2009; Schwartz et al., 2012; Schwartz et al., 2011). The benefits of mentoring can be contributed to assisting with closing the academic achievement gap and the mentee’s social and emotional health, along with their cognitive development (Baker & Maguire, 2005; Broussard et al., 2006; Dubois & Rhodes, 2006; Malone, 2006; Rhodes et al., 2006; Rhodes & DuBois, 2008; Schwartz et al., 2012). In a study conducted among high school students paired with mentors, who monitored academic progress, attendance along with academic attitudes had improved (Broussard et al., 2006). The study further reported the pairing of mentor and mentee had a positive impact on student behavior and a willingness to discuss adolescent non-academic concerns with non-parental adults (Broussard et al., 2006).

Mentoring relationships provide the opportunity for young adults to have a positive relationship with adults, thus increasing the capacity for social skills and decreasing negative views that youth may have towards adults (Rhodes et al., 2006; Rhodes & DuBois, 2008). Urban youth have a greater need for decreasing the negative views of adults within their community, due to the limitation of positive role models (Rhodes et al., 2006). With positive mentoring relationships, evidence shows, the relationships “strengthen or modify youths’ other relationships” (Rhodes et al., 2006) which leads to a willingness to listen to informative conversations and follow through with advice from other adults (Rhodes et al., 2006). When compared to suburban youth, urban youth experienced greater benefits from mentoring programs (Malone, 2006). However, these benefits were inconsistently measured due to the limited numbers of mentors willing to go into urban settings, and consistently meet with the youth for a substantial duration of time (Malone, 2006).

Mentoring programs, during the era of former President George Bush's administration, received attention with $100 to $450 million allocated to different departments (Baker & Maguire, 2005; Rhodes & DuBois, 2008). The Department of Education along with the Department of Health and Human Services was first to receive funds under the mentoring program expansion (Baker & Maguire, 2005). The expansion continues due to the high quantity of young people being involved with mentoring programs (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008). According to The National Mentoring Partnership (MENTOR, 2006) which has been an organization for promoting quality mentoring in the United States, three million adults and young people were paired in formal one-to one mentoring relationships (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008; Schwartz et al., 2012).

One of the largest community and school-based mentoring programs (Henry, 2009; Malone, 2006; Schwartz et al., 2012), well known for promoting positive mentoring relationships among adults and young people has been Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) (Henry, 2009; Rhodes & DuBois, 2008). Most community or school-based mentoring programs require a year commitment, meeting each week for a minimum of an hour (Henry, 2009). Mentors are paired with specific youth, which have been identified as foster, at-risk, or juveniles (Henry, 2009; Schwartz et al., 2012), or youth sharing similar interest with their mentor (Henry, 2009). School-based mentoring (SBM) programs have become the most popular form of mentoring and continues a rapid pace of growth (Schwartz et al., 2011; Schwartz et al., 2012). SBM consist of academic engagement, activities and support which occurs at school during school hours (Schwartz et al., 2011). Many of the SBM mentors were teachers within the school setting (Slicker & Palmer, 1993). SBM programs have the ability to reach larger numbers of students due to the availably and location of the program within the school setting. Due to the setting being within the school, it was reported, student participants had an increase in academic achievement, attendance, and positive behavior (Schwartz et al., 2011). Slicker and Palmer (1993) found that at-risk high school students receiving effective mentoring in a school-based program were less likely to drop out of school, which led to an increase in academic progress. When a school-based mentoring program has not been monitored to ensure mentor and mentee meeting times are consistent, the program lost its effectiveness and relationships with adults were compromised and weakened (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008; Slicker & Palmer, 1993). Critics of SBM programs argue, claiming tutoring and enrichment with students and adults should not be labeled as mentoring (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008). SBM programs are limited in time and duration, due to being restricted by school hours and the school year (Schwartz et al., 2011; Schwartz et al., 2012). It was suggested, mentoring programs that are unable to function consistently in duration and meet regularly could possibly be damaging to the mentees self- esteem (Schwartz et al., 2012) through feelings of rejection and negative self-appraisals and self-worth (Malone, 2006; Schwartz et al., 2012).

To increase the effectiveness of mentoring programs, the following need to be ensured (1) training and continued support, (2) program monitoring and evaluation, (3) program expectations, (4) parent involvement, (5) mentor-mentee relationship duration and consistency with meeting time expectations (Malone, 2006; Rhodes & DuBois, 2008; Schwartz et al., 2012; Schwartz et al., 2011). Unfortunately, the existence of enough positive role models who are capable of providing disadvantaged youth with motivational encouragement has been lacking in the urban community (Kozol, 1991; Scanlon et al., 2008).

Character and Citizenship Education. Hoge (2002) defined character education as a “conscious or overt effort to influence the development of desirable individual qualities or traits” (p. 104). It has been the desire of those, which promote character education, to improve upon human value (Davis, 2006; Hoge, 2002). The promotion of character education was believed by some to be the responsibility of the school, while others believe it is the responsibly of the family to expose and encourage favorable character qualities among young people (Brannon, 2008; Davis, 2006; Vardin, 2003; Jones, 2003). Prior to schools taking on the responsibility of incorporating character education within the curriculum, the Bible was the text used to promote values and these values were emphasized within the home through parenting (Lickona, 1993; Nelson, 2010; Vardin, 2003). Individual responsibilities and the importance of moral values were taught and discussed within the home (Singer, 2010). The message and development of character education was further expanded with the publishing of the McGuffey Readers, authored by Rev. William McGuffey during the 1830’s (Lickona, 1993; Vardin, 2003).

The McGuffey readers, which sold over 120 million copies, were widely used during the 19th century within public schools (Saunders, 1941). The intended purpose of these readers’ was to teach virtuous lessons such as honesty, respect, politeness and kindness, along with patriotism and national unity (Lickona, 1993; Saunders, 1941). Prior to the Supreme Court ruling prohibiting bible teaching within public schools, character education with reference to the Bible were instructional resources (Lickona, 1993).

Deeply embedded within the school curriculum was character education, until its abandonment due to separation of church and state along with the permissiveness movement (Vardin, 2003).

Philosophers such as Socrates and Aristotle, along with one of our nations' founding fathers, Thomas Jefferson believed education curriculum should be grounded in character development (Jones, 2003; Vardin, 2003). The preservation of democracy was the earlier intention of character education in an effort to provide individuals with knowledge on becoming good citizens (Jones, 2003; Vardin, 2003).

The shift from character education within schools towards an academic focus contributed to the moral decline of society (Jones, 2003;Vardin, 2003), which has been blamed for the increase of violence and negativity witnessed within schools and violence and negativity broadcasted within the media (Davis, 2006; Jones, 2003; Vardin, 2003). The "demoralization" of our society" (Vardin, 2003, p. 32) was witnessed during the 1960's, with "permissiveness and tolerance for any and all behavior ... introduced as a way of life" (Vardin, 2003, p. 32) along with the re-emergence of Darwin's evolution (Lickona, 1993) all which unsteadied morality within society. During this time, character education was disconnected from the school curriculum (Lickona, 1993; Vardin, 2003). The altered existence of the traditional family and the increase of single parent families, teen pregnancy, decline in supportive families, inadequate parenting skills, youth crime and violence, resulted in the renewed realization for character education within schools (Lickona, 1993).

The growing trend for character education has been that schools and teachers are tasked with the role of teaching character virtues, which was once the responsibility of parents (Davis, 2006; Singer, 2010). The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) charged itself with the responsibility for promoting civic and character competence among students (Hoge, 2002; NCSS, 1994). The NCSS looked further to its subject matter educators, for tailoring classroom lessons to reflect character education focus and concepts (Hoge, 2002; NCSS, 1994). This focused attention of NCSS was greatly due to "reduced voter turnout, decreased civic participation, and mounting cultural diversity" (Hoge, 2002, p. 103) during the 1990's (O'Brien & Kohlmeier, 2003). The move towards character education within a school setting has seen the emergence of various programs (Singer, 2010). Character Counts, is a popular six-pillar program which focuses on Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring, and Citizenship (Singer, 2010). Youth participants within the Character Counts program expressed "dramatic reduction in crime, drug use, suspension rates and misbehavior" (Phelps & Kotrlik, 2007, p. 69).

A more holistic approach to character education, taken on by Open Circle, which seeks adults to be role models for young people, so that they will become ethical and contributing citizens working towards the good of society (Singer, 2010). WiseSkills focuses on character skill themes, which are practiced and embedded throughout the school for monthly durations in collaboration with school, family, and community (Singer, 2010).

For society to function effectively, its citizens need to possess certain virtues of character (Davis, 2006). The shift to integrate character education within schools was due in part to, the realization by educators, “that without character education, which can help establish a good learning environment, education itself may not be effective” (Davis, 2006, p. 12). A study that interviewed highly qualified teachers, on the importance of character education within schools, found the views on this subject to be in favor of having teachers facilitate acceptable and unacceptable social behaviors (Brannon, 2008). According to Lickona (1997), “Character education is the deliberate effort to teach virtue. Virtues are objectively good human qualities” (p. 65). Research suggests, “teachers serve as ethical mentors” (Lickona, 1997, p. 67). Educators must lead by example while displaying and teaching acceptable character traits themselves (Lickona, 1997).

The media portrays many unacceptable behaviors and messages intended for adults (Brannon, 2008; Davis, 2006; Lickona, 1993; Vardin, 2003). While coming in contact with various messages and visuals, young people get the wrong information of what has been acceptable and what has not and become confused when trying to process multiple content (Brannon, 2008). In addition, teachers feel the need to increase the awareness of character skills within school, due to parental slacking in this area (Brannon, 2008). Often reported is the parent, having “the most profound impact” (Berkowitz, 2005, p. 64) on the development of character skills, yet parental support and involvement is weak (Berkowitz, 2005; Lickona, 1993). Parents were more inclined to take on a friendship role with their children, instead of a parental role in order to make up for parental deficits in other areas (Brannon, 2008). Character education skills being taught within the school setting, are not welcomed by all parents (Brannon, 2008; Gray, 2004). Educators teaching values and morals which could be different from those being practiced within the home, has been a concern of parents (Brannon, 2008). Another concern of parents and school administration has been the amount of time taken away from core subjects to focus on a non-core subject such as character development (Brannon, 2008; Gray, 2004).

The teachers which participated within the same study and practiced embedding character development within their existing curriculum, witnessed students with better academic attitudes and results, respect for others, responsibility and awareness of their actions and positive outcome (Brannon, 2008). The effects of leading by example and modeling good character skills, brought about students working collaboratively and acknowledging the skills among peers (Brannon, 2008). The participating teachers welcomed and encouraged the idea of a "joint responsibility between home and school" (Brannon, 2008, p. 64) with regards to the character development of young people (Brannon, 2008).

Romanowski (2003) described character education as, the emergence of student awareness and conversations on “moral and value laden issues” (p. 17). Through the use of literature, schools were able to encourage young people to embrace character education skills and practice using the skills they have acquired (Davis, 2006; Singer, 2010). Novels, comics, and children’s books are used to bring awareness to character issues such as, honesty, friendliness, self-esteem, prejudice, fairness, responsibility, respect, and problem solving (Singer, 2010). One author of children’s literature read in the development and communication of character education skills was Theodor Geisel, better known as Dr. Seuss (Singer, 2010). Geisel’s works started with a consciousness for social change, democracy, and fairness (Singer, 2010). The works of Dr. Seuss were within the relatedness of a young person’s thinking, therefore a connection to the messages of the story were easily understood and welcome meaningful discussions

(Singer, 2010). In order for a young person to fully understand a new concept or message, the seasoned educator knows the value in the making the message relevant (Singer, 2010). The student has to "make the connection for themselves [to] further [solidify] the concept (Singer, 2010, p.47). Using relevant and engaging literature stories allows the blending of character education skills to occur smoothly, which brings about meaningful conversations with students (Singer, 2010). The familiarity and situations of and within Dr. Seuss stories allow opportunities to discuss acceptable and unacceptable behavior, honesty, conflict resolution, decision-making, self-esteem, social responsibility, along with discrimination and prejudice (Singer, 2010). Many of the Dr. Seuss books have been used as elementary level literature, however *Oh The Places You Will Go*, *The Sneetches*, *The Lorax*, and *The Zax* open young adult dialogue on the topics of life skills, self-esteem, equality, conflict, environmental issues, and the art of compromise, which are skills taught within character education programs (Jones, 2003; Sachteleben, 2012; Singer, 2010). "There is no better way to teach character than through literature" (Jones, 2003, p. 43). Many characters within works of literature possess the character skill traits of "honesty, responsibility, perseverance, caring, citizenship, courage, fairness, and respect" (Jones, 2003, p. 43). Modeling and encouraging these skills, support and build upon the development of character education within young people (Jones, 2003). The works of Dr. Seuss encompass the concepts, which encourage and promote character skills among secondary students (Jones, 2003).

Students' perspectives on character education range from embracing its importance, to resistance on its existence within a high school setting (Romanowski, 2003). High school students expressed, character education within a high school setting as ineffective due to young adults being “set in their ways” (Romanowski, 2003, p. 7), “know what is right and wrong” (Romanowski, 2003, p. 7), and “have decided how [they] are going to act” (Romanowski, 2003, p. 7) regardless of character education being taught. When character education was relevant to students’ lives, included peer discussions along with the teachers modeling character skills, students embraced and practiced the concepts taught (Romanowski, 2003). In order for character education to be effective, “cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of moral life” (Hoge, 2002, p. 104) must be inclusive within the curriculum. The positive effects of character education can range from student achievement in school, positive behavior changes and an increase in self-esteem (Brannon, 2008).

The goals of character education as Lickona (1998) suggest, were (1) the development of good character among individuals in order to reach human maturity; (2) the implementation of character education within the school setting to ensure a safe environment for learning to occur; (3) the existence and continuance of a moral society where virtues are practiced consistently. Lickona (1998) believed, virtues are within good character and an individual possessing an abundance of quality virtues ultimately possesses quality character. Quality virtues are habits, which have been practiced and developed; among these virtues are patience, perseverance, honesty, kindness, self-discipline, and courage (Lickona, 1998). According to Lickona (1998), “the deliberate effort to cultivate virtue” (para. 5) is the goal of character development in an effort to develop actions, which become habits among young people.

Throughout the review of literature, many examinations of character education and citizenship education were discussed as separate entities, however the concepts of both are often shared, integrated and overlap (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006). The goal of character education has been virtue and moral development (Brannon, 2008; Davis, 2006; Lickona, 1993, 1998; Romanowski, 2003; Singer, 2010; Vardin, 2003), similarly, the goal of citizenship education or civic education has been to develop moral citizens who contribute to the good of society (Bass, 1997; NCSS, 1994; Nelson, 2010; O'Brien & Kohlmeier, 2003; Tonon, 2012), and "act in the best interest of the common good" (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006). Character Counts, a character education program, integrates character education and citizenship education within its Six Pillars of Character curriculum, when listing responsibility and citizenship as two of its pillars of character (Singer, 2010). The primary focus of citizenship education had been government, historical knowledge, political knowledge, and practice (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006). Citizenship education was focused on improving government through the increased knowledge of law and politics (Hoge, 2002). Thomas Jefferson expressed " civic education is essential in a government of the people, for the people must be informed about the way that government operates and about their role in it" (Davis, 2006, p. 12). A lack of knowledge exists among young people concerning their "preparation to be participating members in the American political system (Davis, 2006, p. 12), therefore a need exists for the foundation of education to be built upon character and citizenship education (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006; Shields, 2011). According to Bass (1997) citizenship was comprised of many definitions and civic responsibilities. Citizenship comes with rights such as voting, education, and self- protection, however with those rights citizens are required to be law abiding, tax paying and vote casting participants (Bass, 1997). Citizenship also means, "participating in and influencing the actions of government" (Bass, 1997, p. 204). Citizenship has often been a magnet approach, which brings its participants together in patriotic support of a belief and in times of challenge and crisis (Bass, 1997). Non-participation of civic involvement had not only been a crisis, which will affect the youth; it had been a crisis which will impact the entire social community and its members (Tonon, 2012)

Shields (2011) states, "Education should develop intellectual character, moral character, civic character and performance character.... together, [they] define what is meant to be a competent, ethical, engaged, and effective adult member of society" (p. 49). Excellence should be rated by the quality of a persons' character, rather than quantity of content acquired through knowledge (Shields, 2011). Shields (2011) further explained the promotion of both character and content knowledge to bring about a well-informed citizen with the ability to practice the developed and acquired knowledge for the good of society. Lickona (1993) suggested, "education has had two great goals: to help people become smart and to help them become good" (p. 6).

Leadership. Leadership had been the practice of influence (Kress, 2006; Whitehead, 2009), inclusive of "a complex moral relationship between people, based on trust, obligation, commitment, emotion, and a shared vision of the good" (Ciulla, 2004). Gardner (1990) states, "Leadership is the process of persuasion or example by which an individual...induces ...objectives" (p. 1). Dobosz and Beaty (1999) defined leadership, "as the capacity to guide others in the achievement of a common goal" (p. 215). These authors suggested effective leadership consists of " decisiveness, determination, interpersonal and organizational aptitude, loyalty, self-efficacy, and self-discipline" (Dobosz & Beaty, 1999, p. 215).

Brungardt (1996) defined leadership development as a "form of growth or stage of development in the life cycle that promotes, encourages, and assists in one's leadership potential" (p. 83). This form of development was a process, which results in skills relevant of adolescent to adult success and self-efficacy (National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability, 2005). Leadership development should focus on being authentic (Whitehead, 2009). Authentic leadership focuses on social outcomes based on positive behavioral actions, minus the potential for unhealthy actions on the part of the leader (Whitehead, 2009). The authentic leader is self-reflective, relationship and trust building, focused, ethically and morally driven, and committed to the success of the organization and those within (Whitehead, 2009). The authentic leader is an effective leader (Whitehead, 2009).

An effective leader blends knowledge and social skills (Dobosz & Beaty, 1999; Kress, 2006) in an effort to motivate and encourage participants, members or followers towards a goal (Carter & Spotanski, 1989; Cox, 2011; Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994; Kress, 2006). Leadership occurs through persuasion and the willingness and consent of others to follow the lead of the individual in charge of the team (Hogan et al., 1994). The ability of a leader to create and maintain a team has been a skill required in order for leadership effectiveness and success (Hogan et al., 1994; Kress, 2006). Maintaining a team requires the leader to, clearly state the mission of the organization, identify resources and talent, plan and organize for change or success and identify needed support (Hogan et al., 1994). In addition the leader must be able to problem solve and communicate goals among team members (Hogan et al., 1994; Kress, 2006; Nelson, 2010). Collaboration among group participants towards a common goal has been a vital skill in which a leader must encompass (Cox, 2011) ultimately “leaders only lead with consent of followers” (Whithead, 2009, p. 858).

Limited research existed on youth leadership (Teasley et al., 2007; Whitehead, 2009) and an even narrower was the review of literature for leadership among African-American youth (Teasley et al., 2007; Whitehead, 2009). What was noted concerning African American students and leadership was, the higher the confidence and self-esteem levels are, the greater chances this group of students have for acquiring and developing leadership skills (Teasley et al., 2007). Many young people are confused about leadership qualities and characteristics (Fertman & Long, 1990; Nail, 2007; Nelson, 2010). Young people associate leadership and being a leader, attainable when adulthood has been reached (Nelson, 2010). When young people associate leadership within their group of peers, the association was based on popularity, good looks, sports participation, economic status, and academic standing (Fertman & Long, 1990; Martinek, Schilling, & Hellison, 2006; Nelson, 2010).

Developing leadership skills among young people was in the best interest of society, due to these individuals one day being representative within the decision making process of our nation’s future (Dobosz & Beaty, 1999). According to the National Council for the Social Studies (1994), leadership has been a quality which young people must be knowledgeable in, in an effort to “make informed and reasonable decisions for the public good as citizens (p. 3), for this quality is one of many “hallmarks of excellence” (p. xx). Research, suggested young people “display[ing] leadership aptitude, by the age of 10 (Nelson, 2010, p. 20) are capable of mastering the skills needed to be a leader (Nelson, 2010). Young people while among their peers develop an eagerness to learn and be accepted (Walters & Bowen, 1997) and this “natural leadership ability tends to emerge in early social settings” (Nelson, 2010, p. 21). These interaction and social skills were components of effective leadership, which are “developed ...in adolescence and young adulthood” (Mohamed & Wheeler, 2001, p. 4).

Leadership among youth is a process in which being aware of one’s own ability to lead is part of the developmental stage (Yip & Nadel, 2006). Leadership development among young people brings forth opportunities which build relationships among adults, peers, and allow youth to become involved with community and civic concerns and leads to an “engaged citizenry” (Mohamed & Wheeler, 2001, p. 3). Through leadership development, skills and opportunities to practice the skills emerge, however in addition to this practice young people, “must have a sense of purpose, responsibility, and self-worth” (Wheeler & Roach, 2008, p. 4). The development of leadership skills, not only increases student social skills, involvement and leadership capacity; the enhancement has proved to be associated with an increase in academic performance (Whitehead, 2009). Students with higher GPAs experienced greater leadership abilities over those with lower academic accomplishments (Robinson & Horne, 1993). Leadership skills among young people are required in an effort to function within the demands of society and being workforce ready (Carter & Spotanski, 1989). According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (2013) leadership skills such as being able to work as a team, problem solving and communication skills are skills desired by employers. Leadership was the highest ranking skill of 80% with regard to employers ideal employee candidate (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2013), however when asked to rate new employees, employers gave a 9.98 on a scale of 1-13 for leadership, which shows a continued need for development in leadership qualities and skills among young people (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2013).

Youth leadership evolves from youth development (Kress, 2006). Youth development "requires that young people have stable environments, services, and instruction…relationships and networks that provide nurturing standards, and guidance, as well as opportunities for trying new roles, mastering challenges, and contributing to family and community" (Wheeler & Roach, 2008, p. 4). Many of the qualities and values, which shape citizenship and character development, are responsible for the creation of youth development, which ultimately leads to leadership qualities in young people (Kress, 2006). According to the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability (2005), youth development assist young people with the skills needed to become better informed with the capacity of coping with "the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences that help them to become socially, morally, emotionally, physically, and cognitively competent" (p. 1). Having the opportunity to develop leadership qualities and perceive oneself as a leader was essential to the overall well-being of young people and society (Fertman & Long, 1990). These "opportunities can help aspiring leaders to gain the experience which will propel them towards becoming exceptional leaders" (Kress, 2006, p. 55). Leadership potential, often developed and enhanced when young people are encouraged, validated, supported, given the permission to take risk and make mistakes (Des Marais, Yang, & Farzanehkia, 2000; Fertman & Long, 1990).

The development of leadership competencies among young people were often times embedded within sports participation, civic and volunteer programs (Nelson, 2010).

One criticism towards today’s youth had been the practice of being lazy and not involved with real world issues collectively as a group (Des Marais et al., 2000; Tonon, 2012). Past generations were a part of a cause or a purpose driven by societal issues and concerns (Des Marais et al., 2000). Today’s generation has been labeled as shallow, easily distracted and academically challenged (Tapscott, 2008). This same generation was expected to perform a certain way, however not provided skills, which will prepare them for the expressed expectations (Des Marais et al., 2000). The lack of preparedness was in part due to “adults assum[ing] that leadership is something one earns or grows into. Thus young people cannot possibly be leaders in the present” (Des Marais et al., 2000, p. 679). Adults assume young people are not ready to take on a leadership role, and “have set the bar far too low in the area of youths’ ability to learn leadership skills” (Nelson, 2010, p. 24). This assumption increases the lack of leadership involvement, which had been an important component to leadership growth (Des Marais et al., 2000).

A distinction between learning about leadership and learning leadership (MacNeil & McClean, 2006) is explained as the latter being, involvement and practice, whereas the former focuses on theories with examples of great leaders (Detzler, Van Liew, Dorward, Jenkins, & Teslicko, 2007; MacNeil & McClean, 2006; Phelps & Kotrlik, 2007). Evidence suggested, simulations, role-play and mock experiences and ultimately, real situations have been instruments of measurement for leadership capabilities (Des Marais et al., 2000; Hogan et al., 1994). Creating opportunities for young people to actively participate in leadership action leads to the practice of learning leadership (Des Marais et al., 2000; Guidoccio, 2010; Kress, 2006; MacNeil & McClean, 2006). Youth-focused leadership organizations are beneficial in helping urban students develop the skills and a passion for becoming effective leaders (Detzler et. al., 2007; Guidoccio, 2010; MacNeil & McClean, 2006). Organizations afford young people the opportunity to become actively involved and interact within the shaping of the organizations mission, while demonstrating leadership skills increases its participants leadership capacity (Whitehead, 2009).

Facilitating Leadership in Youth (FLY), an urban leadership organization based in Washington, D.C., encourages and provides young people with an opportunity for active involvement in betterment of their community (Detzler et al., 2007). Student participants of FML were able to stay involved with the organization from elementary through high school (Detzler et al., 2007). Leadership development in the areas of decision making, project management, public speaking, and the facilitation of meetings, is strengthened for participants, while becoming actively involved with community awareness and development, informational publications, city council meetings and advisory groups is increased (Detzler et al., 2007). Engaging youth in authentic leadership experiences has been the most empowering practice for them to exercise leadership capacity (Des Marais et al., 2000; Detzler et al., 2007; MacNeil & McClean, 2006; Mohamed & Wheeler, 2001).

A “dynamic and powerful strategy” (Mohamed & Wheeler, 2001, p. 3), affords young people the forum to “develop and exercise leadership” (Mohamed & Wheeler, 2001, p. 3) while also believing they have the ability to “address societal problems” (Mohamed & Wheeler, 2001, p. 3). An increased participation within community and civic organizations by young people increased their opportunity to experience active team involvement rather than passive participation (Guidoccio, 2010; Nail, 2007; O'Brien &

Kohlmeier, 2003). By serving within a form of leadership capacity, young people exhibit “leadership life skills significantly higher than those students who had not served” (O'Brien & Kohlmeier, 2003, p. 69). Yip, Liu, and Nadel (2006) report, lessons learned through life experience increases the effectiveness of youth development. Youth lack the competencies and experience often afforded to adults and adults are the best facilitators for leadership guidance.

Youth gain most of their leadership experience through involvement with “community, interest groups or service project” (Yip et al., 2006) involvement. Carter and Spotanski (1989) in an effort to uncover if hands-on leadership training over leadership development through curriculum produced students, which were more prepared to handle leadership responsibilities, found the latter to produce more effectively prepared students. Students that participated within youth programs, such as vocational clubs and community service youth organizations, were more likely to acquire self-esteem, effectiveness, communication, and social skills, which are components of leadership and citizenship characteristics (Carter & Spotanski, 1989). A mix of developmental training and curriculum based learning within a leadership development program produced a high noticeability in leadership qualities among young people (Carter & Spotanski, 1989).

Civic engagement and participation among young people allow for learning opportunities in the areas of problem solving, decision making, and collaboration, all which are skills leading to leadership capabilities (Des Marais et al., 2000; Guidoccio, 2010; Kress, 2006; Nail, 2007; National Council for the Social Studies, 1994; Nelson, 2010; O'Brien & Kohlmeier, 2003; Phelps & Kotrlik, 2007) to ensure young people have the "willingness and ability to assume leadership roles" (O'Brien & Kohlmeier, 2003, p. 164). A lack of community and civic involvement among young people has been due to a hesitation of their voice being heard and acted upon by established political leaders, along with the non-realization that "they can make a difference (O'Brien & Kohlmeier, 2003, p. 162). A lack of civic participation and self-esteem decrease the empowerment of young people's abilities to become leaders (Maynard, 2008; O'Brien & Kohlmeier, 2003). Ensuring the empowerment of youth occurs when adults allow active involvement, express acknowledgement, and provide validation and skills for young people (Maynard, 2008).

A shift from creating leaders for tomorrow, towards creating young leaders of today has been suggested in an effort to empower young people to have a voice that addressed the concerns in which they presently live (MacNeil & McClean, 2006). Young people are willing to participate in present day community challenges in an effort to create solutions and contribute towards meaningful change (Wheeler & Roach, 2008). Research suggested, communities which experience problematic issues could see a decline when the youth are more involved with decision making to resolve community concerns (Wheeler & Roach, 2008). Labeling young people as "leaders of tomorrow" (Kress, 2006, p. 54), or "next generation" (Kress, 2006, p. 54) leaders, "limit[s] the power of youth" (Kress, 2006, p. 54) for present day involvement. A challenge for young people occurs when they believe they are overlooked for leadership roles and for participation in leadership programs to develop leadership competencies (Des Marais et al., 2000; Nelson, 2010).

Leadership development and skill building are not privileged only to those participants of athletics and school-based civic organizations, “society cannot rely solely on sports or club actives to develop young leaders” (Whitehead, 2009, p. 866). However, these activities are a springboard to leadership development given the opportunity for, leadership engagement among peers (Dobosz & Beaty, 1999; Whitehead, 2009), increased social skills, and “greater confidence in ... ‘personal’ abilities” (Teasley et al., 2007, p. 94). Research exists suggesting participants of athletic and civic organization being limited in leadership development due to diverting attention away from academics (Coleman, 1961) and being potentially biased based on an exclusivity of race, gender and social-class (Kress, 2006; Whitehead, 2009). Student athletes when compared to other students, which did not participate in sports, experienced greater leadership skills and abilities (Dobosz & Beaty, 1999). Lopez (2006) found in his research, “youth who are involved in sports report higher average levels of civic engagement than their counterparts who do not participate in sports” (p.1). Lopez’s (2006) study concluded that sports participating youth involved themselves in civic citizenship duties such as volunteering, registering to vote, and watching current news.

Far-reaching for students, not labeled as academic scholars, athletes, and civic participants, is the active involvement within leadership opportunities (Fertman & Long, 1990; Nelson, 2010). This group of students lack the self-realization of possessing leadership qualities and capacities (Fertman & Long, 1990; Nelson, 2010). Leadership programs, which focus on developing skills, often leave out the component of self-awareness (Fertman & Long, 1990; Kress, 2006; Nail, 2007; O'Brien & Kohlmeier, 2003; Whitehead, 2009; Yip et al., 2006). Students provided the opportunity for leadership involvement who had never been involved within leadership development programs or activities, showed increased awareness of their individual leadership abilities, and actively demonstrated leadership behaviors (Fertman & Long, 1990). Participation and engagement within leadership and civic citizenship practices afford young people the opportunity to learn from their experience (Kress, 2006; Larson, Walker, & Pearce, 2005). These opportunities and experiences allow the adult reins of restriction to be loosened so that young people gain skills, knowledge, confidence, leadership and teambuilding responsibilities (Kress, 2006) in an effort to develop “their willingness and ability to assume leadership roles” (O'Brien & Kohlmeier, 2003, p. 164).

Summary

In summary, this chapter has presented an attempt to bring forth an understanding of the literature, which pertains to student achievement and involvement with leadership and citizenship practices. The history and intent of the Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps was examined due to its reported academic improvement for participants being increased (Blair, 1999; Bulach, 2002; Elliott et al., 2001; Polson, 1987; Schmidt, 2003) and having a reputation for the increased awareness of character and leadership among participants (DeMoulin & Ritter, 2000). An increased skill level within these areas had positive academic and personal growth outcome for JROTC participants (DeMoulin & Ritter, 2000). The review of literature brought out criticism of JROTC’s academic effectiveness, which argued against improvement among student participant academic achievement (Berlowitz, 2000) due to limited quantifiable data to explain program effectiveness (Lutz & Bartlett, 1995). Despite some criticism of the program, many urban schools which experience numerous challenges for its students, reported the structure, discipline and student accountability reported positive outcomes for its student participants (Bemak et al., 2005; Berlowitz, 2000; Elliott et al., 2001; Price, 2008).

Student athletic participation and academic achievement was another area of investigation. This often debated and researched topic suggested athletic participation promotes positive academic achievement, (Barron et al., 2000; Broh, 2002; Fox et al., 2010; Hartmann, 2008; Jordan, 1999; Klesse & D'Onofrio, 2000; Marsh, 1993; Miller et al., 2005; Rehberg & Schafer, 1968; Tracy & Erkut, 2002; Videon, 2002) while those opposing this view argued, athletic participation is a barrier to academic achievement (Hartmann, 2008, Hartzell & Picou, 1973). The later viewpoint states, time energy and finances are an obstacle to the true nature of education (Hartzell & Picou, 1973). Athletes spend an abundance of time on sports practice instead of applying the time to education (Hartzell & Picou, 1973). Developmental theorist supported athletic participation due to its participants developing skills and habits, which transfer into the classroom (Miller et al., 2005). An abundance of research was found in support of academic achievement for those who participate within sports activities (Burnett, 2001; Broh, 2002; Dobosz & Beaty, 1999; Eccles & Barber, 1999; Fox et al., 2010; Hartmann, 2008; Jordan, 1999; Miller et al., 2005; Nail, 2007; Rehberg, 1969; Samel et al., 2011). Research showed, students involved with sports experience high levels of self-confidence, assertiveness, positive –decision making, and mental and physical well-being (Darling, 2005; Eccles & Barber, 1999; Jordan, 1999; Nail, 2007; Tracy & Erkut, 2002)

The academic achievement of urban high school students were also examined in an effort to uncover the challenges which these students face and how these urban students overcome the obstacles. The challenges stem from external and internal conditions such as unemployment, high crime substandard living and systemic failure of the community, home, and school (Bell, 1979; Billet & Rand Corp, 1978; Sheppard, 2006). Urban schools and its students continue to fall academically below non-urban schools and students (Belluck, 1999; Fram, 2007; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Rojas-LeBouef & Slate, 2012). Urban students taught by less experienced teachers (Griffin, 2006) employ teachers with lower credentials than non-urban schools (Fram, 2007), and experience inconsistent support, low expectations and frustration from school staff (Samel et al., 2011; Sandy & Duncan, 2010; Steele, 2004). Standardized test scores are a reflection of how well students are performing academically within a school (Hillocks, 2002; Morris, 2011; Phillips, 2006; Zucker, 2003). These tools of measurement for district, school and student performance (Lemke et al., 2006; Morris, 2011; Zucker, 2003), show minorities and urban public school districts reported to have the lowest test scores for its schools and students (Green & Griffore, 1980; Pringle et al., 2010; Sandy & Duncan, 2010; Sheppard, 2006). The urban school is a boiling pot for increased academic achievement gap, low graduation rates, high drop-out rates, and high instructor turnover (Baldwin, 2001; Bridgeland et al., 2006; Greene & Forster, 2003; Griffin, 2006; Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; Lippman et al., 1996; Orfield et al., 2004; Patterson et al., 2007; Plank et al., 2008; Roderick et al., V, 2009; Samel et al., 2011; Storer et al., 2012; Swanson, 2004; Venezia et al., 2004). Research suggested, the solution to this crisis is the existence of a climate and culture of nurturing, high expectations, effective and supportive teachers (Butler, 2012; Hoy, 1990; Pringle et al., 2010; Samel et al., 2011; Shaunessy & McHatton, 2009; Sheppard, 2006).

Student perception of themselves has been instrumental in what they believe they can and cannot accomplish (Carter, 2008; Saunders et al., 2004) this is an important factor in academic success, leadership experiences, civic and citizenship involvement. When examining the literature on African American student perception, research showed these students are "perceived as being academically disengaged and intellectually inferior" (Carter, 2008, p. 12) due in part to society's portrayal and view of them (Ward, 2005). Negative stereotyping and media portrayal have transmitted daily messages to African American students of being "undesirable, inadequate, and inferior" (Ward, 2005, p. 262). These negative messages along with external and internal challenges are arguably reasons as to this group of students' low academic performance and low self-perception (Saunders, 2004; Ward, 2005).

Urban high schools implement interventions for the academic success of its students, however these interventions are often time stagnant, lacking in progress monitoring and non-effective in measuring student academic achievement (Sunderman, 2006). Common among initiatives to increase student achievement are Supplemental Educational Services (SES) which provide educational services to supplement learning within poorly performing public schools to raise student achievement (Burch, 2007; Sunderman, 2006). SES providers commonly offer services after school in the area of tutoring, remediation and enrichment (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement (2009). Among the review of literature, limited research was found to support student performance gains as it related to SES programs (Burch, 2007). One area in which students have received positive outcome has been within the Career and Technical Education programs (Plank et al., 2008). Students defined as being at-risk of not completing high school along with those returning to high school benefited the most from CTE programs (Gray, 2004). CTE programs provide a curriculum which prepare students to gain education and job skills allowing them to be occupation or career employment ready after high school graduation (Levesque et al., 2008; Lynch, 2000). Urban schools which experience high drop-out rates were able to enroll at-risk students within its CTE program (Gray, 2004; Plank et al., 2008) in an effort to provide them with "college-level technician training" (Gray, 2004, p. 134). CTE programs provided at-risk and less motivated students with a skill along with continued high school completion (Levesque et al., 2008). Summer learning loss and low achievement gains can be supported with summer school attendance (Cooper et al., 2000). Summer school often provides enrichment opportunities, additional instruction, reinforcement of learning (Sloan et al., 2011), and beneficial skills for academic success (Cooper et al., 2000). Students who attend summer school have decreased delinquency and disciplinary infractions, improved attendance during regular school session, increased self-esteem, and experience a higher likelihood of graduating (Sloan et al., 2011). Long-term academic advancement and a decrease in academic loss over the summer months for summer school participants ultimately leads to high school degree completion and graduation (Cooper et al., 2000; Sloan et al., 2011). In addition to SES and CTE programs, mentoring has been reported to have the most beneficial and long term effects on student academic achievement (Butler, 2003; Gordon et al., 2009; Malone, 2006; MENTOR, 2006; Rhodes & DuBois, 2008; Somers et al., 2009; Schwartz et al., 2012; Schwartz et al., 2011). Attendance, academic motivation, and social skills were some of the reported benefits of students participating in mentoring program (Broussard et al., 2006; Rhodes et al., 2006; Slicker & Palmer, 1993).

This chapter not only looked at urban schools, its students and ways in which academic achievement can be increased, the focus was also on character and citizenship education and leadership development. Character education has historically been the responsibility of the school (Brannon, 2008; Davis, 2006; Vardin, 2003; Jones, 2003) and even more so with the increase of violence within schools (Lickona, 1993). The integration of character education within the core curriculum comes at a time when educators are realizing, character education is responsible for maintain a school environment conducive to learning (Davis, 2006). When character education is embedded within the existing curriculum, students have better academic attitudes themselves and respect for others learning as well (Brannon, 2008). Along with respect of learning and respect of others come respect of society and being a responsible citizen (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006; Davis, 2006; Hoge, 2002; Shields, 2011). In order for young people to become contributing adult members of society, they must develop intellectually, morally, civically, and actively (Shields, 2011).

Another form of development, which must take place among adolescents in order for them to become successful adults, has been leadership development. Many leadership skills such as commitment, relationship building, self-discipline, persuasion, communication and problem solving, are required for basic functioning within society and job performance (Ciulla, 2004; Dobosz & Beaty, 1999; Hogan et al., 1994; National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2013). The National Association of Colleges and Employers (2013) ranks problem solving, communication, and teaming among the highest skills desired by employers. Although research on adult and organizational leadership is plentiful, research on youth and urban youth leadership is limited (Teasley et al., 2007; Whitehead, 2009). What is alarming is the lack of understanding among youth and more specifically urban youth, on what leadership involves and skills and qualities needed for effective leadership (Fertman & Long, 1990; Martinek et al., 2006; Nail, 2007; Nelson, 2010). Along with the citizenship skills being developed among young people for the good of society, the development of leadership skills is needed as well (Dobosz & Beaty, 1999). The National Council for the Social Studies (1994) reports leadership, a quality needed by young people to "make informed and reasonable decisions for the public good as citizens" (p. 3).

The review of literature on leadership development among young people supports an increase of student social skills, leadership capacity, and an increase in academic performance (Whitehead, 2009). Overall, the literature supported academic achievement among students participating within leadership and citizenship engagement and educational programs, which focus on developing the skills, associated with leadership and civic involvement. Chapter Four details the results of this study and Chapter Five is a discussion of these results and implications for future research.

Chapter Three: Methodology

In planning this study, the researcher was “reminded to select instruments having high reliability and validity coefficients, to choose designs which minimize threats to internal and external validity, and select analysis procedures appropriate for testing hypotheses of interest” (Olejnik, 1984, p. 40). Accordingly, “The research community and those using the findings have a right to expect that research be conducted rigorously, scrupulously and in an ethically defensible manner” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 49). The researcher conducted this study in an effort to, “add to the existing body of knowledge” (Kumar, 2011, p. 10), provide evidence which could possibly impact student performance, and also assist with systemic education decisions (Lauer, 2006).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this mixed method study was to compare three groups of students, JROTC students, student athletes, and other students, to determine if there were differences in academic achievement. To evaluate differences, the study included a measure of the difference in self-perception between three groups of 11th-grade students in an urban secondary setting in the areas of leadership skills and citizenship traits. The study was designed to determine which group of students produced higher academic assessment scores based on a standardized assessment and to acquire evidence concerning possible influence of acquired leadership and citizenship skills on academic achievement. A comparison of the 2012 PSAE and ACT assessment results, in addition to self-perceptions of leadership and citizenship traits measured by a Likert-scale survey were examined**.** A mixed method design was chosen in an effort to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research inquiry while also attempting to ensure valid and reliable results (Creswell, 2011; Fraenkel et al., 2012; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007; Lauer, 2006; Maxwell, 2012).

Research Design

The researcher chose to use a mixed method comparison research design to investigate the difference in self-perception between three groups of 11th-grade students in an urban secondary setting (JROTC participants, athletes, and others) for leadership skills and citizenship traits, along with analysis of academic achievement on standardized tests among these three student groups. The design of mixed methods, “typically refers to both data collection techniques and analyses given that the type of data collected is so intertwined with the type of analysis that is used” (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, p. 43). Research supports the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods to “provide a more complete understanding of research problems than [would] the use of either approach alone” (Fraenkel et al., 2012, p. 557). Mixed method studies have been used in order to systematically address the topic of research (Johnson et al., 2007; Maxwell, 2012; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). After reaching out to leading mixed method leaders for their definition of mixed method research, the researcher selected the following definition, “an intellectual and practical synthesis based on qualitative and quantitative research...[that] recognizes the importance of traditional quantitative and qualitative research but offers a powerful third paradigm choice that often will provide the most informative, complete, balanced, and useful research results” (Johnson et al., 2007, p.129). In an effort to ensure a description of specifics, the researcher of this study interpreted “numerical data and statistical analysis [along with] written communications”

(Fraenkel et al., 2012, p. 557). It is the intent of the researcher to demonstrate how “both quantitative and qualitative research are important and useful” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 14) while also showing how the “strengths of the two methods will complement each other and offset each methods respective weaknesses” (Fraenkel et al., 2012, p. 561). Similarly, Creswell (2011) stated, “mixed methods ... provides strengths that offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research” (p. 12).

Research Questions and Hypotheses

According to Maxwell (2012) the research questions, “are the component that most directly links to all the other components of the design” (p. 73). The research question serves two very important functions, assisting the researcher with focus within the study and providing structured guidance (Maxwell, 2012). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) stated, “Mixed methods research is an attempt to legitimate the use of multiple approaches in answering research questions, rather than restricting or constraining” (p. 17).

RQ1: Are there differences and or similarities of perceptions on student leadership among groups of JROTC students, student athletes, and other students?

RQ2: How do students perceive their participation in JROTC or sports as a contribution to their development of leadership skills?

RQ3: How do students perceive their participation in JROTC or sports as a contribution to their development of citizenship traits?

Null Hypothesis 1: No difference will exist in academic achievement, as measured by the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE), between 11th-grade JROTC students, student athletes, and other students with similar GPAs in an urban setting.

Null Hypothesis 2: No difference will exist in student self-perceptions of leadership Skills, defined and measured by the Leadership Skills Inventory, between 11th-grade JROTC students, student athletes, and other students with similar GPAs, in an urban setting.

Null Hypothesis 3: No difference will exist in student self-perceptions of citizenship traits, defined and measured by the Citizenship Scale, between 11th-grade JROTC students, student athletes, and other students with similar GPAs, in an urban setting.

Research Setting

The researched school and the focus of this study was a public co-ed high school located in a Midwest urban setting, which was comprised of numerous communities with a declining population of 26,708 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). The city had a per capita home income of $11,907, and a poverty rate of 42.1% (Illinois School Report Card, 2012; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). As the population of the city declined, so did the student population within the school district. A city, which once had two rival high schools and four middle schools, was now reduced to one high school and two middle schools.

According to the 2012 Illinois School Report Card the city's only high school had a total enrollment of 1,752 students. Ninety eight percent of the student population was identified as Black, of which 96% came from homes with low-incomes (Illinois Interactive Report Card, 2012b; Illinois School Report Card, 2012; Leadership Team, 2011). Eighteen percent of the high school students had an Individual Education Plans (IEP), 71% were identified as chronically truant, and the mobility rate was 14% (Illinois Interactive Report Card, 2012b; Leadership Team, 2011). The graduation rate for the researched high school was 62%, with the state average at 82%, and the dropout rate was 2%, with a state average of 3.8% (Illinois School Report Card, 2012).

The researched school was placed within a negative status for failure to achieve Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) the nine years previous to this study and placed within school improvement due to poor student performance on the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) (Illinois State Board of Education, 2011; Illinois Interactive Report Card, 2010; Leadership Team, 2011). Table 2 illustrates the data, which represents the consistent underachievement of the school district when compared to students throughout the state.

Table 2

Years of Non-Achievement Measured by Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and Composite Meets/ Exceeds Percent

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
School	14	13	14	13	12	11	9	12	8
State	62	65	73	74	75	76	76	77	77

Note: Adapted from Illinois Interactive Report Card 2012b.

The high school reported decreasing student performance in both math and reading scores on the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) and was underperforming when compared to the state averages of other students on this assessment within the state of Illinois (Illinois School Report Card, 2012; Illinois Interactive Report Card, 2012b). Table 3 displays student data, which demonstrated a low percentage of the testing population scoring in the meets/exceeds categories when compared to the state student data.

Table 3

PSAE Percentage of Meet/Exceeds Within the Areas of Mathematics and Reading

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
School Math Scores	7	9	10	10	11	8	6	10	5
State Math Scores	53	53	54	53	53	52	53	51	52
School Reading Scores	18	21	20	15	13	13	14	14	10
State Reading Scores	57	60	58	54	53	57	54	51	51

Note: Adapted from Illinois Interactive Report Card 2012b.

The researched school had many challenges other than inadequate student performance. Numerous administrators were charged with the duty of managing and overseeing the improvement of the school and its students, however the turnover rate was ongoing with a new administrator and staff every year for six years previous to this study (Leadership Team, 2011). Parental and community involvement was all but non-existent due to the feeling of disconnectedness with the school and the district (Leadership Team, 2011). Due to mismanagement of district funds, staff was decreased over the three years previous to this study. Failing and ineffective operational practices led to non-compliance of state mandated goals and the intervention of the Illinois State Board of Education to appoint a new superintendent for four years, in an effort to create systems of accountability, bring improvement to student achievement, and structure to the researched school district and school building (Illinois State Board of Education, 2011).

Research Population

This study involved urban public high school 11th-grade students who participated in administration of the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE). This population was chosen based upon for the availability of measurements of student achievement, represented by scores on the PSAE and the PSAE, which included components of ACT and WorkKeys assessments as benchmarks for college and career readiness skills. Of this PSAE tested population, the sample population consisted students with similar cumulative grade point averages of 2.0 or above. Students were also included due to participation in the JROTC program provided by the school district and active involvement in sports. To provide points of comparison, other students who did not participate in JROC, sports, or extracurricular activities were included.

Sample and Sampling Method

The sample population was acquired based on both randomization and stratified sampling methods. Stratified sampling, "is used when the proportion of subgroups (strata) are known in the population; selection is random but from each of these strata" Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, p, 75). The researcher of this study focused on identification of three different groups of students with similar GPAs within the researched school. After stratifying the population into GPA categories, the researcher stratified the category lists into the three the three activities identified for study, and then performed randomization to create the three samples used for analysis. The aim of a stratified random sample was to ensure the research groups were proportionately represented and unbiased (Fraenkel et al., 2012; Johnson & Christensen, 2004).

In order to proceed with randomization of the stratified population lists, student names were coded with a mixture of student school identification and lunch identification numbers. Johnson and Christenson (2004) discussed sampling as the process of studying "the characteristics of a subset ... selected from a larger group... to understand the characteristics of the larger group" (p. 197). Using an online randomizer, the researcher entered the individual student codes and used the generated randomized list to select the sample population of forty-five participants, one for each of the three groups of students. This random sampling technique was used to “produce a “good” sample” (Johnson & Christenson, 2004, p. 198), which was unbiased (Johnson & Christenson, 2004; Lauer, 2006) “in which every member of the population [had] an equal chance of being selected” (Johnson & Christenson, 2004, p. 200). A sample of the population which is 30 or larger “are much more likely to provide meaningful results” (Fraenkel et al., 2012, p. 338) therefore a sample size of 45 students per each three like groups were chosen based on a realistic expectation of student willingness to participate and parent consent.

Participants

Participants with similar GPAs were identified from the total 11th-grade population. The researcher identified from this similar GPA group, 45 student participants from the JROTC enrollment report. To identify the 45 student athlete participants, the researcher acquired the sports participant report from the school athletic director. In an effort to identify the third group of “other students,” the researcher reviewed the student enrollment information documents to determine possible non-involvement in extra curriculum activities as the criterion for inclusion. Once the population from each of the strata was identified, the researcher notified parents through a letter requesting study participation. Along with the letter of request, the consent to participate, description of the study, and its purpose were included. Parental permission was essential to the research study, since the participants were under the age of 18. Participant privacy and confidentiality was maintained during both the administration of surveys and the collection of assessment results. All participant names were removed from documents and replaced with the generated codes during the data collection period, along with proper handling of documents placed at an offsite secured location. Invitation to participate within the study was voluntary.

The initial intent of the researcher was to include all 45 student participants from each of the three randomly stratified lists in the study. The parental response to the 45 mailed notification letters, returned fewer than 40 for each stratum. The parental response for athletic participants was 80%, (36 students) JROTC response was 84%, (38 students) and sixty-eight percent 68%, and (31 students) for other students. After receiving fewer than 40 consent letters from each of the three student groups, and consulting with a statistical expert, the researcher chose to decrease the sample size from 45 to 30.

Data Collection

For the purpose of this study, the Leadership Skills Inventory (Townsend & Carter, 1981) and the Citizenship Scale (Narvaez et al., 2004; Narvaez, 2008) were administered to measure participant perception of individual leadership and citizenship skills. Separately the three participant groups were given the Likert-scale surveys three times during the school year by the secondary school counselor. The surveys were given during the months of September, January, and April of the 2011 and 2012 school year. Student participants were issued passes to be excused from their class and relocate to a confidential area where diagnostic assessments were frequently administered. Five student participants from each of the three student groups were randomly selected to participate in interviews conducted by the secondary school counselor. The same confidential method used for the surveys was also followed for the interviews. The interviews were scheduled to be conducted during the months of April and May, however due to the secondary school counselor being relocated to a satellite campus, the researcher was limited in securing another counselor which resulted in conducting written questionnaires consisting of the same interview questions. The written questionnaires were given to ten randomly selected participants in the month of May.

Data from the PSAE-ACT portion was accessed in June from preliminary test scores received from the Illinois State Board of Education. Data from the PSAE WorkKeys section was accessed in late July from the Illinois Interactive Report Card website (IIRC) and final assessment results received from the Illinois State Board of Education. Student participant PSAE scores were identified by matching student ID numbers to individual test scores.

Instrumentation

According to Fraenkel et al. (2012), the whole process of preparing to collect data is called “instrumentation” (p. 111). Two separate Likert-scale surveys were used to “discover attitudes by asking individuals to respond to a series of statements of preference” (Fraenkel et al., 2012, p. 126) and uncover emerging patterns among participants. Research concluded, “The pattern of responses …viewed as evidence of one or more underlying attitude” (Fraenkel et al., 2012, p. 126). Lauer (2006) stated “Scaled questionnaires (also called attitude scales) are often used to measure attitudes and beliefs. Most scaled questionnaires use a Likert scale, in which respondents are given choices reflecting varying degrees of intensity” (p. 37).

The first instrument, the Leadership Skills Inventory (LSI), was developed and tested by Townsend and Carter (1981) at Iowa State University. The LSI was used numerous times for the purpose of assessing self-perceptions of students' leadership skills (Townsend & Carter, 1981), and reliability was consistent (Caudle, 2007; Thorp, 1998). The LSI included 21 questions, based on five interval subscales consisting of (1) working with groups, (2) understanding self, (3) making decisions, (4) communicating, and (5) leadership (Townsend & Carter, 1981). Responses were based on a five-point scale value: 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=neutral, 4= agree, and 5= strongly agree.

The second survey instrument, the Citizenship Scale (Narvaez et al., 2004; Narvaez, 2008) was developed to measure honesty, trustworthiness, rule following, and conscientiousness. This 12-item survey was also based on a five–point Likert-scale response with the following assignments: 1= never agree, 2= rarely agree, 3=not sure, 4= usually agree, and 5= always agree. For dependability and consistency, "Previous research with high school ... students found a Cronbach's reliability of .93" (Narvaez, 2008, para. 4).

Questionnaires were given to a random sample of 10 participants from each of the three student groups. Questionnaires are useful because they can be administered to a group of individuals at the same time, however opportunity for both the respondent and researcher to gain question and answer clarity are limited (Fraenkel et al., 2012.

According to Fraenkel et al. (2012) "Most, but not all, research requires use of an instrument. In studies where data are obtained exclusively from existing records (grades, attendance, etc.), no instrument is needed" (p. 111). Student assessment data from the PSAE was gathered from the Illinois State Board of Education and Illinois Interactive Report Card, for the purpose of analyzing student test scores.

Data Analysis

Each of the three student participant groups defined the qualitative data, which was gathered from the 2011-2012 PSAE student assessment score. Test score data was received by the researcher through the district's data coordinator in early July of 2012. The researcher chose to analyze three areas within the PSAE assessment, which included the overall composite score, ACT scores, and WorkKeys scores. When analyzing the quantitative data, an ANOVA and subsequent *z*-test for difference in means was conducted, as necessary, on each of the three PSAE assessment areas of inquiry. Before conducting the ANOVA, to determine whether a variance for the three sets of data existed, the researcher first conducted an *F*-test for difference in variance.

The researcher created a frequency distribution table in Microsoft Excel to summarize, categorize, and disaggregate data (Fraenkel et al., 2012) from both surveys. An ANOVA followed by a *z*-test for difference in means was conducted on the PSAE subtest scores and the overall average response on both the leadership and citizenship perception surveys, as well as the responses to individual questions to analyze potential differences in participant perceptions and attitudes.

The researcher administered written questionnaires to a random sample of 10 students from each of the three groups instead of the intended interviews due to movement of personnel away from the main campus.

Emerging themes and key terms from the questionnaires were categorized in the areas of (1) Involvement, (2) Confidence, (3) Leadership, (4) Goal Setting, (5) Citizenship, (6) Academic Performance, (7) Hard Work, and (8) Time Management.

Categories and emerging themes from the questionnaire data allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding on the perceptions and attitudes of the participants.

Summary

Chapter Three discussed the research methods used in this mixed method study. The research conducted, investigated potential perceived differences among three groups of 11th-grade students in the areas of leadership skills and citizenship traits and measureable differences in academic achievement on standardized test. Data was gathered through administration of two different Likert-scale surveys for the purpose of measuring self-perceived leadership and citizenship skills, a questionnaire, and analysis of student standardized test scores. Chapter Three discussed the methodology of research design, sampling method, data collection, instrumentation, and the data analysis procedures. Chapter Four presents the data results, and the conclusions along with research recommendations are included in Chapter Five.

Chapter Four: Results

The researcher conducted a mixed methods research design to investigate the measurable and perceived differences among three groups of 11th-grade students in the areas of leadership skills, citizenship traits, and academic achievement on standardized test. The purpose was to identify if a measurable difference existed among a group of students' academic assessment scores based on a standardized assessment and the possible influence of acquired leadership and citizenship skills on academic achievement. Student assessment data was acquired from the Illinois PSAE, which includes ACT and WorkKeys assessment scores. The Leadership Skills and the Citizenship Inventories provided self-reported data for student leadership and citizenship perceptions. Qualitative data consisted of questionnaires, which were completed by research participants.

Quantitative Data

Null Hypothesis 1: No difference will exist in academic achievement, as measured by the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE), between 11th-grade JROTC students, student athletes, and other students with similar GPAs in an urban setting.

The researcher conducted an analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine if a "significant difference between the means of more than two groups" (Fraenkel et al., 2012, p. 236) existed between the three groups of students on each of the six sub-test areas of the PSAE. The six subtest areas were: combined reading, combined math, ACT reading, ACT math, WorkKeys reading, and WorkKeys math.

Null Hypothesis 1a: No difference will exist in academic achievement, as measured by the combined reading subtest on the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE), between

11th-grade JROTC students, student athletes, and other students with similar GPAs in an urban setting.

Table 4 displays the results for the applied ANOVA for difference in means of the PSAE combined reading scores for the three student groups.

Table 4

PSAE Combined Reading

Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*
JROTC	30	4353	145.100	100.162
Athletes	30	4355	145.166	96.005
Other	30	4300	143.333	112.436

ANOVA

Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between Groups	64.866	2	32.433	0.315	0.730	3.101
Within Groups	8949.533	87	102.868			
Total	9014.400	89				

Comparison of the *F*-test value of 0.315 to the *F*-critical value of 3.101 confirmed non-rejection of the null hypothesis. The data does not support a significant difference in academic achievement using standardized assessments measured by the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE), between 11th-grade JROTC students, student athletes, and other students within an urban setting with similar GPAs for the combined reading subtest of the PSAE.

Null Hypothesis 1b: No difference will exist in academic achievement, measured by the combined math subtest on the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE), between 11th-grade JROTC students, student athletes, and other students with similar GPAs in an urban setting.

Table 5 displays the results for the applied ANOVA for difference in means of the

PSAE combined math scores for the three student groups.

Table 5

PSAE Combined Math

Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*
JROTC	30	4340	144.666	115.264
Athletes	30	4271	142.366	98.240
Other	30	4258	141.933	91.029

ANOVA

Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between Groups	129.488	2	64.744	0.637	0.530	3.101
Within Groups	8831.500	87	101.511			
Total	8960.988	89				

Comparison of the F-test value of 0.6378 to the F-critical value of 3.103 confirmed non-rejection of the null hypothesis. The data does not support a significant difference in academic achievement using standardized assessments measured by the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE), between 11th-grade JROTC students, student athletes, and other students within an urban setting with similar GPAs for the combined math subtest of the PSAE.

Null Hypothesis 1c: No difference will exist in academic achievement, measured by the ACT reading subtest on the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE), between 11th-grade JROTC students, student athletes, and other students with similar GPAs in an urban setting.

Table 6 displays the results for the applied ANOVA for difference in means of the ACT reading scores for the three student groups.

Table 6

PSAE ACT Reading

Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*
JROTC	30	463	15.433	13.840
Athletes	30	449	14.966	14.171
Other	30	452	15.066	18.202

ANOVA

Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between Groups	3.622	2	1.811	0.117	0.889	3.101
Within Groups	1340.000	87	15.404			
Total	1344.000	89				

Comparison of the *F*-test value of 0.117 to the *F*-critical value of 3.101 confirmed a non-rejection of the null hypothesis. The data does not support a significant difference in academic achievement using standardized assessments measured by the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE), between 11th-grade JROTC students, student athletes, and other students within an urban setting with similar GPAs for the ACT reading subtest of the PSAE

Null Hypothesis 1d: No difference will exist in academic achievement, measured by the ACT math subtest on the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE), between 11th-grade JROTC students, student athletes, and other students with similar GPAs in an urban setting.

Table 7 displays the results for the applied ANOVA for difference in means of the ACT math scores for the three student groups.

Table 7

PSAE ACT Math

Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*
JROTC	30	496	16.533	6.602
Athletes	30	478	15.933	3.926
Other	30	464	15.466	2.809

ANOVA

Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between Groups	17.155	2	8.577	1.929	0.151	3.101
Within Groups	386.800	87	4.445			
Total	403.955	89				

Comparison of the *F*-test value of 1.929 to the *F*-critical value of 3.101 confirmed a non-rejection of the null hypothesis. The data does not support a significant difference in academic achievement using standardized assessments measured by the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE), between 11th-grade JROTC students, student athletes, and other students within an urban setting with similar GPAs for the ACT math subtest of the PSAE.

Null Hypothesis 1e: No difference will exist in academic achievement, measured by the WorkKeys reading subtest on the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE), between 11th-grade JROTC students, student athletes and other students with similar GPAs in an urban setting.

Table 8 displays the results for the applied ANOVA for difference in means of the WorkKeys reading scores for the three student groups.

Table 8

PSAE WorkKeys Reading

Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*
JROTC	30	131	4.366	0.791
Athletes	30	135	4.500	0.672
Other	30	120	4.000	0.896

ANOVA

Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between Groups	4.022	2	2.011	2.555	0.083	3.101
Within Groups	68.47	87	0.786			
Total	72.49	89				

Comparison of the *F*-test value of 2.555 to the *F*-critical value of 3.101 confirmed a non-rejection of the null hypothesis. The data does not support a significant difference in academic achievement using standardized assessments measured by the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE), between 11th-grade JROTC students, student athletes, and other students within an urban setting with similar GPAs for the WorkKeys reading subtest of the PSAE.

Null Hypothesis 1f: No difference will exist in academic achievement, measured by the WorkKeys math subtest on the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE), between 11th-grade JROTC students, student athletes, and other students with similar GPAs in an urban setting.

Table 9 displays the results for the applied ANOVA for difference in means of the WorkKeys reading scores for the three student groups.

Table 9

PSAE WorkKeys Math

Groups	*Sample size*	*Sum*	*Mean*	*Variance*
JROTC	30	114.	3.800	1.544
Athletes	30	110.	3.666	1.678
Other	30	113.	3.766	1.288

ANOVA

Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*p-level*	*F crit*
Between Groups	0.288	2	0.144	0.096	0.908	3.101
Within Groups	130.833	87	1.503			
Total	131.122	89				

Comparison of the *F*-test value of 0.096 to the *F*-critical value of 3.101 confirmed a non-rejection of the null hypothesis. The data does not support a significant difference in academic achievement using standardized assessments measured by the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE), between 11th-grade JROTC students, student athletes, and other students within an urban setting with similar GPAs for the WorkKeys math subtest of the PSAE.

Null Hypothesis 2: No difference will exist in student self-perceptions of leadership skills, defined and measured by the Leadership Skills Inventory, between 11th-grade JROTC students, student athletes, and other students with similar GPAs in an urban setting.

A single factor ANOVA was applied to the Leadership Skills Inventory survey data. As shown in Table 10, an analysis of the data resulted in a non-rejection of the null hypothesis due to the *F*-test value of 1.553 falling below the *F*-critical region of 3.142. The researcher concluded that the data did not support a significant difference in student perceptions of leadership skills, defined and measured by the Leadership Skills Inventory.

Table 10

Leadership Skills

Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*
JROTC Leadership Skills	22	98.1	4.459	0.054
Other Leadership Skills	22	95.1	4.322	0.131
Athletes Leadership Skills	22	97.9	4.450	0.060

ANOVA

Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between Groups	0.256	2	0.127	1.553	0.219	3.142
Within Groups	5.187	63	0.082			
Total	5.443	65				

Null Hypothesis 3: No difference will exist in student self-perceptions of citizenship traits, defined and measured by the Citizenship Scale, between 11th-grade JROTC students, student athletes, and other students with similar GPAs in an urban setting.

Table 11

Citizenship Skills

Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*
JROTC Citizenship Skills	13	20.1	1.546	0.052
Other Citizenship Skills	13	19.1	1.469	0.088
Sports Citizenship Skills	13	19.5	1.500	0.605

ANOVA

Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between Groups	0.038	2	0.019	0.078	0.924	3.259
Within Groups	8.960	36	0.248			
Total	8.998	38				

A single factor ANOVA was applied to the Citizenship Scale survey data. As shown in Table 11, an analysis of the data resulted in non-rejection of the null hypothesis due to the *F*-test value of 0.078 falling below the *F*-critical region of 3.259. The researcher concluded that the data does not support a significant difference in student perceptions of citizenship traits defined and measured by the Citizenship Scale.

Qualitative Data

This section discloses the categories and themes identified from administration of open-ended questionnaires to study participants. According to Johnson and Christensen (2004) "Open-ended questions are valuable when the researcher needs to know what people are thinking" (p. 169). The researcher analyzed the text by first coding. Coding is defined as "the process of marking segments of data (usually text data) with...descriptive words, or category names" (Johnson & Christensen, 2004, p. 502). According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998), "The essence of qualitative data analysis of any type is the development of a typology of categories or themes that summarize a mass of narrative data" (p. 119). The qualitative data was grouped into eight categories, "content analyzed" (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, p. 128), and discussed for each of the three groups of research participants.

The first category was involvement. Questionnaire responses from students within the athletes group described participation in extracurricular activities as involved within a variety of activities in and outside of school sports activities. Respondents described sports involvement as a regular part of their lives and an opportunity to experience success with teammates who are friends. One student athlete responded, "My involvement with sports is a big hobby of mine. I keep sports in my life so I can stay active, keep in shape, feel good about myself, and be a part of a winning team with my friends." Another student athlete discussed involvement within sports leading to team victories when stating, "My involvement with sports is for me to show my talents and how hard I am willing to work for the team to win." The student athletes mentioned the many sports and activities they were involved with, "I am involved in volleyball, basketball, track and field. I am also involved with summer track and field and I participate in summer sports camps with little kids"; "I run track, play basketball and play baseball in the summer." The athlete student group linked involvement with playing sports and participating in recreational activities.

Responses from the JROTC student group uncovered a wealth of involvement within the program. These participants discussed the drive for continued involvement in an effort to earn rank and recognition from JROTC peers and instructors. Being involved and looked upon as a leader was evident with the response of, "My involvement in JROTC has been uplifting. I earned a Cadet Captain rank and became a class leader while participating in color guard." And additionally with, "I am involved in color guard and serve as a flight leader. Being a flight leader means my class thinks I am a good person to follow." Being recognized for involvement and leadership ability was evident in the following response, "I participate in the JROTC color guard, drill team and flight commander while also earning the rank of Cadet Captain. My classmates look up to me as Cadet Captain and my instructor recognizes me as a class leader." Research participants among the other student group expressed low involvement and participation with extracurricular activities in and outside of school. Responses were, "I do not have a lot of involvement in my school"; "I go to class and participate as much as possible. I don’t play any sports or anything”; and “I volunteer a lot, but I don’t do anything at school except go to class.” Along with expressing low involvement, some respondents disclosed a feeling of not belonging within the school environment due to popularity. One of the students within this group responded, “If you don’t play sports you aren’t popular and don’t get picked to do fun stuff or be a part of fun school stuff.” Another student responded, “I’m not really involved because I don’t hang out with the popular crowd. I ran for class secretary and lost because I’m not popular.”

Confidence was the next category examined. For student athletes, confidence was most prominent among the categories. Respondents noted a high level and self-awareness of individual confidence. One student commented, “On a scale of 1-10 my confidence is a 10.” Another comment was, “I am very confident in myself and everything I do.” Student athletes noted high confidence during game play and involvement with sports when stating, “ I have a very high level of confidence. I am very confident when I play sports” and “My level of confidence with sports is high.”

The JROTC student group expressed high levels of confidence. This group of respondents listed their confidence levels in rank order. Three of the 10 JROTC respondents stated, “On a rank scale of 1-10 my confidence is a 10”; “Before JROTC I was a 4; now I am a 9”; and “I am a 10.” Another JROTC student discussed an increased level of confidence since being involved with the program, “ My level of confidence is increasing. I have tried and accomplished things I didn’t expect to accomplish.”

Confidence among the other student group was highly reported. Four of the other student group participants responded, “My confidence is very high”; “I am confident that I do my best”; “I am confident because I believe in myself”; and “I always think positive and stay confident so I can do my best at what I do." Respondents disclosed a self-reported awareness for knowing what self-confidence is and individual high levels of confidence. One student responded, "I feel good about myself and know when I do a good job it makes my confidence get bigger." Another student added, "It is very high because I know my strengths and I have learned to accept my weaknesses and work on them." Some of the respondents within the other student group mentioned learning from mistakes and overcoming insecurities when stating, "When I came to this high school I was insecure because of so many new people. Once I made friends my confidence was high"; and "I was very insecure and had low confidence when I was at the middle school. I will graduate next year so my confidence has to be high before I go to college. It's an 8 now and I need it to be a 10."

Thirdly, the category of leadership was analyzed. Each of the 10 student athletes disclosed leadership role involvement or holding a leadership position. One of the student athletes stated, "I have been the captain of my eighth grade volleyball and basketball team and the captain of the high school junior varsity basketball team." Another stated, "I am the captain of the basketball team." Eight of the student athletes listed each of the leadership roles they were or had been involved within. One of the respondents discussed a leadership role outside of sports when remarking, "Yes, I was the head treasurer for my eighth grade class. I am the track drill leader and the summer sports camp activity leader."

Leadership among JROTC students was highly reported as well. This respondent group noted high levels of leadership involvement and leadership roles when mentioning, "My leadership skills are a 10. The past three years I have held the role of flight commander. This is a leadership role that I have to be confident in because I am leading by example"; "I would say I rank a 9. I am a flight commander and an element leader"; and "I am a flight leader so I would say I am a 10." One of the responses mentioned leadership and the possibility of receiving a higher rank when stating, "Being involved in JROTC means you have to have leadership skills, especially if you want to move up in rank. I would say I am a 10 on a scale of 1-10."

Leadership responses among the other student group revealed this group held leadership roles within a classroom setting or among friends when making decisions. When asked about holding a leadership role, one student responded, "When I am with my friends I am the most outspoken to decide what we do." Three students expressed being a leader within the classroom and stated, "Yes I am always the group spokesperson when the teacher puts the class into groups"; "If the class gets out of control I can get everyone back to work and calm down"; and "I am the one that can get the teacher to postpone a test or let us use our notes. The class gets me to go talk to the teacher."

The fourth category on the questionnaires was goal setting. The student athlete participants equated goal setting with making up your mind to achieve a certain task. The responses were, "You have to have the right mind set. You have to know exactly what you want to do and how you are trying to get there." Another student mentioned, "You have to have a mind set to believe in yourself." The student athlete respondents to this question did not go into detail about actual steps needed for goal setting. However, they were aware that goal setting was a component of achievement with the responses of, "I think you have to have the ability and skill to keep a strong mind set to set and achieve goals" and "You have to be able to focus and stay on the right path."

Goal setting for the JROTC student group consisted of making a plan and mapping out how goals would be achieved. Three of the JROTC students responded, "I make a list of what my goals are or what I want to accomplish and I write down what I need to complete to get my goal"; "JROTC taught me how to write out my goals and write how what I need to do to get that goal completed"; and "I set my goals of going to college and becoming a journalist or a motivational speaker and I know that I have to become a better public speaker and take communication classes in college."

The other student group participants noted earning good grades towards academic achievement and getting into college were goals they had set in motion at the time of this study. "I knew what college I wanted to attend when I was a sophomore. I started working towards getting a high enough ACT score to be accepted as soon as I went to visit the campus." Some of the students within this group did not discuss actual goal steps for achieving their aspirations but equated goal setting with the aspirations of college acceptance and succeeding in life. One student stated, "Yes, I set goals that will help me succeed in life. My goals this year are good grades and college acceptance next year." Another student stated, "I know what I want out of life and I know that graduating from high school with a good ACT score will help me get into college and get a good job." A goal which would bring pride upon an entire family was expressed when one of the students mentioned, "I want to be the first person in my family to graduate from college."

The citizenship category indicated the student athletes were lacking in awareness of the citizenship concept. Participant answers took on the tone of being a part of a community rather than being active within the community. Some of the student responses were, “Citizenship is knowing that you belong with everyone else”; “A person living in the United States as a leader or citizen”; and “Someone who lives in the community.”

JROTC student group respondents discussed, in detail, citizenship traits. This student group had responses which were more informed on what citizenship consisted of than the student athlete group. One response described citizenship as, “A person who puts service before self, one that will help those who need assistance and a person who can serve nation and community.” Two other students’ descriptions were, “Volunteering, public service, and knowing what it means to be and acting like a contributing citizen of society” and “Community service and being productive and an active citizen.” Finally, “Becoming involved in society to better our nation and taking pride in our country, not just sitting back and complaining about what is wrong” was noted as civic and citizenship involvement.

Citizenship awareness appeared non-existent among the other student group. Respondents gave no response to the question, or gave an answer lacking in substance. Several students responded, “I’m not sure” or “ I don’t know.” Three students within this other student group equated citizenship with individual behavior and stated citizenship was, “Good behavior”; “Doing what you’re supposed to do, being responsible”; and “Doing something right.” One student cited, “Helping others and doing what needs to be done,” as civic involvement and understanding what citizenship consist of.

The category of academic performance was expressed with strong comments among the student athlete group. These respondents related academic success on standardized tests as relevant to their college and career readiness. A couple of the student athletes spoke of academics; “performance is very important, it prepares me for college” and “It is very important because no one wants to recruit an athlete with low test scores.” Two students noted that academic test performance was important because, “performance on the test[s] determine my future” and test performance will “help me to get into a good college and help me get a good job.”

JROTC students expressed what was expected of them as students and the relationship the expectations had on their academic performance. JROTC students communicated, “Academic performance shows my potential. My instructors expect me to be a better student because of the uniform that I wear.” Students within this group further communicated, “Being a part of JROTC means that my test scores should be high. Being a part of JROTC means that I am expected to get good grades, be a leader for others and have a good career after college.” According to the responses, this student group experienced a high level of expectation from others, and this was evident in the comment, “If I don’t do well on the PSAE or get a good ACT score my JROTC instructors will be a little disappointed in me. They expect us to be our best and we should want to be the best. If my scores are bad I’m not the best JROTC cadet.”

The academic performance category among the other student group provided evidence of participants’ claims of importance and a link between this theme and the theme of goal setting. One student stated, “My academic performance is very important; it’s about my future and goals for success in my life.” Another student responded, “Very important, it means everything to me to pass and succeed.” Two of the responses linked academic performance with ACT test when commenting, “My performance is important because my ACT scores will determine my college acceptance" and "I believe it is very important because it determines my future in college (ACT) and my GPA is looked at also."

The next category was student perception of hard word. The theme of hard work continued to emerge throughout the responses given by student athletes. When student athletes discussed being a leader on and off the court or field, being a hard worker or having to show persistence was evident. One student discussed, "You can only be a leader if you are willing to work hard," while another student stated, "I had to keep showing my coach that I was willing to work hard to get the captain position. I was very persistent and dedicated to the long practice time." Additionally, hard work was again expressed when a student noted, "I have always been dedicated to my sports and my hard work pays off."

The category of hard work was noticed repeatedly among the JROTC student group responses. Student responses consisted of "performing drill is hard work, you have to stay focused and remember which call goes with each movement," and "we are expected to be disciplined in everything we do, being disciplined is hard work for a lazy person." Over half of the JROTC student responses included the phrase, "hard work."

The theme of hard work was not evident when analyzing the other student group questionnaires. These respondents discussed goal setting and being academically driven, however the discussion of working hard and being dedicated did not come through when analyzing the data.

Lastly. the category of time-management was examined. Student athlete respondents expressed systemic procedures for time management. All of these participants noted a process for keeping their schedule organized and managed. Student athletes mentioned managing “time by doing certain things at a certain time and set how many minutes it’s going to take to get the big jobs done” and practice setting “a time limit for the things that I have to do.” Three students mentioned organization and stated, “I keep my schedule organized. I make sure nothing is at the time I have to do homework or practice”; “I put everything on my calendar”; and “I have a dry erase calendar in my room and I fill in all my assignment, drill practices, and JROTC meetings. If I get everything done then I will relax and watch TV or get on Facebook.”

Evidence of structure came through when the JROTC student group discussed time management. This group noted procedures, which ensured discipline for time management stating, “If I don’t manage my time I will miss deadlines and assignment. If I miss assignment and deadlines I will have to deal with the consequences of possibly getting bad grades,” and “Managing my time and having an organized life is the key to making sure I stay on task and meet my goals.” Students within this group discussed missing out on socialization time in order to stay on task and in line with goals they had set. Two students stated, “I have to stay focused and disciplined in completing my homework and studying hard. I don’t always get to hang out when my friends are having fun,” and “A lot of times I see my friends going to hang out but I don’t go because I have things to do, things that I have committed to. Getting my homework and school assignments done is important to me that comes first.”

Time management was consistently discussed among responses from the other student group. These respondents noted various methods for managing and scheduling their time. One student mentioned, “I complete the hardest things first and then do the easier stuff last.” Two other students stated, “I do what’s important first”; “I make a weekly list and check stuff off as it's completed. This list lets me know what I have to do and what play time I have"; and lastly "I have a routine and I stick with it. I get home from school get my clothes ready for the next day, do chores, do my homework, and sleep. The weekend is when I do nothing."

Categories and emerging themes from the questionnaire data allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the perceptions and attitudes of the participants.

Summary

Chapter Four examined six sub-test scores of the PSAE assessment along with survey and questionnaire data. After analysis of the sub-test PSAE data was completed, the null hypotheses were not rejected, and the alternative hypotheses not supported. Data did not support a significant difference in academic achievement, as measured by the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE), between 11th-grade JROTC students, student athletes, and other students with similar GPAs in an urban setting. The statistical analysis for the Leadership Skills Inventory and the Citizenship Scale, resulted in a lack of support for a significant difference in student perceptions of Leadership Skills, defined and measured by the Leadership Skills Inventory, and also for citizenship traits, defined and measured by the Citizenship Scale, between 11th-grade JROTC students, student athletes, and other students with similar GPAs in an urban setting.

An analysis of the questionnaires examining the eight categories: (1) Involvement, (2) Confidence, (3) Leadership, (4) Goal Setting, (5) Citizenship, (6) Academic Performance, (7) Hard Work, and (8) Time Management, was explored and discussed within this chapter. Chapter Five presents a discussion of the results found in Chapter Four, and concludes with the researcher giving implications and interpretations of the results along with recommendations for future research.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Reflection

The purpose of this study was to determine the difference between three groups of 11th-grade students in terms of their academic achievement, self-perceptions of leadership skills, and self-perceptions of citizenship. Academic measurement data was measured using the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE), comprised of the American College Test (ACT), and the WorkKeys assessment. The Leadership Skills Inventory and the Citizenship Scale measured student self-perceptions of leadership and citizenship skills.

In an effort to determine the difference between three groups of 11th-grade students in terms of their academic achievement, the researcher conducted an *F*-test for difference in variance on each of the three PSAE assessment areas of inquiry, followed by statistical testing of six sub-tests of the PSAE. An ANOVA for difference in variance was also conducted on data from the leadership and citizenship self-perception surveys. Responses to individual questions to analyze participant perceptions and attitudes provided qualitative data for the study. Due to failure to reject the null hypotheses for the quantitative data, further testing was not needed. Questionnaires which were administered explored eight categories: (1) Involvement, (2) Confidence, (3) Leadership, (4) Goal Setting, (5) Citizenship, (6) Academic Performance, (7) Hard Work, and (8) Time Management, which were analyzed and discussed, for each of the JROTC students, student athletes, and other students groups.

Discussion

The study results were not what the researcher anticipated. The results indicated that potential development of leadership and citizenship skills through varied involvement or non-involvement in athletics and JROTC did not contribute to a difference in academic achievement within the researched population; regardless of numerous studies, which suggested participation within leadership roles and active engagement in citizenship activities promote positive academic achievement, (Barron et al., 2000; Bemak et al., 2005; Berlowitz, 2000; Broh, 2002; Elliott et al., 2001; Fox et al., 2010; Hartmann, 2008; Jordan, 1999; Klesse & D'Onofrio, 2000; Marsh, 1993; Miller et al., 2005 ; Price, 2008; Rehberg & Schafer, 1968; Tracy & Erkut, 2002; Videon, 2002).

The results of this study are in line with a review of the literature in one specific area, which reports quantifiable data supports JROTC program involvement association with increased academic success is non-existent (Berlowitz, 2000; Lutz & Bartlett, 1995). Researchers have suggested an increase in adult preparedness, discipline, and self-confidence. School-based outcomes, within JROTC programs, which measure academic success lacked research proven results.

The data from this study supported arguments which suggest "no specific relationship [exists] between sports participation and academic performance" (Fisher et al., 1996, p. 333). Previous research further suggested, that athletic participation was a barrier to academic achievement (Coalter, 2005; Coleman, 1961; Cutler, 2009; et al., 2008; Hartmann, 2008; Hartzell & Picou, 1973). This barrier occurred due to practice demands, low expectations for advanced classes, and the physical and cognitive devotion towards athletics overcoming the devotion towards academic success (Coleman, 1961; Dawkins et al., 2008; Fisher et al., 1996; Hartzell & Picou, 1973).

The results also indicated students identified as non-participants in extracurricular activities, showed no significant difference in academic achievement when compared to those students who did participate in extracurricular activities. Similarly, all three groups of students attended an urban high school. Previous studies concluded that urban students were challenged by many obstacles, such as low motivation, low quality of life, limited meaningful academic skills, and ineffective teaching (Bell, 1979; Chung, n.d.; Constantine et al., 1998; Noguera, 2011; Samel et al., 2011; Sandy & Duncan, 2010; Scanlon et al., 2008; Sirin et al., 2004; Storer et al., 2012; Uwah et al., 2008). Findings of this study were consistent with other studies, which supported low academic achievement for economically disadvantaged urban students.

When analyzing the eight categories and emerging themes from the questionnaire data, confidence stood out as the highest level of self-perception for each of the three student participant groups. Previous research, suggest students who participate in JROTC experience a higher rate of confidence (Blair, 1999; Bulach, 2002; Elliott et al., 2001; Polson, 1987; Schmidt, 2003). High self-reported confidence was also cited among athletes, related to which supporting research claims sports participation increased a player's level of confidence (Grissom, 2005). Developing self-confidence within an athlete is part of the sportsmanship process (Anderson, 2001; Burnettt, 2001) and students involved with sports experience high levels of self-confidence (Darling, 2005; Eccles & Barber, 1999; Jordan, 1999; Nail, 2007; Tracy & Erkut, 2002). Other studies suggested, African American students have high levels of self-reported confidence (Teasley et al., 2007), and the results of this study confirmed that suggestion.

When looking at the leadership category, the results for this study data are aligned with the leadership responses for the three student group participants. Responses from the JROTC and athlete group revealed leadership role involvement within and outside of structured programs or activities, however responses from the “other student” group revealed students holding leadership roles within a classroom setting and among friends only. JROTC reported their program instills leadership skills, however according to research possessing leadership skills “does not assure constructive outcomes” (Berlowitz, 2000, p. 395). Based on the results of the quantitative data within this study, JROTC student participants self-reported leadership skills at a high level, however when examining academic achievement, there was no measurable difference measured by PSAE assessment data. When student athletes discussed their roles as team captain and starting player, research suggested these roles were considered leadership positions. The researcher found that data from this study connected to the literature review, which stated, team captains and starting players motivate and encourage their teammates to perform for the greater good of the team which is ultimately a leadership role (Dobosz & Beaty, 1999). African American students, according to previous research and this research study, are highly confident, which leads to a greater chance for acquiring leadership skills (Teasley et al., 2007).

Student involvement and participation in activities, both at school and away from school, were notably high for JROTC and student athletes. Both of these student groups stated being involved in extracurricular activities were a major part of their life-routine and further discussed the desire for continued involvement. Athletes are often times inducted into the “leading crowd” due to sports associations, (Rehberg, 1969; Steven, 1978) which gives them access to popularity and being more involved. JROTC students exhibit a higher maturity level, which motivates this group to greater involvement (DeMoulin & Ritter, 2000).

Comparably, the other student group related limited extracurricular activity involvement with lack of popularity or lack of acceptance into the popular groups, which often times included students participating in sports. The other student group may be lacking the “connected” (Showalter, 2008, p. 9) feeling which the student athlete experiences (Jordan, 1999; Showalter, 2008). When trying to understand the reason for limited extracurricular activity involvement from the other student group, attention was given to the possibility of these students having responsibilities at home which limited their ability to stay after school and commit to a schedule. Students from low socioeconomic families were burdened with the responsibilities of having to work in order to supplement the family income or the need to watch and care for siblings to provide parents with the availability to go to work. When looking at data for the student athlete group, previous studies noted “involvement in athletics decrease[d] interest in academic engagement” (Dawkins et al., 2008, p. 52). The results of this study also demonstrated high involvement for student athletes linked with low academic achievement, which coincided with prior research (Braddock, & Celaya, 2008; Coleman, 1961; Dawkins et al., 2008).

A connection between goal setting and academic achievement was noted within a limited number of studies. The research discussed leadership and citizenship skills as influencing goal setting (Robinson & Horne, 1993). JROTC student participants reported goal setting as the catalyst for accomplishments and life achievements. Athletes described goal setting as being determined and motivated to achieve a task, yet the discussion on detailed steps needed to take to reach the accomplishment were not expressed. The other student group shared similar discussions of goal setting as the

JROTC student group did when discussing goal setting concerning academics, good grades, and high GPAs as intended accomplishments, which lead to better preparation for college and future careers. Noted with the student athlete and the other student group was a lack of discussion for actual detailed steps for achieving life aspirations. Interestingly, this data linked back to conversations, which occurred prior to this research study. Students within the researched school were asked about setting goals which would allow them to attain life accomplishments, prior to this research study. Student discussions with the researcher consisted of individual life goals and intended accomplishments, however describing the steps and the needed skills to be successful were not acknowledged.

Similar to the findings of Ayers (2006), Bartlett and Lutz (1998), Blair (1999), Bulach (2002), and Pema and Mehay (2009), JROTC participants benefit from, and are consciously aware of, the citizenship values which the program tried to instill. The JROTC student participants discussed “service before self,” along with serving nation and community as a responsibility of each American citizen, for the betterment of our nation. These data responses are supported by research, which stated civic participation was a social responsibility of our nation’s citizens, and the promotion of citizenship development was viewed as a component of the JROTC, which leads to ongoing awareness and action (Bloom et al., 2009; Tonon, 2012). This group of participants was more informed on what citizenship consisted of, considering that the JROTC curriculum promotes citizenship (Gallagher, 2007; Pema & Mehay, 2009).

For both the athlete students and other students, citizenship discussions were lacking in depth and awareness. Some of the other student and athlete student participants did not respond to the citizenship question. A possible suggestion as to why the data uncovered these results is related to the lack of motivating adult mentors and programs for urban students (Kozol, 1991; Scanlon et al., 2008), which were needed on a daily basis to instill the characteristics which ultimately prepared them to be "participating members in the American political system" (Davis, 2006, p. 12; Honora, 2002; Scanlon et al., 2008). Since citizenship involves service, pride and moral characteristics (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006; Bass, 1997; National Council for the Social Studies, 1994; Nelson, 2010; O'Brien & Kohlmeier, 2003; Tonon, 2012), urban students are often present in a daily state of powerlessness and frustration (Bell, 1979) surrounded by challenging circumstances (Bell, 1979; Cooper & Liou, 2007; Samel et al., 2011; Sheppard, 2006) which are opposite to the message of citizenship. Challenges which urban students face, lead to an urgency for focus on immediate survival needs (Bell, 1979). When students are focused on immediate needs for survival, the absence of planning for the future, or being a part of a service driven-concept such as citizenship, is present.

JROTC, athletes, and other student participants within this study clearly demonstrated self-reported awareness and the importance of successful academic performance when responding to the questionnaire. Students within the JROTC group discussed expected academic performance, and this performance representing a measure of their knowledge and capacities, which furthered their chance for acceptance into college. Comparable to the qualitative data results of this study, JROTC instills the importance of excelling academically within program participants (Price, 2007). Previous research suggested students within urban settings seek to find structure within an unstructured setting, search out the nurturing environment of JROTC which typically was the only positive academic program within urban schools (Berlowitz, 2000; Elliott et al., 2001). Student athletes related successful academic performance to becoming both college and career ready. Not only did this group discuss the importance of above average test scores and academic success, the mention of motivation and drive was evident as well. The competitiveness of sports transferred into academic competitiveness (Rehberg, 1969). The awareness to perform academically might also coincide with the student athletes' motivation to be academically eligible to participate within school sports. The no-pass-no-play policy requires an athlete to maintain a certain GPA for sports eligibility (Pearson et al., 2009). Along with maintaining athletic eligibility, student athletes have connections with teachers, coaches, and mentors, who provide a sustained academic support system (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Hawkins, Royster, & Braddock, 1992; Jordan, 1999). Rehberg (1969) stated that athletes are a part of a "leading crowd,",= and this membership comes with validation of being able to access resources, which will afford high grades and an awareness of the importance for excelling academically (Rehberg, 1969; Steven, 1978).

The other student group, which was not involved within JROTC or sports, also expressed the importance of successful academic performance. Due to urban students being aware of the many negative stereotypes depicted towards them (Ward, 2005), this group developed "strengths and resilience" (Reis et al., 2005, p. 115) and "'prove them wrong' attitude" (Carter, 2008, p. 13) in an effort to drive towards academic success (Carter, 2008). The concept of meaning something to others (Tucker et al., 2010) was a suggestion of urban students' awareness and motivation to strive to become academically successful, when this other student group responded to the questionnaire pertaining to academic performance.

The theme of hard work surfaced when students discussed leadership. Student athletes and the JROTC student group mentioned hard work throughout their answers. It was reported that sports participation takes time, energy, and dedication, which combined into a schedule of hard work (Cutler, 2009; Hartzell & Picou, 1973). Rigorous and committed practice schedules, which take away from socialization time, are examples of hard work and dedication to the game of sports (Goldberg & Chandler, 1995). Participants within JROTC programs go through military-style drill and a disciplined program comprised of physical and mental exercises (Bloom et al., 2009). Programs, such as JROTC and the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe, have components within the program which develop characteristics, such as becoming a hard worker and being self-disciplined (Price, 2007). Responses from the other student group failed to uncover the theme of hard work or dedication.

Since student athletes and JROTC students were participants within a structured program, being mindful of time and schedules critical to accomplishing school assignment, chores and task, while also being on time and present for practices and events, supported research suggesting these students would be self-disciplined hard workers (Price, 2007). The importance of structure and meeting deadlines, making practice times and being able to accurately perform JROTC drills were based on students' abilities to manage time. Responses for the other student group consisted of time management as an important skill in the effort to make life easier and not stressed. Urban students are faced with many challenges that are uncontrollable, the ability to manage time and have a structured schedule could possibly provide this student group with a strategy to limit unforeseen obstacles (Bell, 1979; Chung, n.d.; Lee, 2005; Billet & Rand Corp, 1978; Sheppard, 2006).

Implications and Recommendations

The results and interpretations of this study provided implications and recommendations for urban school leaders to further examine the reason for poor and unacceptable student performance on standardized assessments. With the Common Core State Standards and Partnership for Assessment of College and Career Readiness (PARCC) assessments which become reality in the 2013-2014 school year, Illinois educators must implement a consistent plan of action to increase student achievement.

Since teachers have a direct impact on student learning, a recommendation for increasing student achievement is to provide teachers with performance-based incentives, directly linked to student academic growth. Providing teachers with a clear set of expectations, along with support for best practices in the classroom, the researcher believes, could possibly result in an increase in student academic growth.

Schools, which exclusively focus on sports and lack the same devotion to academics, must create a bridge between the two. Conversation for academic performance, which encourage and promote college and career readiness, must resonate throughout the school community. The researcher’s experience revealed that often times these conversations for academic assessment growth and academic achievement take place months before standardized assessments were given. The researcher believes that conversations with students, parents, and staff must take place upon entering the freshman year of high school; increasing the student's academic capacity within the school environment to reinforce appropriate academic behaviors and relationships.

The implementation of alternative leadership or ambassador organizations within the school, which emphasize community networking, peer mentoring, peer academic coaching, and are not based on admittance to popularity, could possibly strengthen student leadership skills and academic performance.

Increasing student academic expectations and parental involvement, as reported within the literature review, has led to increased student academic performance in school (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Hayes, 2011; Trotman, 2001). An additional recommendation for increased student academic achievement would be to encourage positive and supportive relationships between students and school staff. It is essential for school administration to hire and retain supportive teachers who provide the encouragement and high expectations needed for academic improvement (Samel et al., 2011).

Future Studies

Recommendations for future studies would be to include data from two similar urban schools. Participants in this study were limited to 90 11th-grade students from one urban high school. Using data from more than one research site could possibly strengthen the study results. Using assessment data from an additional source, which measures student skills and knowledge throughout the ninth and 11th grades may have provided the researcher with a deeper understanding of student growth in relation to possession of leadership and citizenship skills.

In an effort to keep research participants engaged and committed to the study, survey administration should be limited to one session. Student participants became disinterested and inconsistent when appearing for survey admission after the first round.

It is further suggested that an additional alternative interviewer be secured for interviews. Although interviews were originally intended to be conducted, due to unforeseen circumstances interviews were not administered. Had interviews occurred, this research could have possibly provided a deeper understanding of thoughts and perspectives for each of the three student groups. The interviewer may have been able to clarify questions for the interviewees and also clarify interviewee responses.

Summary

Student achievement among urban students attending school specifically within an urban setting have many challenges, and the results of this study lends to the reality of one of the challenges related to academic achievement. With standardized test scores as a reflection of student performance within a district and school, this study reported and confirmed that, even in the presence of supportive leadership and citizenship programs, students within urban schools continue to underperform academically.

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Vitae

Carmen Williams-Bonds holds a bachelor’s degree in Political Science and Secondary Education from Southern Illinois University. She earned her master’s degree in Education Administration from Lindenwood University and her anticipated graduation date from Lindenwood University’s doctoral program in Education Administration is December, 2013.

Carmen currently holds an administrative position within the Saint Louis Public School district, and has had several years of school administrative and leadership experience. Prior to holding administrative positions, Carmen has served as a high school and middle school instructor in the area of social science.