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Effects of Socioeconomic Status on Academic Performance in Missouri Public Schools

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fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
School of Education

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I do hereby 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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EFFECTS OF SOCIOECONIMIC STATUS ON
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN MISSOURI SCHOOLS

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This dissertation had been approved as partial fulfillment
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Abstract

Understanding the effects of socioeconomic status on academic performance is important in determining effective and valid testing for all Missouri students. Determining the correlation between these two variables is important for all educators to understand, so that all students can achieve to their academic potential. Finding the correlation between academic performance and socioeconomic status can assist educators in determining instructional strategies that best fit each individual student. In this study the researcher analyzed the effects of socioeconomic status on the academic performance by retrieving data on the state mandated Missouri Assessment Program. The researcher analyzed fifty school districts on the communication arts portion of the MAP test. This data was used in determining the academic performance of these students. The percent of free and reduced lunch students in these districts was used in determining their socioeconomic status. The correlation between the two variables was determined by using the Pearson r Correlation Formula.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....iii

List of Tables.....vi

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION.....1

Statement of the Problem.....5

Importance of the Study.....7

Design of the Study.....9

Hypotheses.....10

Null Hypothesis #1.....10

Null Hypothesis #2.....10

Null Hypothesis #3.....10

Limitations of the Study.....10

Operational Definitions.....12

Summary.....14

CHAPTER II REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE.....17

Cause of Academic Success.....18

The Effect of Socioeconomic Status on Academic Performance.....27

The Problems of Standardized Testing within the Population.....39

Urban vs Rural Education.....44

Factors Affecting Academic Success.....49

Home Environment.....54

Summary.....63

CHAPTER III METHODS.....66

Introduction.....66

Hypothesis Tested.....70

Description of the Population.....71

Instrumentation.....72

Administration Procedures.....74

Treatment of Data.....74

CHAPTER IV ANALYSIS OF DATA.....76

Introduction.....76

Restatement of the Problem.....77

Analysis of the Correlation Between Academic Success and Socioeconomic Status.....78

Summary.....87

CHAPTER V SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....90

Summary.....90

Conclusions.....92

Recommendations.....95

REFERENCES.....97

VITA.....116

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Correlation Between Academic Success and Free and Reduced Lunch
in 250 Random Missouri Schools.....

Table 2. Correlation Between Academic Success and Free and Reduced Lunch
in Small Rural Schools.....

Table 3. Correlation Between Academic Success and Free and Reduced Lunch
in Large Urban Schools.....

CHAPTER I
Introduction

Student achievement in public schools has become a top priority for the United States Government. With the passing of legislation in 1998 known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), public schools have been mandated to have all students receive proficient scores on state assessments by the year 2014. This has created a sense of urgency among public school administrators and teachers throughout the country. This legislation has created much discussion and debate on the outcome factor of student achievement.

One of the most debated issues among educational professionals is the correlation between the academic performance and socioeconomic status of students. A prevalent argument is that the socioeconomic status of a student has a major effect on his/her academic performance. Many school districts with a high number of low socioeconomic students feel that meeting the state and federal requirements on test scores is unrealistic (Ellis, 2008). Others challenge this theory and imply that other variables outside the socioeconomic status of a student are the determining factor in academic performance (Marzano, 2003). The study examined the correlation between academic

performance and socioeconomic status of students in Missouri Public Schools.

Research was conducted to determine if there is a correlation between socioeconomic status and academic performance in large urban school districts and small rural school districts. Much research has been done on the effects of socioeconomic status and academic performance in relation to large urban school districts. Little research has been done on the effects of such variables in small rural school districts. The correlation of these two backgrounds and geographical differences was studied to determine if a correlation exists between the two groups.

Many educators think that low socioeconomic status creates a negative effect on academic performance. Adams (1996) mentioned that the basic needs of certain students are not being met, thus not allowing the students to physically or mentally be able to perform in school. If students are not properly fed or given proper hygiene care, they cannot be expected to perform successfully in their academics. These environmental deficiencies are thought by educators to have a negative effect on the student’s image and result in a lowering of self-esteem. This lack of confidence infringes on the success a student may have in

the academic environment (US Department of Education, 2003).

Determining if socioeconomic status has an effect on academic performance is important in concluding if state assessments are equitable measurements for all schools. Crane (1996) stated that many studies have determined that there are significant disparities in students' cognitive skills due to their home environments. There is direct evidence that socioeconomic status and home environment play a major role in the achievement of mathematic skills of children. Crane concluded there are other variables that can play a role in the student's performance including size of the family and cognitive genetics of the parents. The factor that most generally applies to mathematic performance of the student is the socioeconomic status.

There is great attention by educators and researchers to determine if the socioeconomic status of children plays a role in their academic performance. Garzon (2006) stated socioeconomic status is a determining factor on what strategies could be implemented in the curriculum to assist these particular students. It also could change the process on how these students are evaluated and assessed. The goal for all educators is to make every student successful in the educational process. Kahlenberg (2006) concluded that

high poverty schools can be successful, but such success is not very common. Middle-class schools tend to perform better academically due to the support at home, and such students come to school more prepared than those of lower-class school districts. Low-income students have been shown to perform well in middle-class schools, compared to middle-class students performance in low-income schools (Kahlenberg). In middle-class schools students are exposed to an environment that values education and are less likely to be involved in discipline problems. Students in middle-class schools have a less transient population and are more likely to attend college after graduation. Middle-class parents are more likely to support and become involved in school activities that promote the importance of education to the student (Kirkup, 2008).

Some scholars argue that socioeconomic status is an excuse for low scoring school districts on assessments. Many feel that low-income school districts can still perform at a high academic level. Lang (1998) stated that socioeconomic groups are closing the gap on academic performance. There is a contrary argument among society that less intelligent people are producing more children than highly intelligent people. The socioeconomic class

differences among the higher and lower thirds have slowly decreased since 1932.

On the contrary, many feel that socioeconomic status is a key factor in academic performance. Bracey (2004) concluded that socioeconomic status and poverty in school districts are not an excuse for low academic performance in students, but a condition. “Like gravity, it affects everything”. Toutkoushian and Curtis (2005) stated that schools are punished due to low test scores when presented with a high population of low socioeconomic students. The problem increases when state funding is affected by standardized test scores in relation to schools that have a low academic outcome due to high numbers of low socioeconomic children. Schools do not have control over the economic status of the population that resides within their district but are still held accountable for successful outcomes on state mandated test scores (Toutkoushian & Curtis).

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine if a correlation exists between low socioeconomic students and their academic performance on Missouri standardized tests. The study also focused on the correlation of socioeconomic status and academic performance between small rural schools

and large urban schools. Wenglinsky (1998) implied that students of low socioeconomic families have fewer educational opportunities than those from the middle and upper class families. The educational background of the students' families plays an important role in academic success. Burtless (1996) stated that schools that have strong financial resources can positively affect the performance of students in those districts. Financial equalization is an important factor in the quality of education and the overall academic success among those students.

Heyneman (2005) stated that for many years it has been shown that students from a low socioeconomic background do not show effective performance in school. It is globally suggested that social status is the key factor in academic performance, but this is not necessarily true. There are many other factors, including but not limited to subject, student age, and gender. Heyneman concluded the important solution is the integration of the social classes among schools. The argument should shift from closing the gap of social status of adults and focus on the integration of the social classes. However, Shever and Walls (1998) mentioned that there is much more to consider when discussing

students academic performance than just their social background.

The constant debate of socioeconomic status and academic performance is evident among many studies. Okpala, Okpala and Smith (2001) conclude that schools with a high amount of expenditures per pupil showed a positive effect on student achievement, where as schools with a high number of free and reduced lunch participants reflected negatively. Schools with a high number of free and reduced lunch participants are considered to be low-income schools districts. These districts scored poorly on standardized tests (Okpala, Okpala and Smith). Students in a low-income school district do not have the home support to promote the importance of academic success (Trusty, 1999).

Importance of the Study

As the importance of meeting Annual Yearly Progress on state mandated assessments becomes more intense, the need for understanding the correlation of socioeconomic status and academic performance increases. Once a correlation is determined between the student's academic success and his/her socioeconomic status, research will need to be done to meet the needs of that particular student population. Tucholka (2006) stated that standardized tests are an important tool in evaluating and making decisions in

educational reform. This is why it is so important to understand the many factors that are entailed when making decisions based on standardized test outcomes.

Results of this study will help educators make important decisions on education reform that will best benefit all social groups of students. This study will determine if there is a correlation between socioeconomic status and educational performance in Missouri schools, and whether a correlation exists between small, rural and large, urban schools. With the determination of this data, administrators can push for reform with legislators and the State Board of Education to implement strategies to make all students successful. It will also aid in determining if the standardized Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) test is an effective tool in assessing school and student success.

The correlation between socioeconomic status and academic performance has been an important and much discussed topic for many years among educators. There are many factors that are viewed and studied in determining academic success. Factors such as cultural background, socioeconomic status, gender, race, genetics and parental educational background, are just a few that have been studied. This study focused on the correlation between the socioeconomic background of the student and their success

on the Missouri Assessment Program, and the relationship between small, rural and large, urban schools. The study included nineteen large urban school districts in the Kansas City and St. Louis geographical areas with over 5,000 students enrolled in grades K-12. Nineteen small rural school districts were randomly chosen throughout the state of Missouri with a K-12 enrollment of less than 1,500 students. Again, the MAP test was be used to determine the correlation between the small rural districts and the large urban districts.

Design of the Study

The intent of this study was to randomly choose two hundred fifty school districts in the state of Missouri. The MAP scores, representing academic performance, and the percent of free and reduced lunch students, representing the socioeconomic status, were studied.

Test scores from two hundred fifty Missouri school districts were analyzed to determine if a correlation existed between academic performance and socioeconomic status. The effects of low socioeconomic students from rural and urban schools were analyzed to determine if a correlation exists between these two variables. The data from the study was taken from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website. The data was ranked

according to the districts' MAP scores, and the percent of their free and reduced lunch count. The Pearson r Correlation Formula was used to analyze and determine the percent of correlation between the students' academic performance and socioeconomic status.

Hypotheses

1. The null hypothesis will determine that a correlation does not exist between socioeconomic status and academic success in Missouri schools.
2. The second null hypothesis will determine that a correlation does not exist between socioeconomic status and academic success in small, rural school districts in Missouri.
3. The third null hypothesis will determine that a correlation does not exist between socioeconomic status and academic success in large, urban school districts in Missouri.

Limitations of the Study

Two hundred fifty Missouri school districts were randomly chosen to study their MAP results from the 2007 school year. Nineteen large, urban schools from the Kansas City and St. Louis areas and nineteen randomly chosen, small, rural school districts were studied, using MAP results for the 2007 school year. The percent of the

districts' free and reduced lunch count was also studied. This data was analyzed to determine the correlation between academic performance and socioeconomic status of these districts. The time frame for the study included the fall and spring semesters of 2008-2009 year.

Limitations of Study:

1. Two hundred fifty school districts of the five hundred forty districts in the state of Missouri were used in this study.
2. Only Missouri Assessment Program test data was used to determine academic performance.
3. Research was limited to the state of Missouri.
4. Some parents who would qualify for free and reduced lunches do not participate in the free and reduced price lunch program.
5. Only the federal free and reduced lunch qualifications were used in determining socioeconomic status.
6. A limited number of large urban school districts are located in the state of Missouri.
7. It is assumed that the information reported by school districts to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MDESE) is current and accurate.

Operational Definitions

Correlation Study. A study in which the researcher does not manipulate variables, but rather studies naturally occurring relationships (correlations) among variables.

Free and Reduced Lunch Qualification. A rule that details state and local responsibilities as outlined in 7 CFR part 245 which are used to determine eligibility and establish procedures for extending free and reduced price meals and free milk to eligible children from economically needy families. Specific areas in this rule include eligibility standards, public announcements, applications, hearing procedures and nondiscrimination practices.

Large, Urban School District. The school districts used in the study that have an enrollment of more than 5,000 students and are located within the Kansas City and St. Louis areas.

Missouri Assessment Program (MAP). The annual set of mandatory standardized tests taken by students in the state of Missouri, USA. Each April, students in elementary, middle and high schools take the tests in math and communication arts. The language arts tests are taken in

third, seventh and eleventh grades, while the math tests are taken in the fourth, eighth, and tenth grades.

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The administrative arm of the State Board of Education. It is primarily a service agency that works with educators, legislators, government agencies and citizens to maintain a strong public education system. Through its statewide school improvement initiatives and regulatory functions, the department strives to assure that all citizens have access to high-quality public education. The scope of the department's duties ranges from early childhood to adult education services.

Pearson r Formula. A correlation coefficient employed with interval- or ratio-sealed variables.

Proficient Test Scores. Students that have or show knowledge, ability, or skill in the Missouri Assessment Program. This consists of students that score proficient or advanced on particular areas of the MAP test.

Small, Rural School Districts. The school districts used in the study that have an enrollment of less than 1,500 students and not located in a large urban, geographical area.

Socioeconomic Status. A term for referring to prestige-based measures of socioeconomic position as determined by rankings in a social hierarchy.

Standardized Tests. Tests that are uniformly developed, administered and scored. They are given to a group in a similar setting under similar conditions in order to determine and evaluate against a norm.

Student Performance. The percentage of students within any given school district scoring proficient or above proficient on the MAP test.

Summary

This study will benefit fellow administrators and educators in pursuing knowledge that will assist in determining the important variables in successful academic performance. With increased accountability of educators mandated by recent federal legislation, it is important to focus on how to help all students succeed. The constant debate and concern of low-income students and how to successfully educate them are of vital importance. The intent of this research paper is to find the correlation between academic performance and socioeconomic status, so that educators can determine effective education reform that will benefit all students. By collecting and analyzing the data from the selected school districts in the state of

Missouri, the results will add to the ongoing discussion of this issue.

Educators know the importance of successfully promoting performance in all students. They underestimate the importance of student variables that determine academic success. Educators work extremely hard to help students become as successful as possible, but they do not have the knowledge of individual needs requiring innovative teaching techniques. It is important that educators study the issue of socioeconomic achievement and academic performance. The success of our schools, administrators and students rely on the ability to determine the variety of variables responsible for academic achievement.

It is important for educators to understand the correlation between socioeconomic status and academic performance that exists between small rural and large urban school districts. These findings will be vital in determining teaching strategies and techniques to meet the needs of each individual student. Findings will be important for educational reform, depending on the size and geographical location of a school district. It is necessary for educators to understand each variable affecting academic performance, including socioeconomic status,

gender, race, and geographical location, including small, rural and large, urban settings.

CHAPTER II
Review of Relevant Literature

Understanding the correlation between socioeconomic status and academic performance is important in determining education strategies. Most states use standardized testing in determining proficient school districts. They do not take into consideration other variables, including socioeconomic status, when evaluating standardized test scores. Much research shows a correlation between different social aspects of students and how they academically perform. Educators need to determine what factors affect educational success and exploit ideas in determining ways to increase academic achievement.

Educational reform has been a widely discussed topic in the United States for many years. The American Institutes for Research (2005) showed many concerns on recent studies comparing students in the United States with those of other countries. The 2001, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation mandated public school districts to become 100 percent proficient among all students by the year 2014. This has increased pressure on school teachers and administrators to perform on state standardized tests. The California Executive Board (2001) showed concerns among school district personnel on whether the grading of

standardized tests considers the social background of the students. The diversity among students should be taken into consideration when determining each student's proficiency. The purpose of this study is to find if socioeconomic status has a correlation with academic performance. It will focus on the effects of such variables in small, rural and large, urban school districts. It will also look at other social factors that affect academic success. Determining this correlation will help educators determine teaching strategies to implement for student diversity, size of school district and geographical location, and determine if standardized testing needs reorganizing to conclude if students meet mandated proficiency levels.

Cause of Academic Success

For years educators have argued the issues of what determines the academic success of all students. Secker (2004) stated that, when groups of students with similar backgrounds are compared, the students from a high-socioeconomic status outperform those from a low socioeconomic status (SES) on academic performance. High SES is related to better social support, fewer discipline problems in the district, and higher social expectations. The most common variables in low income school districts

are parental education, parental occupation, large family size, and absence of one parent (Secker).

> Several factors appear to have an affect on standardized achievement scores; 1) a student's intellectual ability; 2) the nature of school curriculum and instruction and the standardized tests used to measure student mastery of that curriculum; 3) the cultural and socio-economic history and environment of the individual student; 4) the economic environment of the school attended by the student. Only one of these factors (number 2, above) is in the control of the school district. (Research and Accountability Department Pinellas County Schools, 1999)

Poverty level of students was studied in mathematic students in North Carolina to determine if the students' social levels were indicators of their academic performance. McCoy's (2005) research stated that mathematical teaching and learning is one of the most important and serious issues in education. Often, schools with a high poverty level have a difficult time recruiting and retaining quality teachers. With the inability to hire effective teachers, the quality of learning does not meet its potential. McCoy goes on to state that poor achievement

in algebra is mainly due to the students. Various social and personal characteristics, including gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status play a major role in students' academic success. Research shows that students who are poor, female, and a minority tend to have less academic success than other students. Hershberg (2005) suggested educational reform in which all students succeed, including low socioeconomic status students, deal with producing, recruiting, and retaining quality educators. This involves changing the teaching field into one that is more of a financially rewarding and intellectually satisfying experience.

There are many components to study when determining the actual causes of academic performance. Rumberger and Palardy (2005) concluded that the overall socioeconomic status of the school had as much effect on academic performance as the individual student's SES. Schools that serve low-income students tend to operate differently than the highly affluent districts. These low-income districts differ in teacher expectations, amount of homework given, the number of high-level courses students take, and the overall students' concern for safety. The authors stated that if school environment is not an issue, then segregation is not the solution to improving low-income

school districts, and that adding resources to these districts will benefit low-income students.

Research shows a wide range of data when showing the correlation between socioeconomic status and academic performance. Sirin (2005) stated there are many variables to consider when determining a student's socioeconomic status effect on academic achievement. The student's race and parental education play an important role when researching this correlation. Sirin also discussed research that showed that schools' demographics also play an important role in SES and the effect it has with academic achievement. Parental income has a strong effect on student performance due to the economic resources allowed for more academic components to be implemented. Resources available at home are an important indicator for the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic performance (Sirin). Another indicator of SES is the influence of parental education. It is considered one of the most important aspects in determining SES because it is established at an early age and tends to remain the same over time (Krashen 2005).

Segregation of school districts is discussed as a potential fix for low-income students. Kahlenberg (2006) discussed that low-SES students should be integrated into

middle class districts. There should be no more than 42% of free and reduced students in one particular district. This allows for greater achievement for these low-SES students. Research also shows that middle class students are still improving in achievement and maintaining a high level of academic performance. This occurs because the majority sets the pace for academic performance in the district. The author goes on to state that research indicates that the socioeconomic makeup up of the school determines academic performance, not the racial makeup. The reason for black students' increase in academic performance with integration was not due to the fact they were placed with white students; it was increased due to the improvement of the socioeconomic makeup of the district in which the students were placed (Kahlenberg). Hardy (2006) concluded that it is not the socioeconomic status of one particular individual that determines his/her academic success; it is the socioeconomic status of the entire school that is the determining factor. Integrating schools by putting low socioeconomic status students in with middle and upper class students will promote higher expectations, more effective teachers and administrators, and an overall better learning environment for students to achieve academic success. Test scores show that disadvantaged

students perform remarkably better in upper and middle class schools which have stronger discipline, more college prep courses, and peers who, from an early age, are expected to attend college (Hardy).

There are many variables that can lead to positive thinking and successful classroom environments that create high academic performance. Page's (2002) study compared the attainment of elementary students in technology classrooms in terms of student achievement, self-esteem, and classroom collaboration. The study showed positive effects on technology and academic performance of elementary students from a low socioeconomic status and the sense of worth those students achieved while involved in the technology curriculum. Alves-Martins, Pixoto, Gouveia-Pereira, Amaral, Pedro (2002)concluded many educators have studied the importance of self-esteem and worthiness, and how both affect academic performance. Page (2002) stated the increase of interest in technology and the success that was accomplished showed great improvement of their students' academic success. It appears that the use of technology has a positive effect on student self-esteem and worthiness, thus creating a positive and successful learning environment.

The environments to which children are exposed play a crucial role in their academic potential. Goddard (2003) indicated that the academic success of individuals is directly related to their own personal characteristics. Members of schools, families, and communities play a vital role in the student's academic accomplishments. Students may have access to many forms of social support to assist in their academic performance. The social assistance a student received from his/her various support groups had an impact on his/her academic success. Relational networks and social features, such as relational trust and positive support groups, are essential. Relationships that have little trust and discourage positive academic performance are detrimental for student success (Goddard). Furstenberg and Hughes (1995) showed that social capital, defined by a parent's involvement in his/her child and his/her community, increased the percentages of his/her child graduating from high school and attending college. Goddard (2003) showed that the social structure involving the parents, children, and the community were important factors in the academic success of their children. If a child's actions are supported with the group's norms and values, a sense of trust is instilled in the child, thus instilling a sense of confidence that is crucial for academic success.

Rouse and Hollomon (2005) stated that, since the release of A Nation At Risk (1983), the American public education system has been challenged to produce a better quality education for all students. Strong accountability has been placed on teachers and administrators in public schools. Having quality teachers that are well trained has become an important component of educational policy reform. Hollomon and Rouse also mentioned that higher educational facilities have a responsibility of training and producing a higher level of quality teachers and administrators. Teachers are required to obtain a more advanced teaching certificate than ever before. They must pass state exams and continue professional development throughout their careers. NCLB (2001) legislation requires a teacher to receive a Masters degree in order to be considered a Highly Qualified Teacher.

The achievement gap among minorities has been consistently studied to determine how to improve educational instruction. Pearce (2006) concluded that achievement gaps and racial inequality have shown the importance of cultural and structural elements as keys for academic performance. The gap between whites and blacks within American education is large, but the Chinese-American gap is relatively low. The key reason for the

difference in these gaps was the social emphasis placed on education between the black and Chinese American cultures. Pearce added that importance of high educational expectations, parental involvement, and parenting styles play a vital role in the student's academic success. Therefore, gender, socioeconomic status, urban city, family composition, immigrant status, and parental education are important in the educational success and attainment, allowing certain social factors to build obstacles or improve opportunities for each individual student to succeed (Pearce).

Reschly and Christenson (2006) examined the engagement of students with learning disabilities and emotional disturbance, and the relation of this engagement to school completion. Identified students with learning disabilities (LD) and emotional or behavioral disorders (EBD) were compared with average students without disabilities to determine the dropout rate. The engagement of students with disabilities compared to those without showed significant differences with engagement being determined much higher than those students without disabilities. The authors mentioned that, while considering the variables of achievement test scores, grade retention, and socioeconomic status, student engagement was a significant determinant in

school dropout rates and completion for students with disabilities and students without disabilities. The authors continued to state that most students come to school ready and excited to learn and participate in the classroom setting. This creates a positive sense of identification with educational goals and the values necessary to learn. These students are more likely to enjoy and complete graduation requirements. On the other hand, other students enter school with a preconceived notion that they will not like school and have an overall negative attitude about the educational experience. Consequently, these students are less likely to be successful and become involved in the school environment, and are probably feeling isolated from school and eventually drop out (Christenson and Reschly).

The Effects of Socioeconomic Status on Academic Performance

Much research supports the idea that socioeconomic status effects academic performance (Marzano, 2003, Kahlenberg, 2001, Bracey, 2001). Although socioeconomic status is a key ingredient in academic success, there are other variables to consider. An increase in academic performance is still possible while controlling the socioeconomic status of school districts. There are high-performing school districts that contain a large amount of low-income students. Studies show that strong leadership

from administration has little to no correlation in academic achievement in school districts. Three organizational properties seem to make a difference in student achievement: the emphasis placed on academics in the school, the faculty's and administration's trust in the students and their parents, and the competency of the faculty in the school district. All three areas are highly correlated and reinforce one other to produce a positive environment for educational success (Hoy, Hoy and Tarter 2006).

> Although, Hughes (1995) found that factors other than SES were influential to academic achievement when high-achieving schools were matched with low-achieving schools based on participation in the free and reduced lunch program. That is not to say that Hughes found no differences among low-SES and high-SES schools in terms of achievement. In fact, before selecting the specified schools for evaluation, Dr. Hughes' study found that overall there were differences among the high and low-achieving schools. Examples of differences may be found in Table 1. (Mulvenon, Ganley, Fritts-Scott, 2001)

Table 1
Comparison among high and low-achieving schools (Education Policy Research Institute, 1995)

School Variables Difference*	Low Achieving	High Achieving	
Children in free and reduced lunch program	72.7%	28.3%	Yes
Teacher Experience Years	11.0	15.0	Yes
% Bachelors	25.7%	8.8%	Yes
% Bachelors + 15	32.0%	28.7%	No
% Masters	10.7%	11.0%	No
% Masters + 15	9.4%	15.8%	Yes
% Masters + 30	21.5%	35.2%	Yes
Average class size	18.0	21.0	Yes
Student movement	9.4% in,12% out	7.9% in,7.6% out	Yes
Teacher pupil ratio	14.0	18.0	Yes
Promotion rate	95.0%	98.0%	No

* Differences were significant at p<.05 (N=33)

Concerns are present among educators in disputing how the amount of resources given to school districts affects academic performance. Okpala, Okpala and Smith (2001) research found that expenditures per pupil and parental involvement were not statistically significant in determining mathematic test scores among North Carolina fourth grade students. Results showed that students on free and reduced lunches had a negative effect on academic performance in math. The results also showed that socioeconomic status has a direct correlation with academic performance among these students. School districts are misallocating resources and are not spending money on items or programs effecting student achievement (Okapala,

Okapala, and Smith). Missouri school finance litigation involving the Coalition for Education Equality (CEE) is more concerned with the equalization of funds and the educational opportunities available for all children (Samberg, 2007).

A positive home environment, and instilling the importance and need for education have a direct relationship with academic performance. Ma (1999) suggested that parental involvement promotes academic success by building cognitive skills for academic work and promotes a positive attitude for excellence in academic performance. A child who has parental involvement in his/her academic progress becomes more competent in the development of skills. Shaver and Walls (1998) stated that parental involvement also plays a positive role through the assistance of homework and for providing resources that assist in the academic challenges. School and family are the two most important factors in determining a student’s academic success.

Warren (2002) examined whether teachers have the same expectations for all children, including those from a low socioeconomic background. The author stated that schools have searched for years to find a way to successfully educate students from a low socioeconomic background. Many

times these districts have a high population of minorities, consisting mostly of students of color or who that are from low-income families. Improvements have focused on creating and dispersing additional resources to districts with high poverty levels. In fact, more money has been re-allocated in these districts than any other districts. This reform has not been successful and the need for systematic change is necessary (Warren). The United States Department of Education (1998) stated that reform efforts focused on teacher quality of low-income school districts are not the main ingredient for positive change. The focus on successful reform needs to be shifted to the beliefs that teachers hold about their students. Many teachers who are employed in low-income school districts are not considered highly qualified and do not have high expectations for their students. Many teachers have a low expectation for low-income students. They blame home environment and do not teach past these educational barriers. They must expect a high level of learning from all students and involve parents in the learning process (United States Department of Education).

The 1983 report “A Nation At Risk” (NAR) was the first time educational performance and success was addressed for low socioeconomic students. For the first time, the report

changed the focus from the upper and middle class students' success to address all students. It concluded that all students must achieve at high standards. Guthrie and Springer (2004) addressed the NAR policies and determined they were not valid or successful. The NAR report created the most significant change in public education than ever before. Over the past decades, the nation has seen significant increase on the focus of educating low socioeconomic students. The NAR report did not look at this factor with any detail. It focused more on the fear that the nations youth would be unable to compete in a global economy. It wanted to see improvement with students' performance in technologically advanced industries. The NAR report inhibited educational reform by not focusing on the true issues of successful education. The lack of focus on how socioeconomic status affected academic performance was a menace in the report (Springer).

It is a public perception that private schools produce higher educational achievement than public schools. Lubienski and Lubienski (2005) concluded that when using a socioeconomic status variable created for the study, the widely perceived "private school effect" is due to the population of the students, not to the effectiveness of the school district. Private schools enroll a larger number of

high socioeconomic status students than public schools. Therefore, the study of the two groups showed a higher level of academic performance from the private schools than that of public schools with a high number of low socioeconomic students.

Brooks (1988) mentioned that in the state of Ohio, along with many other states, high-stakes, mandated, standardized tests are becoming the indicator for student success. Because of the legislation of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, school districts across America are being judged and graded on the performance of the children on state mandated test scores. Brooks cited a study by Fitzpatrick's, attempting to find the relationship between music participation and academic performance compared to standardized test results. Students who scored well on musical reading abilities scored higher on standardized test scores than those that scored low. Brooks (1988) stated the socioeconomic status of a student is highly correlated on both academic performance and musical participation. The author stated that socioeconomic status is determined by free and reduced lunch status, and has been found to be a significant indicator in a student's performance in scoring at or above the national average in

reading and mathematics on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (Brooks).

Fransoo, Ward, Wilson, Brownell and Roos (2005) indicated that educators have known for years that students from high socioeconomic families academically perform better than those from low socioeconomic families. Although many students from high socioeconomic backgrounds do not perform well, and many from low socioeconomic background perform very well, the overall trend is evident. It is not the case that students from low socioeconomic status do poorly, but the higher the economic status of the student, the more likely the educational success. The results of the authors' study reveal that the socioeconomic status as compared to the academic performance is far more evident than previous documentation has shown. Students from low socioeconomic status are much more likely to dropout of school or are retained in a particular grade. The answers to the problem of educating low socioeconomic students are challenging and demanding. The authors stated that schools must start small and focus on the needs of the children and their families. Districts must start with the early childhood development of their students. They must also develop a relationship with their parents and community. With a team effort and the careful organization of

educational reform involving all stakeholders, educational success for all students is possible (Fransoo, et.al.).

The United States has of one of the highest child-poverty rates in the Western nations. The child-poverty rate varies from area to area, but studies indicate that between 16 and 20 percent of children live in poverty (Synder and Freeman, 2003).

Yu and Taylor (1997) indicated that students from wealthier families outperform students from poor families on academic achievement tests. The students' from low-income families achievement is higher when they attend schools and classrooms where the majority of the population is economically advantaged. U.S Department of Education (1997) concluded that schools with a high percent of low-income students had a negative effect on all students' academic performance. It was also stated that high poverty students performed better when attending schools that have a low poverty percent.

Kahlenberg (2001) indicated that all students are entitled to a quality education. He concludes that the success of such a goal is dependent on schools consisting of a population in which the majority is comprised of middle class students. The author stated there should be much importance place on the economic diversity of children

in public schools. Students from a high poverty school tend to skip class, have more behavioral problems, have less motivation for academic success, and even possibly feel that performing successfully on their academics is embarrassing. Kahlenberg believed that having the majority of the school population comprised of middle class students would improve the quality of teachers and expectations of students, and would ensure educational quality in public schools.

Sirin (2005) researched students' grade level and the relationship of socioeconomic status and academic performance. He suggested that a relationship exists between the socioeconomic status and academic achievement across various levels of schooling with exceptions to the high school level students. The relationship between grade levels showed significant correlations between socioeconomic status and academic performance. It started in the elementary levels and continued through the middle school years. The study showed that there was a statistical gap between low and high socioeconomic students throughout the grade level and tended to widen as the grade levels increased. Sirin also stated that academic achievement is a process, and when valuable skills are not obtained in early grade levels, the gap of academic performance increases

throughout the educational process. The reason for the high school level showing a low statistical gap was due to the fact that many of those students performing at a low level were more likely to drop out of school in later years, thus not allowing for inclusion in the research samples (Sirin).

In a district study of urban schools produced by the Council of Great City Schools (2001), the results of the Stanford Achievement Test showed that scores from students from a low socioeconomic background were lower than those of a lesser poverty level. Of the three grade levels studied, 4^{th}, 8^{th}, and 10^{th}, achievement gaps of the districts were greatest in high and moderate poverty levels in forth grade reading and mathematics.

In a study of West Virginia school districts involving grades 3, 6, 9, and 11, Howley (1995) found a weaker correlation between socioeconomic status and academic performance in these particular grade levels. He suggested the generally small class sizes in the majority of West Virginia schools seemed to assist in subduing the negative effects of low socioeconomic status in academic performance. Sander (2001) compared Chicago schools with the rest of Illinois school districts. Again, students from a low socioeconomic background scored poorly. He found that Chicago schools did perform as well as the rest of the

state in grade school levels in the areas of reading and mathematics after factoring out family background. Reading scores became significantly lower for students from a low socioeconomic background at the high school level.

Poverty has a strong association with low academic performance of students. The low poverty level increases the number of dropouts, grade failure, and school disengagement. The longer a child is embedded in poverty-stricken conditions, the more detrimental his/her environment is for the progress of academic enhancement. When there is a concentration of poor students in a school setting, research has shown an academic decrease to all students, even if they came from a non-poverty background (Research and Accountability Department Pinellas County Schools, 1999). The research also stated that the percent of students not performing academically increases when the percent of poverty goes up in one particular school. “Both nationally and locally, the affect of school poverty concentration on student performance has been shown to have a significant relationship between school poverty rates and student achievement.”

The Problems With Standardized Testing Within the Population

During the past two decades, the educational community has worked diligently to reform the educational system in the United States. The focus has been on educating all students regardless of gender, race, and ethnicity. Since "A Nation at Risk, The National Commission on Excellence in Education" (1983), educational standards have been the tool used in evaluating the status and progress of reform.

By using standards to evaluate education reform, federal and state governments have created challenging environments in which all students must perform successfully on assessment tests and show proficiencies on such standards. These involve three major components: content and performance standards for each discipline, assessments aligned to each standard, and accountability for meeting each standard (Briars and Resnick, 2000).

Ballou, Sanders and Wright (2004) suggested that, although all students have the ability to learn and academically improve, it is much more difficult for students that are from a low socioeconomic environment. The authors go on to state that holding students, teachers, and administrators accountable for a high level of academic performance is unfair. These policies alienate teachers,

causing the most needy population of students to suffer in the long run. Holding educators accountable for academic achievement discredits the movement of standardized testing. The system should account for the student's background when considering academic success (Ballou, et.al.).

Many public educators in the United States debate the validity of standardized testing and the importance placed upon it. Rotberg (2006) mentioned that few countries in the world hold educators accountable for how their students perform on standardized tests. Countries admired for their educational success, such as Canada, Finland, France, Japan, and Sweden, do not use standardized testing to hold educators accountable for student success. They feel that using standardized testing limits the curriculum which teachers use in their classroom lessons. The 2001 legislation of No Child Left Behind in the United States has mandated all schools to participate in state standardized testing. Rotberg concluded this might cause schools to focus on those students close to reaching proficient test scores and lose interest in those low and high achieving students. Teachers feel obligated to focus on areas which will be tested and not use their imaginations in their curriculum and classroom lesson

development. The educational gap between low and high-income students is evident, but mandated state standardized testing, holding teachers accountable, and centralization is not the cure for those students in poverty. Schools solve the problem of poverty, but NCLB legislation assumes standardized testing solves the problem of poverty (Rotberg).

Texas Education Agency collected data from high schools in New Hampshire to explain variations between socioeconomic status and academic achievement on standardized test scores. They researched the validity of comparing districts on a particular standardized test score. Schools are viewed negatively or penalized for poor performance on standardized tests. This negatively affects schools that have a high number of low socioeconomic students. Schools are viewed and graded by standardized tests, but consideration is not given to other variables that affect academic performance. School districts in Texas are graded on academic achievement based on student performance on state standardized test scores and dropout rate. High-performing schools receive monetary rewards, while those districts scoring low on state mandated tests are subject to state intervention (as cited in Toutkoushian and Curtis, 2005).

Popham (2007) stated that the discrepancy of achievement gaps between students is not justified due to the method of testing using standardized tests. It has become obvious over the past several years that standardized testing is not a valid tool in assessing academic performance. There is an inability to determine if students are being taught effectively or not performing on standardized testing. This testing method does not take in account possible variables that may determine outcomes, such as socioeconomic status and other background interventions. If mandated state tests being used are highly correlated with socioeconomic status, then the validity of the test is in jeopardy. Tests differ from one another, and data is unable to be reviewed for possible studies and conclusions. Many tests do not assess the possible variables involved with other subjects tested, such as socioeconomic status, family background, and race (Popham).

Sutton and Soderstrom (1999) reviewed the Illinois School Report Card (IGAP) to measure student achievement. The authors determined that a school's IGAP achievement score is determined more by the demographics of the school than its socioeconomic status. With emphasis on achievement for all students, focus was placed on the learning of basic

skills. The authors stated that educators must be held accountable for student success, and the best way to determine this success is to use standardized testing with all students. There must be accountability and accurate assessment in order to evaluate and compare results. Students' achievement must be monitored in order to place proper accountability on school districts. The most efficient results for accountability are standardized test scores (Soderstrom and Sutton).

Jennings (2006) stated an important factor in the development of state evaluation systems is the effects of the home background of the students and other influences that are out of the control of the schools that affect academic performance, including test scores. Research has shown that socioeconomic status plays a large role in the performance of standardized test scores. Accountability systems that do not take into consideration the home background and socioeconomic status of students are considered to be deferring a bigger challenge than other districts face in educating their students. Systems that do take socioeconomic status into consideration are accused of setting different standards for students based on their economic background (Jennings).

Stiggins (2002) mentioned that standardized testing has been a controversial issue in education for many years. Many believe that accountability on standardized tests is the key ingredient in school reform and improvement. Others feel that it has caused a detrimental effect on quality teaching and learning, causing instruction to be focused on the test and not the overall learning of the individual students. Phelps (1999) stated that the general public has shown favor to the standardized testing due to the accountability it presents. Many educators continue to strongly criticize the testing, stating it is counter-productive, creating poor curriculum, lack of high-order thinking skills, and lower student achievement.

Urban vs Rural Education

Marcon (1999) studied 222 urban early adolescents with a median age of 149 months. She studied the different motivations that would improve academic performance. One of the important factors found to be an indicator of successful academic performance was socioeconomic status among the students studied. The study showed that lower income students were found to have poorer test scores. Students from higher income families were found to have a significantly higher grade point average in all academic areas except art, health, and physical education. Students

with a higher economic status were found to have scored better on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) in all areas except spelling (Marcon).

Educational Policy Research Institute (1995) found that characteristics associated with less effective rural schools included the following: “a) high staff turnover, b) lack of continuity in pedagogical practices, c) teachers were not appreciated as part of the “school community”, d) prevalent expectations by faculty that students would fail because of home environment, e) no definite instructional leader, f) frequent disagreement among students, g) low student pride, low student respect for teachers, and perception by students that they were not respected, h) low district involvement, i) low student motivation by faculty or administration, j) limited access to external opportunities, k) limited special programs that would offset detrimental effects of poverty when poverty was a factor.” (As cited in Mulvenon, Ganley, Fritts-Scott, 2001).

Yan (2006) studied the difference between the quality of rural and urban education. He studied three types of school districts: countywide, rural non-countywide, and rural-urban. He found that many supporters of consolidation argue that a small rural curriculum does not measure up to

large districts. These supporters feel that small schools do not obtain or retain quality teachers and do not have the resources to educate students successfully. In his study, he found that there was no statistical significance between small and large districts when comparing programs offered.

Yan (2006) stated there is no statistical evidence in his study that showed a deficiency in large schools outperforming rural schools on academic achievement. The results of the three districts were very complex.

> Countywide school districts perform better on some test scores but not on others. In addition, countywide school districts, which represent the biggest school districts, perform better than rural non-countywide school districts (small school districts) but not as well as mixed rural-urban school districts (small school districts). The results indicate that school district size might not be the direct reason for lower or higher academic performance of students. In addition, analyses of academic attainment of high school graduates did not reveal statistical differences between countywide school districts and percentage of high school graduates who go to

> college or take other career paths. This study does not support the concept that big school districts have more students seeking postsecondary education than small school districts or vice versa. (Yan, 2006)

Papay, Murnane and Willett (2008) studied the outcomes of low-income students on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment (MCAS). They found that families of urban, low-income students lack the resources to provide quality education for their children. Low-income students typically attend schools in which the majority of the student bodies perform very poorly on standardized tests. The authors stated that these school districts are now recognizing that parental involvement is a key essential in producing successful students. It is vitally important for improvement in urban-poor school districts to involve the parents in the educational process to improve in the math and reading content areas (Papay, et.al.).

Research showed that large school districts are not successful in academic achievement in Washington's 4th and 7th grades because the outcomes exploits the strong correlation between poverty and student achievement (Abbot, Joireman, Stroh, 2002). The researchers stated that there was a much more significant relationship between poverty

and academic achievement in larger districts than smaller ones. Smaller districts appear to get quality outcomes out of students from a low socioeconomic background. When school districts have a high percent of poverty, students from a small school district outperform those from a large one. The research also stated that the most significant outcomes occur when both the school and the district are small.

Bracey (2001) stated that many researchers believe that breaking into smaller schools could solve the problems for larger schools. Supporters for small schools feel they can provide the following:

- raise student achievement, especially for minority and low-income students;
- reduce incidents of violence and disruptive behavior;
- combat anonymity and isolation and, conversely, increase the sense of belonging;
- increase attendance and graduation rates;
- elevate teacher satisfaction;
- improve school climate;
- operate most cost-effectively;
- increase parents and community involvement; and

- reduce the amount of graffiti on school buildings. (p. 413)

Factors Affecting Academic Success

Jensen (1998) concluded the main factors that affect the way children grow up include families, neighborhoods, and schools. The quality of these particular factors, whether they are supportive and secure or neglected and dangerous, plays a vital role in the successful development of an individual's life. Wyner, Bridgeland, and Diivlio (2007) proposed that family income might be the most important factor in determining the success of an adolescent's life. Jensen (1998) stated that research shows that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds deal with large amounts of stress due to their environments. Stress is believed to be an important factor in academic success. According to Jensen, educators need to be aware of the importance of stress on the academic performance of their students. Excessive stress has been found to play an important role in the success of a student's academic performance. Educators need to be aware of the possible threats for students based on the way in which the brain reacts to stress. When students become stressed, their bodies can become physically impaired, causing depression of the immune system, tensing of the large muscles, blood

clotting, and increasing blood pressure. This can cause a dramatic effect on school performance. Chronic stress can determine how the brain reacts to what is important and what is not important for a student (Jensen).

Jensen (1998) stated many sources in a student's life could contribute to the stress level the student possesses. All of these situations and sources of stress could affect a student in a negative way and how the brain has reacted to these threats. Some may have dismissed the threat, while others can be negatively affected. Many of the threats to a student's life can be devastating. Students that have repeated exposure to threats and high stress have problems focusing their attention in the academic setting. Many of these individuals come from homes in which domestic violence occurs. They begin to look for violent situations that could possibly occur in the school setting and take focus away from their academic involvement. The individual's mindset becomes focused on the sense of survival. The student has created his or her own environment that is not acceptable for educational success (Jensen).

Jencks and Phillips (1998) conclude that parenting factors play a huge role in the academic success of a child. The role of the parent in the educational process

has a significant influence on the success a student has in the classroom. Jencks and Phillips stated the following:

> Parenting practices almost certainly have more impact on children's cognitive development than preschool practices. Indeed, changing the way parents deal with their children may be the single most important thing we can do to improve children's cognitive skills. But getting parents to change their habits is even harder than getting teachers to change. Like teachers, parents are usually suspicious of unsolicited suggestions. This is doubly true when the suggestions require fundamental changes in a parent's behavior. But once parents become convinced that changing their behavior will really help their children, many try to change, even when this is quite difficult. As a practical matter, whites cannot tell black parents to change their practices without provoking charges of ethnocentrism, racism, and much else. But black parents are not the only ones who need help. We should be promoting better parenting practices for all parents, using every tool at our disposal . . ." (p.46).

Redding, Langdon, Meyer and Sheley (2004) concluded that poor families do not understand the relationship

between family and school. These families tend to have more children than they can afford, creating a competitive atmosphere for their children's time and loyalty. These parents thrive on the emotional comfort they find in their children and become anxious when other individuals, including teachers, develop relationships with their children. On the other hand, children coming from the middle class have parents that are engaged in their schooling, and are active in school and parent organizations, such as Parents As Teachers.

Ingersoll (1999) stated that family income plays a major role in the educational opportunities for children. Students from low-income families usually attend school districts with few resources and lower funding. The poor funding does not allow for the proper, updated textbooks, technology, library books, and other vital learning tools and resources. These districts tend to have a high turnover of teachers and administrators, and tend to have fewer qualified faculty.

Schools are the focal point for the positive influence on a student's academic success. There are many more factors in achieving success outside the realm of curriculum, and instructional strategies and practices. Community support, parental involvement, and the

psychological characteristics of students also play a critical role in the academic performance of all students. Research shows that improvement in math and reading have been shown to be productive when parents are involved in their students' academic endeavors than those parents who are not. This has shown true for all levels of educational and socioeconomic backgrounds of the families (Shaver and Walls, 1998).

Walberg's "Theory of Educational Productivity" is useful in determining the different factors that affect academic performance. He proposed a nine-factor model for the "optimizing" of learning, including affective, behavioral, and cognitive skills. The first group is labeled as aptitudes, including ability, development, and motivation. The second group is labeled as instruction, including amount and quality. The last group is labeled as environments, including home, classroom, peers, and television. (Roberts, 2007)

Weber's (1971) studies of four effective inner city schools directly opposed Coleman (1966) and Jencks' (1972) findings. Weber defined a successful school by its ability to educate poor students as effectively as middle class students. All of the four schools scored above the national average on standardized test scores. His findings found

seven important factors in determining schools' effectiveness: "strong leadership, where the principal was influential in setting the tone of the school, high expectations for students, an orderly and quiet atmosphere, emphasis on reading skills and phonic awareness, frequent evaluation of skills to guide instruction, additional reading personnel, and individualization of instruction" (Weber).

Home Environment

White stated that the most important factor of academic success for students from low socioeconomic status is the home environment. It is more crucial than other factors affecting academic performance, such as parental income and education. Schools cannot change the factors of parental education and income but can have a positive effect on the home environment by educating and working with parents. Educating parents on the importance of the home environment on academic performance and giving them tools to assist in the educational process can be beneficial in creating a positive home environment for a child's education. Creating a positive home environment will assist in the success of academic performance (as cited in Marzano, 2003).

Parents who are educated have children who score higher on standardized tests. They are more likely to read to their children and provide reading and education material, and are able to successfully assist their children with their homework (Krashen, 2005). Parents who have a strong educational background tend to communicate better with their children regarding school and school activities. They also show interest in schoolwork and have children that score better on standardized tests. Communication between students and parents is more effective by discussing what information is being taught at school and what activities their children are participating in. This showed to be a positive association with educational goals (Trusty, 1999).

Positive parental involvement showed successful outcomes in student achievement. Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) stated that parents who create a stimulating learning environment tend to have higher educational motivation, creating higher performance in school. This included providing reading material, such as books, magazines, and newspapers. Also, including their children in learning experiences and environments, such as libraries, museums, lectures, and music performances, created a positive learning environment, enhancing their

academic success in school. Barton and Coley (1992) concluded that presence of reading material, such as newspapers, books, encyclopedias, and magazines, in homes shows the availability of reading instruments for the child. Parents from a high socioeconomic status have the resources to have these important reading materials available for their children. Encouraging outside reading material in the home showed substantial reading proficiency in this study. Unfortunately, the trend of having such reading materials significantly dropped between 1971 and 1990. This showed to be a negative statistic for educators (Barton and Coley).

There is some evidence showing that parental involvement and monitoring of their child's homework can have negative results of academic performance. Ginsburg and Bronstein (1993) implied that parents who constantly monitor and remind their child to complete homework and other educational tasks could cause negative affects on academic success. These behaviors cause a child to be extrinsically motivated instead of intrinsically, creating a negative learning atmosphere and producing poor academic performance.

Parental involvement in their child's school activities has positive results on their academic success.

Research has found that children of parents who are involved in their child's educational experience, such as parent-teacher conferences, open house, and volunteering at the school, showed significant increases in academic performance (Griffith, 1996). Other research showed that there is no correlation between parental involvement and academic success (Trusty, 1999).

The family's socioeconomic status plays a significant role in the involvement of the student's educational process. Research showed that families from a high socioeconomic background are more involved in the educational process than those from a low socioeconomic background (Hickman, 1995). Parents from high socioeconomic statuses have more free time and resources such as transportation, childcare, and accessibility to educational tools. They also are more familiar with the educational process, and feel more comfortable talking and working with the schools their child attends (Griffith, 1996).

Trusty (1999) stated the importance of socioeconomic status of parents when discussing communication among parents and teachers. Parents from a low socioeconomic status tend to communicate with the school due to behavior issues or low grades of the student. They tend to communicate with the school under negative circumstance,

thus creating a negative view of the school by these individuals. This type of communication creates a detrimental relationship between parents and the school, thus corrupting the educational teamwork between the two for the student's academic success. Those parents from a high socioeconomic status tend to communicate with the school in a much more positive manner (Trusty). Lazar and Slostad (1999) suggested there must be trust among parents, teachers, and administrators when discussing academic success for students. If not, parents will only visit the school when required for reasons such as bad behavior or poor grades by the child. This creates a negative attitude toward school for these parents. Parents do not feel they are welcome at the school and have bad experiences when visiting. Many teachers say that parents from low socioeconomic status do not care about their child's academic success when, in fact, it could be the negative atmosphere and experiences the school has created for the individuals (Lazar and Slostad).

Henderson (1988) stated that the success of a student's academic performance is strongly dependent upon parental involvement. This is extremely true for those students that come from a low socioeconomic background. These individuals need to have parental involvement in

their academic journey in order to attain a high level of educational success. The author stated that historically these students from a low socioeconomic background are the ones not receiving the crucial involvement from home. They are the students in which academic performance is failing the most. Henderson stated that parental involvement created “higher grades and test scores, long-term academic achievement, positive attitudes and behavior, more successful programs, and more effective schools” (p.60).

The Westat and Policy Studies Associates (2001) report concluded that parental involvement is important for student success. They studied 71 poverty schools from seven states from 1996 to 1999. They determined that teacher outreach to parents created a positive effect on student test scores. Teacher outreach to parents included individual meetings, sending instructions home to parents on how to assist their child, frequent telephone calls, and generally consistent communication with parents involving all aspects of the child’s educational goals. Those students from low socioeconomic backgrounds scored lower on test scores. There was a increase in math scores in certain grade levels of students whose teacher communicated with the parents on a regular basis. The report showed that

teacher outreach to parents is crucial for students from low socioeconomic status.

Communication among young children and their parents is important for their future academic performance. Heath (1983) studied babies from white middle and low socioeconomic families. Heath found that babies from both communities had similar educational tools and were cared for in a loving caring manner. Most environmental settings were similar. The key difference between the two communities involved the reading process. The middle class parents read to their child, and they asked about story content, pointed out pictures, and asked questions regarding the meaning of the story. They asked questions and corrected wrong answers. The low socioeconomic parents did not obtain the knowledge for higher level thinking involving the communication barriers that existed. They were less engaged in the meaning and unable to successfully communicate that to the child (Heath).

Shumow and Lomax (2001) studied the effects of parental involvement on academic success of students. They studied 929 families of children 10 to 17 years of age. They concluded that, the more the parents were involved and monitored their child’s academic performance, the higher they performed in school. The parents’ sense of competency

in being involved in the community, educating their child on drug awareness, and working to strengthen the school showed positive effects on the student's academic performance. It was important for parents to know what their children were doing and with whom they were hanging around, and to discuss with their children drugs, family, and friends. Henderson (1988) determined that training low-income families to participate assisted in creating a positive relationship and encouraging parents to become more supportive of the teacher and school. It also challenged some parents to finish or continue their own education, creating even more confidence and competency in the school setting.

Research has shown that teacher contact with parents involving discussions regarding disciplinary issues can create a negative relationship. Teachers have a greater number of contacts with parents involving discipline issues than about academic progress. It is important for teachers to engage in conversation with parents about positive issues as well as negative to improve parent-teacher relations (Izzo,et.al. 1999).

Epstein (2001) concluded that poorer communities tend to have less parental involvement than more advantaged communities. These families tend to have more survival

issues, such as money and safety, than educational concerns for their children. Parents from low socioeconomic communities tend to have poor relationships with the school because they feel they are not being respected. The author stated it is vital that school districts make collaborative efforts to involve these parents and make them feel comfortable communicating with the school and teachers.

Fantuzzo,et.al., (2000) concluded that parents who are educated have a more positive relationship with the school than those less educated. Those parents that come from an educational background feel comfortable being involved in the school setting. They do not feel intimidated by communicating with the teachers of their children. They also tend to put more emphasis on the educational success of their children, and spend more time helping with homework and educational skills at home (Fantuzzo,et.al.). Children who have parents that are involved in their education tend to stay in school longer and graduate on time when compared to those children with less involved parents (Barnard, 2004).

Hill and Craft (2003) studied the effects of ethnicity of parental involvement in student academic achievement. The sample included Euro-Americans and African American kindergarteners. The authors concluded that there were

different impacts between the two samples. The African American kindergarteners showed an increase in math performance with parental involvement. The involvement with Euro-American parents showed negative outcomes for their kindergarteners on the math performance. Hill and Craft (2004) hypothesized that the Euro-American parents became more involved in school when there was trouble with their child. Their communication with the school tended to involve a negative manner. The African-American parents were more involved with their children's education in an academic manner, consisting of communication dealing with performance improvement. The authors suggest that the parents of African American children were less informed about how to help promote academic skills with their children because they do not have the "informal social networks" like the Euro-Americans did. Being in the school, these parents learned important strategies to assist in their child's academic performance (Hill and Craft).

Summary

There are many different variables to consider when dealing with effective student achievement (Waters and Marzano, 2006). The purpose of this research was to find the correlation between socioeconomic status and academic performance. The most important aspect for all educators is

to educate all students. In order for this to happen, educators must understand the many variables affecting academic performance. The success of students depends on educators having the ability to understand and realize the variables that exist and determining how to implement strategies to compensate for each individual student.

The research consisted of the 2007 communication arts and math MAP results for two hundred fifty public school districts in Missouri. It also focused on the correlation of the same variable in nineteen small rural and nineteen large urban school districts in the Kansas City and St. Louis areas. The study determined if there was a correlation among Missouri students regarding their socioeconomic status and academic performance. The research analyzed the percent of free and reduced lunch students compared to their proficiencies on the communication arts and math MAP test. The research will assist educators by determining if the variable of socioeconomic status plays a role in students' academic performance.

> Improving the setting in which many low-income children and adolescents grow up – that is, supporting their families, strengthening their neighborhoods, improving their schools, and making quality health care and other services more accessible to them –

should be a policy priority for government at all levels and a research priority for social scientists from all disciplines. Ultimately, this is likely to be the only way to prevent the intergenerational transmission of poverty and exclusion from meaningful and rewarding participation in our society. The fates of poor and low-income children and adolescents are inextricably linked to our future as a nation. (Escarce, 2003).

CHAPTER III
Methods

Introduction

Determining student variables related to educational outcome is the most important thing educators have to accomplish. The understanding of variables such as socioeconomic status, is vital in producing successful students. Facilitating success of students is the main objective for all school districts. This is why a high priority should be placed on defining and understanding the effects of socioeconomic status on students' academic performance. It is also important to understand the correlation of such variables concerning the size and geographic location of school districts.

Determining the different variables that affect academic performance is very challenging. Students come from such a wide variety of backgrounds in public schools today. The diversity among students is greater than ever before. An educator must determine the variables that exist in the classroom and develop strategies in which all students are given the opportunity for educational success. This is a time consuming and difficult task, requiring skills, organization and planning. This process must be taken very seriously by the school district due to the

impact that it could have on children. It is important for research to be done to determine which factors affect academic performance so that educators can develop teaching strategies to ensure that all children can achieve their greatest learning potential.

The mission of determining the social factors of children in our classrooms is important in diagnosing a strategy so all students reach their academic potential. Finding the variety of variables that exist among students will lead to a more effective teacher who in turn will help develop successful children. The process that will be studied consisted of determining the correlation between socioeconomic status and academic performance. The study also focused on the correlation between academic performance and socioeconomic status on students from small, rural and large, urban school districts. The study used MAP scores from students in Missouri K-12 public schools.

The socioeconomic status of a student was determined by the federal free and reduced lunch count, and the academic success of a child consisted of the proficiency on the MAP test. The data analyzed determined the correlation of socioeconomic status and the student’s academic success. The Pearson r Formula was used in determining this

correlation. This information is vital to determine the need of each individual child in the classroom.

The study also determined the correlation of socioeconomic status and academic performance in comparison to small, rural and large, urban school districts. Again, the socioeconomic status of the students was determined by the qualification of the federal free and reduced lunch, and the proficiency on the MAP test determined the student's academic performance. The same Pearson r Formula was used in determining the correlation of the two variables. This information was important in determining if the size of the school district in relationship to the socioeconomic status had a correlation with academic success. This enabled educators to determine if the correlation would initiate alternative teaching strategies to meet the needs of all children, regardless of the size of the school district.

Although there are many different variables to consider when looking at the diversity of classrooms in American schools, socioeconomic status is one which is consistently debated. Much research has shown a possible correlation between academic success and socioeconomic status, but there has been little information on how to determine what to do about it. It is very important that

educators not only determine the different types of variables that affect academic success but also devise a strategy on how to correct the issue. Schools that have a high percent of free and reduced lunch participants must understand if a correlation exists between socioeconomic status and academic success, and work diligently to arrive at solutions to intervene and strategically plan for all students' success.

Much research has been done on the effects of socioeconomic status and academic performance in large urban school districts. The study focused on the correlation of socioeconomic status and academic performance in small, rural schools and large, urban schools in the state of Missouri. It was of vital importance to realize not only the variables that affect academic performance but also to determine if the correlation is consistent within the subjects in which the environment is different. The researcher determined if the correlation is consistent throughout the state, regardless of the size of the school district which the students attend.

This was a descriptive study that involved two hundred fifty, randomly chosen Missouri school districts. It showed the data of these school districts' free and reduced lunch

percent and the students' proficiency on the K-12 Missouri Assessment Program test results. The data was collected from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary School's website. These districts were all accredited public schools by the state education department. A raw data tally was used to arrive at the research results.

The study used all nineteen urban school districts in the Kansas City and St. Louis areas that have an enrollment of 5,000 students or more. The study used nineteen randomly chosen school districts with an enrollment of 1,500 or less in rural Missouri areas. It also showed the data of these school districts' free and reduced lunch percent and the students' proficiency on the K-12 Missouri Assessment Program test results. Again, the data was collected from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary School's website. A raw data tally was also used in arriving at the researcher's results.

Hypotheses Tested

1. The null hypothesis will determine that a correlation does not exist between socioeconomic status and academic performance in Missouri schools.
2. The second null hypothesis will determine that a correlation does not exist between socioeconomic

status and academic performance in small, rural school districts in Missouri.

3. The third null hypothesis will determine that a correlation does not exist between socioeconomic status and academic performance in large, urban school districts in Missouri.

Description of the Population

The study involved two hundred fifty school districts in Missouri. The districts involved in the study range from small, medium and large schools, and all serve K-12 students. There is a constant debate on the correlation between socioeconomic status and academic success. The data came from of the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary School's website, using each district's school report card located under the school district's assessment results. The report card indicated each district's performance on the state mandated Missouri Assessment Program results for 2007. The MAP tests grades 3-11 were used in the data collection. The researcher had to look at each individual school district's report card under the 2007 portion of the MAP results, using a raw data tally to arrive at the researcher's conclusions. The researcher used the same variables and source for data in concluding results for small, rural and large, urban school districts.

Instrumentation

Data was collected from two hundred fifty public school districts in the state of Missouri. The purpose of the data was to obtain the information to determine the correlation between socioeconomic status and academic performance. There were two variables of data that were obtained for the study. One area of data collected was the socioeconomic status of the district using the free and reduced lunch percent of students attending those schools in the district. The second area collected was the number of students scoring proficient or above proficient on the 2007 MAP standardized test. The instrumentation used in determining the correlation between the two variables obtained was the Pearson r Formula. This formula is a correlation coefficient employed with interval- or ratio-scaled variables.

Data was also collected from the nineteen school districts in the Kansas City and St. Louis area that had a student enrollment of over 5,000. Nineteen school districts were randomly chosen throughout K-12, rural Missouri schools that had an enrollment of less than 1,500 students. The same two areas of data were collected for this study, including the federal free and reduced lunch percent and proficiency on the district wide MAP scores. The

instrumentation used in determining this correlation was also the Pearson r Correlation Formula.

There are many positive characteristics found by using hard data on the DESE website while doing research. The data was not opinionated and simply stated factual results. The information was easily obtainable and was fairly simple to understand. It generally provided for a high percent of accuracy when determining research conclusions. A web based informational procedure was very efficient in that it demanded less time, was less expensive, and allowed a collection of data from a much larger sample.

The disadvantage of using a web based information procedure is the amount of information obtained. If it is not properly organized or administered carelessly and incompetently, it can lead to incorrect results. The researcher did not have personal contact with the school district participants, thus, did not have any rapport with the subjects used. There could be possible reasons or implementations not known for the results that are being used in the study.

The validity of web-based information from the DESE site was determined by measuring what was supposed to measure. This was, in fact, correct data, given the DESE web site was disclosing the correct information of the MAP

test results of the given school districts. School districts had a window in which they had the opportunity to change any incorrect data placed on the web site. Since the window was closed during the viewing of this particular data, it was conclusive that the research shown was valid information.

Administration Procedures

All data collected was obtained from the DESE website, involving the subject areas of the MAP exam. The MAP exam was taken by all Missouri school districts in the spring of 2007. The results were tallied by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and made public on their website in the fall of 2007. DESE then gave a window for data correction and publicized all final Annual Yearly Progress reports on the DESE website. The District Annual Report Card, which included the MAP results, was open for public viewing later that fall.

Treatment of Data

The MAP test was used in this study to determine the academic performance of students in each district. The percent of those students scoring proficient or above proficient was used to determine the academic performance of the district. The free and reduced lunch percent of the districts was used to determine the socioeconomic status.

A correlation study, using the Pearson r Formula was used in determining the relationship between academic success and socioeconomic status. The data was ranked from 1 to 250 from highest to lowest on the number of students scoring proficient or above proficient on the MAP standardized test. The percent of students on free and reduced lunch was placed next to each specific district, showing the comparison of the two. The data was then compared to determine the correlation between academic success and socioeconomic status. The same data analysis was used in determining the correlation between small, rural and large, urban schools in relation to socioeconomic status on academic success.

CHAPTER IV
Analysis of Data

Introduction

Determining the correlation between academic success and socioeconomic status is important in producing instructional strategies to improve the academic performance for all students. Finding the correlation between the data retrieved is vital in finding solutions for all students' success. Finding solutions for all students to achieve is very difficult. It is the constant battle of educators to improve student achievement. Current legislation holding educators accountable for all students to perform proficient or above has emphasized the importance of these educational challenges. This study looked at two hundred fifty K-12 Missouri school districts to find the correlation between academic performance and socioeconomic status. The study used the 2007 communication arts and math portion of the MAP test, and the percent of free and reduced lunch students in each district. The study also looked at the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic performance in small, rural and large, urban school districts.

Restatement of the Problem

The purpose of the study was to look at the correlation between academic success and socioeconomic status among Missouri students. The study focused on two hundred fifty school districts randomly chosen to view their communication arts and math portions of the MAP test to find the percent of students scoring at or above proficient. The free and reduced lunch count of the schools was used to determine the socioeconomic status of the districts. The study also looked at the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic performance in small, rural and large, urban school districts. The study tried to understand the correlation between academic performance and socioeconomic status by comparing the data retrieved on the DESE web site.

The null hypothesis will determine that a correlation does not exist between socioeconomic status and academic performance in Missouri schools. The second null hypothesis will determine that a correlation does not exist between socioeconomic status and academic performance in small, rural school districts in Missouri schools. The third null hypothesis will determine that a correlation does not exist between socioeconomic status and academic performance in large, urban school districts in Missouri.

There were two hundred fifty K-12 school districts that were randomly chosen for the study. Data was used in finding the correlation between academic success and socioeconomic status. There were an additional nineteen small, rural and nineteen large, urban school districts studied to determine the correlation between the same variables. To facilitate the study, the following data was studied:

1. The number of students scoring proficient or above proficient on the communication arts and math portions of the MAP test in two hundred fifty randomly chosen Missouri school districts.
2. The number of students scoring proficient or above proficient on the communication arts and math portions of the MAP test in nineteen small, rural and nineteen large, urban school districts.
3. The percent of students on the free and reduced lunch program in each district.
4. The correlation between the MAP test scores and the percent of students on free and reduced lunches.

Analysis of the Correlation Between Academic Success and Socioeconomic Status

There is a constant debate among educators on the correlation between academic success and socioeconomic

status. Finding this correlation and using the information from the study to improve instructional strategies to implement in the classroom is important and necessary. The findings of this study could also assist in determining if standardized testing, in which all students must participate, is a valid form of measurement. The findings of the study will also assist in determining instructional strategies used for low socioeconomic status students, depending on the size and geographic location of the school district. In this study, the researcher analyzed the number of students scoring proficient on the communication arts and math portions of the MAP test, and the percent of students on the free and reduced lunch program. These two variables were used in determining the correlation between academic performance and socioeconomic status. This was done by ranking each school district by the number of students proficient or above on the MAP, and comparing these results to the percent of those student on free and reduced lunch. The Pearson r Formula was used in determining this correlation. The two hundred fifty, random schools studied had a range from very large to very small. All nineteen large urban school districts from the Kansas City and St. Louis areas with an enrollment of over 5,000 students were used in the study. Finally, there were

nineteen random, rural school districts from Missouri chosen with an enrollment of less than 1,500 students.

The free and reduced lunch population data was gathered from the DESE web site. The determination of students on free and reduced lunches comes from the federal government calculation of family income. This income level is determined by the government and changes each school year, thus causing the percent of free and reduced lunch students to fluctuate annually. The other variable to consider is that not all families who qualify for free and reduced lunches opt to participate in the program.

The data from those students scoring proficient or above proficient on the communication arts and math portions of the MAP also came from the DESE web site. This is a mandated test administered to all Missouri students attending the public school system. This test is distributed each spring to all school districts and is a factor in determining the accreditation of each school district. Math and communication arts were the two content areas mandated to administer in the 2007 school year. Information concerning the MAP can be found on the DESE web site.

The Pearson r Formula was used in determining the correlation between the two variables because the Pearson

Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, r, represents the extent to which individuals or events occupy the same relative position in two distributions (Runzon, Coleman, and Pittenger ninth edition 2000). A Pearson r Formula can consist of a high, medium and low correlation. It can also be positive or negative. A negative correlation means that, if either independent variable increases, the other decreases. A negative correlation existed in all studies preformed by the researcher.

The Pearson r Formula was used in this study to determine the correlation between academic performance and socioeconomic status. The data from two hundred fifty, randomly chosen public school districts in Missouri shows that the sum of X represents those students scoring proficient or above proficient on the communication arts portion of the MAP tests. The sum of X = 10658.0. The sum of X2 = 472623.17. The sum of Y represents the population of students on the federal free and reduced lunch program. The sum of Y = 11965.3. The sum of Y2 = 636180.93. The sum of XY represents the multiplication of the percent of students on free and reduced lunches, and the percent of students scoring proficient or above proficient on the communication arts portion of the MAP test. The calculation to XY = 487935.56. The data shows the correlation between

academic success and socioeconomic status among the two-hundred fifty, randomly chosen school districts in Missouri in the communication arts portion of the 2007 MAP, as shown by the Pearson R Correlation Formula, r = -0.651191692. This indicates a significant negative correlation.

The data from two hundred fifty randomly chosen public school districts in Missouri shows the sum of X represents those students scoring proficient or above proficient on the math portion of the MAP tests. The sum of X = 10879.4. The sum of X2 = 501252.62. The sum of Y represents the population of students on the free and reduced lunch program. The sum of Y = 11965.3. The sum of Y2 = 636180.93. The sum of XY represents the multiplication of the percent of students on free and reduced lunches and the percent of students scoring at or above proficient on the math portion of the MAP test. The calculation to XY = 495369.53. The data shows the correlation between academic success and socioeconomic status among the 250 randomly chosen school districts in Missouri in the math portion of the 2007 MAP, as shown by the Pearson r Correlation Formula, r = -0.602714965. This indicates a significant negative correlation.

Table 1.

Correlations Between Academic Success and Free and Reduced Lunch students in 250 Random Missouri Schools

Variables	Free and Reduced Lunch
Communication Arts	-0.651191692
Math	-0.602714965

The data shows the sum of X represents those students scoring proficient or above proficient on the communication arts portion of the MAP tests in small rural school districts in Missouri. The sum of X = 816.6. The sum of X2 = 36297.62. The sum of Y represents the population of students on the free and reduced lunch program in these districts. The sum of Y = 898.0. The sum of Y2 = 46878.98. The sum of XY represents the multiplication of the percent of students on free and reduced lunches, and the percent of students scoring at or above proficient on the communication arts portion of the MAP test. The calculation to XY = 37917.27. The data shows the correlation between academic success and socioeconomic status among the nineteen, randomly chosen small rural school districts in Missouri in the communication arts portion of the 2007 MAP, as shown by the Pearson r Correlation Formula, r =

-0.293640217. This indicates a negative correlation that is not considered significant.

The data shows the sum of X represents those students scoring proficient or above proficient on the math portion of the MAP test in small, rural school districts in Missouri. The sum of X = 857.6. The sum of X2 = 40213.86. The sum of Y represents the population of students on the free and reduced lunch program in these districts. The sum of Y = 898.0. The sum of Y2 = 46878.98. The sum of XY represents the multiplication of the percent of students on free and reduced lunches, and the percent of students scoring at or above proficient on the math portion of the MAP test. The calculation to XY = 39311.59. The data shows the correlation between academic success and socioeconomic status among the nineteen, randomly chosen rural school districts in Missouri in the math portion of the 2007 MAP, as shown by the Pearson r Correlation Formula, r = -0.472710571. This indicates a significant negative correlation.

Table 2.

Correlations Between Academic Success and Free and Reduced Lunch in Small Rural Missouri Schools

Variables	Free and Reduced Lunch
Communication Arts	-0.293640217
Math	-0.472710571

The data shows the sum of X represent those students scoring proficient or above proficient on the communication arts portion of the MAP test in large, urban school districts in Missouri. The sum of X = 818.6. The sum of X2 = 40417.98. The sum of Y represents the population of students on the free and reduced lunch program in these districts. The sum of Y = 834.0. The sum of Y2 = 48609.52. The sum of XY represents the multiplication of the percent of students on free and reduced lunches, and the percent of students scoring at or above proficient on the communication arts portion of the MAP test. The calculation of XY = 28307.89. The data shows the correlation between academic success and socioeconomic status among the nineteen large, urban school districts in Missouri in the communication arts portion of the 2007 MAP, as shown by the Pearson r Correlation Formula, r = -0.969876058. This indicates a highly significant negative correlation.

The data shows the sum of X represent those students scoring proficient or above proficient on the math portion of the MAP test in large, urban school districts in Missouri. The sum of X = 812.7. The sum of X2 = 41053.35. The sum of Y represents the population of students on the free and reduced lunch program in these districts. The sum of Y = 834.0. The sum of Y2 = 48609.52. The sum of XY represents the multiplication of the percent of students on free and reduced lunches, and the percent of students scoring at or above proficient on the math portion of the MAP test. The calculation to XY = 27258.87. The data shows the correlation between academic success and socioeconomic status among the nineteen large, urban school districts in Missouri in the math portion of the 2007 MAP, as shown by the Pearson r Correlation Formula, r = -0.968371486. This indicates a highly significant negative correlation.

Table 3.

Correlations Between Academic Success and Free and Reduced Lunch in Large Urban Missouri Schools

Variables	Free and Reduced Lunch
Communication Arts	-0.969876058
Math	-0.969876058

The negative correlations mean that the changing of one variable will oppositely affect the other. In the researcher's opinion, the correlations are not a causation of the variables researched. The data simply shows that correlations exist between the two variables. There are other extraneous factors that may play a role in academic success, including parental education, home environment, gender, and race.

Summary

This chapter examined and analyzed the data collected from two hundred fifty school districts in Missouri. Data was also collected from nineteen, small, rural and nineteen large, urban school districts in Missouri. The data was collected to find the correlation between academic success and socioeconomic status. The researcher's tables and figuring the correlations enabled him to analyze the data. The tables, which were included, are to assist the reader in understanding the results of the research. There were two areas of data collected for the study. The first was the percent of students scoring proficient or above proficient on communication arts and math portions of the MAP test. The second section of data consisted of the percent of students in each district on the federal free and reduced lunch program. The correlation of data was

determined by using the Pearson r Correlation Formula. The data in this formula was shown in the tables and depicts the correlation between the two variables.

The data reflected that the results between academic success and socioeconomic status among the two hundred fifty randomly chosen school districts in Missouri in communication arts portion of the MAP test consisted of a significant, negative correlation. A similar correlation also existed in the math portion of the MAP test. The data supports a correlation between academic success and socioeconomic status in both subject areas. The results shown here are only a correlation between the two variables, and there are other aspects that could also affect the academic performance of students.

The data reflected that the results between academic success and socioeconomic status among the nineteen randomly chosen, small, rural school districts in Missouri in the communication arts portion of the MAP test consisted of a negative correlation that is not considered significant. A significant, negative correlation existed in the math portion of the test. The data showed that the correlation between socioeconomic status and academic performance of the nineteen, large, urban schools in the communication arts portion of the MAP test consisted of a

highly significant, negative correlation. A similar, high correlation also existed in the math portion of the test. Again, the data showed a correlation existed between the two variables in all areas except small, rural subjects in the communication arts portion of the MAP test. The results show a correlation exists only between the two variables. Other extraneous factors could also affect the academic performance of students.

CHAPTER V
Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

It is very important to determine if there is a correlation between academic performance and socioeconomic status. If there is a correlation between these two variables, it is vital to incorporate instructional strategies to improve academic performance for low socioeconomic students in the delivery of instruction. The school districts and administrators should place a high priority on the research and efforts in determining variables that affect academic performance. All educators should be given professional training in diagnosing and adapting to variables that affect the educational success of all students. With the accountability to which all educators are held, they must improve instructional strategies to consistently produce successful students. The many variables that affect the educational outcome, including socioeconomic status and school size, must be researched and overcome by effective teaching.

To find the correlation between academic success and socioeconomic status, the researcher compared the two variables. Two hundred fifty Missouri school districts were looked at in determining the effects of socioeconomic

status on academic performance. Nineteen, small, rural schools in Missouri, and nineteen, large, urban schools in the Kansas City and St. Louis areas were also studied. The researcher used the DESE web-site to find the data pertinent to the study. The percent of students scoring proficient or above proficient on the MAP test was the first variable analyzed. The second was the percent of students in each district enrolled in the federal free and reduced lunch program. The purpose of the study was to determine the correlation between academic performance and socioeconomic status. The goal was to determine the correlation so educators can devise educational reform, consisting of new teaching strategies that will successfully affect those students from a low socioeconomic background. Educators may review the data to determine if the mandated state tests are a valid assessment for those students from a low socioeconomic status. In addition, it will be useful to determine if size and geographical location are factors in academic performance in a low socioeconomic setting.

The data was taken from the DESE web-site from the two hundred fifty school districts' annual report cards. The two variables were compared with a correlation being determined by the Pearson r Formula. The data was totaled,

and the researcher calculated the statistics by using the Pearson r Correlation Formula in the Microsoft Excel software program. Tables were also provided to give the reader a better understanding of the research. Conclusions and recommendations are then given.

Conclusion

Based on the data analyzed for this research, it was concluded there was a significant correlation between academic performance and socioeconomic status among the two hundred fifty, randomly chosen Missouri school districts in communication arts and math. The percents showing a negative correlation implied that, if one variable were to change, the other variable would also change in the opposite manner. This means that the higher the percent of students on free and reduced lunch, the lower the percent of students that would score proficient or above proficient on the communication arts and math portions of the MAP test. Therefore, the researcher must reject the null hypothesis stating there was no correlation between academic success and socioeconomic status. The researcher must accept the alternative hypothesis and conclude that a correlation between the two variables exists. There are no implications that there is a cause and effect relationship between the two variables. It is just a correlation that

may be related to other extraneous variables. The critical values of the correlation coefficient determine the degree of freedom of the r-value. With a sample of two hundred fifty school districts used in the study, the confident value of ninety-five percent shows that a .1638 percent or greater correlation coefficient value is significant.

Based on the data analyzed by the researcher, it was concluded there was not a significant correlation between academic performance and socioeconomic status among the nineteen, randomly chosen, small, rural Missouri school districts in communication arts. A negative correlation existed, showing that, if one variable were to change, the other variable would also change in the opposite manner. Therefore, the researcher must accept the null hypothesis stating that there was not a significant correlation between academic success and socioeconomic status in small, rural school districts in Missouri in communication arts. With a sample of nineteen school districts used in the study, the confident value of ninety-five percent shows that a .3687 percent or greater correlation coefficient value is significant.

Based on the data analyzed by the researcher, it was concluded there was a significant correlation between academic performance and socioeconomic status among the

randomly chosen, small, rural Missouri school districts in math. A negative correlation existed, showing that, if one variable were to change, the other variable would also change in the opposite manner. Therefore, the researcher must reject the null hypothesis stating that there was no significant correlation between academic success and socioeconomic status in small rural school districts in Missouri in math. With a sample of nineteen school districts used in the study, the confident value of ninety-five percent shows that a .3687 percent or greater correlation coefficient value is significant.

Based on the data analyzed by the researcher, it was concluded there was a significant correlation between academic performance and socioeconomic status among the nineteen, large, urban school districts in the Kansas City and St. Louis areas in math and communication arts. A negative correlation existed showing that if one variable were to change, the other variable would also change in the opposite manner. Therefore, the researcher must reject the null hypothesis stating that there was no significant correlation between academic success and socioeconomic status in large urban school districts in communication arts and math. With a sample of nineteen school districts used in the study, the confident value of ninety-five

percent shows that a .3687 percent or greater correlation coefficient value is significant.

Recommendations

1. Additional studies should be conducted to determine other variables that affect academic success.
2. Additional studies, using a larger population of subjects in a larger geographic area, would be beneficial to determine other variables or to reinforce the results.
3. Employing a different variable to determine the socioeconomic status of the students would enhance the results.

   There are a number of families that qualify but do not participate in the federal free and reduced lunch program.
4. Researching a larger population of subjects regarding small rural and large urban school districts will require the study to include states other than Missouri.
5. Researching a smaller number for student enrollment when identifying small rural school districts would enhance the results. Researching a larger number for enrollment when identifying large urban school districts would enhance the results.

6. Reviewing the determination factor of the confidence interval used on the MAP assessment will assist in determining the accuracy of the MAP adjustment when dealing with the assessment of low socioeconomic students.
7. Teachers and administrators should be mandated to participate in professional development in the area of learning strategies for students from a low socioeconomic background.
8. The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education should use the data in determining the validity of the MAP test. The socioeconomic status of a school district should be considered when determining their accreditation based on MAP standards.

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Vita

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Educational studies have resulted in an Educational Specialist Degree in Educational Administration from Lindenwood University, St. Charles, Missouri, a Master of Science Degree in Education Administration from Lindenwood University, and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Physical Education, with a minor in Health and Social Studies, from College of the Ozarks, Point Lookout, Missouri.