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The Use of Classroom Walk-through Observations as a Strategy to Improve Teaching and Learning: An Administrative Perspective

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by

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with

Leslie McEntire and Tom Sorensen

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Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my 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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This dissertation has been approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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at Lindenwood University by the School of Education

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify the possible use of structured classroom walk-through observations as a strategy to improve teaching and learning. A wide variety of programs and initiatives have recently been implemented across the country to improve student achievement. One such initiative is classroom walk-through observations. Classroom walk-through observations are briefly performed by school administrators to gauge the effectiveness of instruction in each classroom. The walk-through observation gives teachers and administrators a snapshot of teaching and learning aspects throughout the school over time. This research was done collaboratively with Leslie McEntire and Tom Sorensen. The research team investigated three middle schools from one district in the Midwestern United States.

Over a two-year period of time, administrators from these schools performed 1,052 classroom walk-through observations. The data from these observations were collected and analyzed to determine potential relationships between the independent and dependent variables. The dependent variables were MAP scores in Communication Arts and Math, discipline referrals, summer school placement, and student retention at grade level. The independent variable was the ABC School District classroom observation data and results.

The findings of the study revealed a potential correlation in all areas analyzed. MAP scores in the area of Communication Arts and Math increased across the board, while discipline referrals, summer school placement, and retention decreased at all three middle schools during the time studied. However, these correlations were not statistically

significant. Additional programs and practices that were implemented over the period of time studied were not factored into the study.

My differentiation to the study was to analyze the research and data from an administrative perspective. As an assistant principal, I have performed the classroom walk-through observations and used them as an instructional tool for teacher improvement. I attempted to determine the potential relationship between the independent variable and each dependent variable while also providing an improved and systematic approach to performing classroom walk-through observations. My research concluded that while classroom walk-through observations can help improve teaching practices and learner outcomes, there exists a limitation which is that many more factors than classroom walk-through observations may have contributed to significant academic gains.

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Key to Abbreviations

ADD	Attention Deficit Disorder
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder
COS-R	Classroom Observation Scale-Revised
GLE	Grade Level Expectation
HAFA	High Achievement for All
MAP	Missouri Assessment Program
DESE	Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
REL	Regional Educational Laboratory
SAT	Scholastic Aptitude Test

Chapter One - Introduction

Walk-through Observations on the Rise

A strategy on the rise that many principals and school leaders are implementing and utilizing is the classroom walk-through observation. Some also refer to this process as a *learning walk*. It is a very practical approach to supervising teaching and learning. The walk-through allows administrators to monitor teaching and learning outcomes. The walk-through also provides the opportunity to evaluate the teaching environment, which can stimulate courageous and productive conversation. The walk-through observation is a time-efficient, non-threatening observation performed by the principal that creates a snapshot of teaching and learning that occurs throughout the school building (Hopkins, 2005). If used appropriately, and results data is collected and generated, walk-through observations can promote improvement of instructional programming. One key ingredient to the effectiveness of walk-through observations is feedback and communication with the teacher and observer. The results can guide teacher improvement and determine staff development opportunities.

Walk-through observations can be a practical, timely, and efficient strategy utilized by school leaders to enhance teaching and learning. As an assistant principal, performing the classroom walk-through observations is enjoyable for me. The observation encourages me to visit classrooms. The information gathered provides me with many talking points for communication with the teacher. When performed consistently with set goals, measurable standards, and accompanied with performance feedback and dialogue, the classroom walk-through observation technique supports improved teaching and increased student achievement. With the level of expectations and

accountability on the rise and the overwhelming tasks and responsibilities of school building and district administrators, classroom walk-through observations may very well be among the top initiatives to promote school improvement. With the proper training and procedures in place, walk-through observations could provide a school level accountability system beyond test scores.

ABC School District Classroom Walk-through Observations

Dr. Hafa (personal communication, November 1, 2007) expressed the fact that the ABC School District needed to address instructional effectiveness. After researching the works of Robert Marzano, Dr. Hafa decided to identify strategies being used in the classroom and promote Marzano strategies. In 2006, the ABC School District implemented a classroom walk-through observation template that was to be used during all walk-through observations (see Appendix A). The data collected from this template is what the researchers used to calculate statistical analysis and identify potential correlations. This template outlined the criteria that were to be briefly evaluated by filling out a bubble response on the form itself. At the time of this writing, the district has conducted these observations for two school years. Principals and assistant principals were required to visit each classroom each week for the first year and each classroom every two weeks for the second year. The purpose of the form was to create a snapshot of the classroom performance in relation to both teachers and learners. The major sections of data included on the form include (a) instructional delivery, (b) instructional strategies, (c) depth of knowledge (DOK) , (d) differentiated instruction, (e) feedback, (f) technology, (g) student engagement, (h) teacher engagement, (i) student work, and (j) classroom learning environment. A concern the researchers have with the observation

form is the amount of criteria to be determined within a 3-5 minute window of observing the classroom. This fact does limit the information to just a snapshot and possibly not an accurate picture of the classroom environment.

The ABC School District provided a set of definitions to apply to the terms used on the classroom walk-through observation form. The following is a list of terms most useful for understanding the ABC School District walk-through form (Vandeven, 2006).

ABC School District Classroom Walk-through Observation Definitions

Advance organizers. Lets the student recollect and convey prior knowledge to new content that is about to be taught (Vandeven, 2006).

Class discussion. Exchange of ideas between students. Open response questions used for promoting dialogue between the students (Vandeven, 2006).

Cooperative learning. Students work together in small or large groups that can be chosen by the teacher or the student. The group will work on a topic collaboratively (Vandeven, 2006).

Cues. Give the student an idea of what they are going to be learning about (Vandeven, 2006).

Differentiated instruction. Curriculum presented in a variety of ways to meet the learning styles of all students (Vandeven, 2006).

Direct instruction. Teacher directly delivers information to students (Vandeven, 2006).

Distance learning. "The teacher and the student are separated by both time and/or location (real-time electronic field trips, video conferencing, etc.)" (Vandeven, 2006, p. 32).

Extended thinking (DOK 4). The capability to investigate, explore, discover and construct a multiple step process to solve problems and bear reasons for the decision that was made (Vandeven, 2006).

Extensive. "During the observation, the instructional strategy is used approximately 90% or more of the time" (Vandeven, 2006, p. 30).

Group work. Students working collaboratively with partners or in groups (Vandeven, 2006).

Hands-on/experiments/laboratory work. An activity that will promote an increase in the content subject matter and create dialogue between students and the teacher (Vandeven, 2006).

Homework/practice. Students independently complete work that was taught in a previous lesson (Vandeven, 2006).

Learning centers. A place where students will participate in certain learning activities (Vandeven, 2006).

Nonlinguistic representation. Teacher presents subject matter in a way that is visual, auditory, and kinesthetic and involves exploration using different modalities (Vandeven, 2006).

Peer evaluation. Students evaluate each other (Vandeven, 2006).

Questions. Ask students about knowledge they have on a certain subject (Vandeven, 2006).

Question and answer. Students are given a problem and must provide a response (Vandeven, 2006).

Recall (DOK 1) Identify facts or reiterate concepts (Vandeven, 2006).

Reinforcing effort/providing feedback. Teachers state the objective and dialogue with the student explaining their strengths and weaknesses on the completed task (Vandeven, 2006).

Research generating and testing hypotheses. Students predict and hypothesize about a given item (Vandeven, 2006).

Seatwork. Work that is completed at the students' desks which includes worksheets, or reading to reinforce knowledge of a certain subject matter (Vandeven, 2006).

Similarities and differences. Identify items that are either alike or different and can classify them accordingly (Vandeven, 2006).

Skill/concept (DOK 2). Student can apply learned skills to basic concepts (Vandeven, 2006).

Slight. "During the observation, the instructional strategy is used approximately 50% to 74% of the time" (Vandeven, 2006, p. 30).

Moderate. "During the observation, the instructional strategy is used approximately 75% to 89% of the time" (Vandeven, 2006, p. 30).

Standard English. A person can correctly identify and pronounce words in the English language correctly (Vandeven, 2006).

Strategic thinking (DOK 3). Being able to solve a problem by developing a plan. (Vandeven, 2006).

Student presentations. Students present their researched information and present their discoveries and presentations to the class (Vandeven, 2006).

Teacher engagement. The teacher is engaged in the students learning (Vandeven, 2006).

Research Team

This research study was conducted as a collaborative team effort. This collaborative approach allowed us to approach, research, and analyze this study from three different perspectives. Let me introduce my research partners. Leslie McEntire is a fourth grade teacher in a neighboring school district to the ABC School District. Leslie's district is a smaller district but is similar in demographics. Leslie conducted this research from a classroom teacher-centered perspective, discussing how the classroom observations can benefit her as a teacher. Tom Sorensen is a guidance counselor in Middle School B of the ABC School District. Tom conducted this research from a student-centered perspective. Tom identified the benefits that the students may receive as a result of the classroom walk-through observations. I am Mark Weller, an assistant principal at Middle School B of the ABC School District. I conducted this research from an administrative perspective. My focus was on how to use the classroom walk-through observations to improve teaching and learning experiences in the classroom and implement support for teachers.

This collaborative project came about after we had discussed classroom walk-through observations as a tool for academic improvement. In a class discussion, we realized that both districts represented by the group used some form of classroom walk-through observation and wondered if they could really have an impact on improved student achievement, while also contributing to decreased discipline referrals, summer school placements, and the amount of students being retained. We began our efforts to

conduct this research study by meeting with the superintendent of the ABC School District, Dr. Hafa, and asked his permission to perform this study. He was glad that we were performing this study and curious to see if the classroom walk-through observations were indeed productive.

After initially meeting with the superintendent, we began gathering data from all of the classroom walk-through observations performed. This part of the research process was supported by the assistant superintendent of testing and evaluation, and completed through the use of the ABC School District Intranet, which allows most district data to be available to all district administrators with passwords. Due to the massive amount of data gathered throughout the entire school district over a two-year period, we limited our research study to only the three middle schools in the ABC School District. Tom and I work at Middle School B and although Leslie works at an elementary school, we decided that we would like to work with the middle schools. The ABC School District also seemed to have a well designed form to collect and generate data. The classroom walk-through observation is highly emphasized as a data-driven decision making tool for the district. We then focused on gathering data and began to analyze the data when almost immediately, we noticed an improvement trend in the areas Missouri Assessment Program scores, and decreases in discipline referrals, summer school placement, and the total number of retained students, which indicated potential of a correlation. Going beyond the data, we then looked at the observation form itself and discussed the limitations, potential improvements to the form and its use, and how the classroom walk-through observations affected each of us from our own professional perspective.

Background of the Study

According to state standardized test results and the regulations of The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the educational system of the United States is at risk. Specifically, schools are at risk in city and urban settings with high percentages of non-white cultures and students living in poverty. According to Wu (2005), UNICEF conducted a study that ranked the United States number 18 out of 24 nations in terms of educational system effectiveness. In 2006, more than a quarter of United States schools were failing under the terms of President Bush's NCLB (Basken, 2006).

Public school accountability and standards have risen across the United States. Standardized tests have been implemented nationwide to determine the level of student performance. Should this be the main factor in determining the success of schools? The federal government has mandated states nationwide to initiate these tests to create what they consider consistency in the administration and grading of the test. However, the reliability of these tests is sometimes questioned by educators. According to the results of these standardized tests, administrators such as me are attempting to find a way to improve student performance. Student performance has been identified as declining and falling short of meeting state testing standards in many school districts such as the ABC School District. Educators are also acknowledging the achievement gap of student subgroups in the context of race, gender, socioeconomic status, and Individualized Education Program students. Public school accountability systems have exploited the weaknesses of nearly all schools and school districts nationwide. "At least 24,470 U.S. public schools, or 27 percent of the national total, did not meet the federal requirement for adequate yearly progress in 2004-2005" (Basken, 2006, para. 2). The percentage of

schools considered as failing nationwide increased by 1% from the previous school year of 2003-2004 (Basken). Once again, is it fair or reasonable to assume that schools and students do not perform well based on one test alone? Our once reputable schools and districts perceived as educational utopias are now facing the possibility of being unaccredited in the near future. The federal government would like to point a finger at the schools, school leaders, and teachers as the cause of this demise, therefore overlooking the fact that maybe it is the accreditation system that is actually faulty. The fact is that it could be a result of the federal government naming standardized tests as the determining factor of accreditation and as a result driving curricular focus and instruction.

Due to MAP test results, many school districts are realizing that their subgroups have been identified as not adequately performing in regards to meeting statewide standards. The results of standardized tests seem to be urging administrators to create and implement programs that improve test scores and student achievement. A strategy that seems to be on the rise is the classroom walk-through observation. The ABC School District uses a standard form to collect data from each classroom in the district. This data is then to be used to create conversation with teachers on how to improve instruction. The ABC School District wants all teachers to be implementing best practices, as identified on the observation form to improve teaching and learning in the classroom.

The National Commission on Excellence in Education, directed under the Reagan administration, released the 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform,* stating that "history is not kind to idlers" (p. 1). This report became a landmark in defining that change is needed in public education. This report stated, "The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that

threatens our very future, as a nation and a people" (as cited in Wong & Nicotera, 2006, p. 3). In addition, the 2004 report by Guthrie and Springer (as cited in Wong & Nicotera) also supported the conclusion of the Commission's report stating, "Widespread low student performance had placed the U.S. education system in ruins and compromised the nation's preeminence economically, technologically, and militarily" (p. 3). It is not reasonable to assume that the educational system is in ruins based primarily on one test while also taking into consideration the advancements in education, science, and technology worldwide. Also, according to Wong and Nicotera, the report also implied that a new era of educational accountability has transformed the agenda in public school reform. This accountability system seems to place the majority of the blame and accountability on the teacher and administrators rather than the multitude of factors that can affect student achievement.

A Nation at Risk clearly marked a movement toward standards-based reform. The nation recognized education as a national challenge, and the Commission's report signaled a need for federal leadership in reforming the entire educational system. For the first time since John F. Kennedy, the president used his office to define and address the problems in the nation's public education. During the first 12 months following the release of the report, Ronald Reagan was quoted multiple times in the media about his findings and plans to address the educational system. The Commission mobilized a wide range of societal interests, resources, and expertise to address educational problems. The work of the Commission lead to two subsequent national educational summits involved the president, multiple governors, businesses, civic, and educational leaders. The work of these summits led to the passage of the NCLB of 2001 (Wong & Nicotera, 2006).

Over 20 years ago, the United States began to acknowledge the so-called mediocrity of public education nation-wide. Unfortunately, even until this day, there has been no specific solution to change that perception of United States public schools. Teachers and administrators struggle to earn the approval of government agencies and local communities based on standardized test performance. It seems that test results are considered by politicians to be the single determinant of school success. Based on those results, the question of how to improve the educational process in order to produce positive student achievement outcomes still remains.

There is a national trend for more schools and school districts to be labeled as struggling or even failing based on high-stakes state testing formats and improvement plans sparked by the NCLB of 2001. In many cases, this does not truly depict the reality of many schools. There are additional factors that should be included when determining the value of education such as the makeup of all schools based on enrollment, student/teacher ratio, demographics, and socioeconomics. With the differences that make up schools, it seems impossible to have a one size fits all system for educational expectations. The purpose of NCLB is to not put such a label on schools or school districts, but rather identify them as “in need of improvement” based on adequate yearly progress standards set forth by each state (U. S. Department of Education, 2004). This federal level accountability system requires public schools to test their students and report scores by subgroups including students with disabilities, socioeconomic status, and race/ethnicity. By the end of the 2013-2014 academic year, the NCLB intends to close the achievement gap between minority and non-minority students, and also between disabled and non-disabled students. The primary function of NCLB is to improve the academic

achievement of all students by improving accountability, setting clear standards, and performing annual accountability testing at specific grade levels (U. S. Department of Education, 2004). While the intentions of NCLB are good, as a result, educators across the country are realizing that many students are not meeting or exceeding the expectations recognized by the state. The stakes are rising in regards to test performance as additional pressure mounts to manage behavior, attendance, and instruction. In fact, the deadline for all students to perform at grade level is the 2013-2014 school year. It is quickly approaching and educators have little time to prove the public school system's educational worth according to standardized test results. Does this indicate that the schools are not performing or does this mean that adjustments need to be made to the accreditation system?

States all across the country now have established standards and standardized tests to evaluate what students should be able to do academically. The state of Missouri has a specific set of content standards to be assessed, but I still must wonder if the MAP test is valid and reliable. Different students take the test each year and are then compared to the previous years' set of students to measure gains in achievement. A more reliable way to measure academic gains may be to test and compare the same students each year. The problem is that many students are not performing well enough on these tests to meet the standards. However, a test is just an interpretation of standards. Subgroups including non-white students and students with disabilities are not "making the grade." Student performance in relation to these standards is how educators are being critiqued so many districts are getting low marks on their performance.

One of the most prevailing concerns of school administrators and district leaders is the achievement gap. It is true that the achievement gap exists and it is now obvious between multiple subgroups. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results illustrate that in 2003, while 39 percent of white students scored at the proficient level or higher on the 4th grade reading exam portion of the NAEP, only 12 percent of Black students and 14 percent of Hispanic students did so ("Achievement Gap," 2004). In further support that the achievement gap exists, "Forty-two percent of White fourth graders scored at the proficient level or above on the mathematics exam compared with just 10 percent of Black students and 15 percent of Hispanic students (U.S. Department of Education, 2003)" ("Achievement Gap," 2004, para. 2).

As for eighth graders, those in schools with high poverty levels and high percentages of free and reduced lunch had lower average science scores compared to their public school counterparts with lower poverty levels (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2004). This causes even more concern in districts such as the ABC School District where there is a high number of students living in poverty.

During the 1960s, many educational leaders felt that schools were helpless to teach students living in environments controlled by poverty, broken homes, and crime. Achievement disparities are often tied to the socioeconomic circumstances of the students. Research by Proctor and Dalaker (as cited in "Achievement Gap," 2004) found that "according to the U.S. Census Bureau, of all children younger than 18 living in families, 27 percent of Hispanic children and 30 percent of Black children live in poverty, compared with about 13 percent of White children" (para. 5). The report concluded that dropout rates are also higher for children who live in poverty. Supporting this statement,

although contradictory to his beliefs, Green (2005) referred to *The Coleman Report* implying that "schools bring little influence to bear on a child's achievement" (p. 12).

There are many obstacles that teachers and administrators face on a daily basis both in and outside of the classroom. With factors such as state funding deficits, rising problems with discipline and violence, truancy and attendance issues, lack of parental support, racism, the achievement gap, English-language learners, students with disabilities, and socioeconomic status, there is a definite call for school reform.

> In 2001, students ages 12 through 18 were victims of about 2 million crimes at school, including about 161,000 serious violent crimes (including rape, sexual assault, robbery and aggravated assault). Also in 2001, about 29 percent of students in grades 9 through 12 reported that someone had offered, sold or given them an illegal drug on school property. (U. S. Department of Education, 2004, p. 31)

A logical question to ask is then, how do administrators and teachers make adjustments to establish a positive school climate that positively impacts the teaching and learning that exists in classrooms each day? Principals in the state of Missouri and all across the country are facing the challenge of closing the achievement gap and ensuring that all students, including those with disabilities, score at grade level or above on all content tested content areas tested by the state accountability test.

Statement of the Problem

Multiple local, statewide, and nationwide schools and school districts are attempting to avoid the label of failing by taking on many different district initiatives to

prevent becoming an unaccredited school district facing a state takeover. As far as educational reform initiatives are concerned,

> No single strategy has proven to be the "magic bullet" that is effective immediately, across the board, and at low cost. Rather, a multi-faceted set of approaches has proven most successful, with an appropriate mix of research-validated strategies and flexibility at the district and school level. (Green, 2005, p. 14)

Although there is no single strategy guaranteed to solve this problem of educational effectiveness and outcome, we plan to examine and present some systematic strategies to implementing classroom walk-through observations that aid in assessing and assisting teachers in their efforts to teach all students. The ABC School District classroom walk-through observation identifies strategies that are intended to improve academic performance. These strategies are taken from the research of Robert Marzano, which will be further discussed in chapter two.

Performance and application, as well as learning style, may vary from student to student. Children come from a variety of backgrounds. They also learn in a variety of ways, just as teachers may teach in a variety of ways. Knowing that all children can learn and deserve the right to an education, the logical question remains, what is the best chance of ensuring that students are receiving the necessary instruction, tools, and learning opportunities in order to meet those standards? In an attempt to answer that question, the ABC School District administrators performed the walk-through observations to determine effective instructional strategies and levels of student cognition.

Cotton's 2003 research (as cited in Green, 2005) stated, "Research has confirmed that effective schools have effective leadership, indicating that the principal is the significant person promoting school-wide improvement" (p. 14). Principals are no longer expected to be just managers, but also effective instructional leaders. "Effective principals tend to be highly task-oriented, can clearly articulate the mission of their schools, and expect their staff to follow their leadership" (Green, p. 14). To be an effective leader, principals and assistant principals must be organized, detailed, ethical, and lead by example.

If curriculum is carefully coordinated by teachers and administrators, then high standards can be maintained for teacher performance by aligning curriculum with state standards and benchmarks. Effective principals also place "high value on instructional time spent on task, with minimal interruptions of the teaching process" (Green, 2005, p. 14). High-performing school districts establish clear expectations that the principal will be the instructional leader and promote the initiative for school improvement (Togneri & Anderson, 2003). Providing this type of effective instructional leadership can be quite challenging along with all other responsibilities. This provides yet another reason why classroom walk-through observations could prove beneficial to administrators when addressing instructional concerns.

Rationale of the Study

The rationale of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of the classroom walk-through observations on academic achievement and school climate within three Midwest Middle Schools in the ABC School District. This study included MAP scores in the areas of Communication Arts and Math, discipline referrals, summer school

placement, and retention. We determined that these areas are primary indicators of achievement and school operations. The theory of the administrators in the district is that all children can learn, and the goal of the educators in the district is that all children can achieve at high levels. The intent of this study was to reveal that the implementation of classroom walk-through observations might be at the forefront of promoting good teaching and learning and a key ingredient to the formula of meeting and exceeding standards and expectations set forth by the state in the areas of Communication Arts and Math. Communication Arts and Math are the only subject areas tested in the three middle schools studied. This can be done through analyzing the data, interpreting and communicating the data effectively and making staff development decisions based on the data outcomes. In addition, other areas were also examined to determine a positive impact to further enhance student learning. Those areas include: discipline referrals, summer school placement, and grade level retention. With administrators spending more time in the classroom, working with the teachers on instructional methods, helping to establish classroom climate, and being visible to the students to promote good behavior, the classroom and school climate should improve in all major academic areas. The current classroom walk-through observation process as utilized in the ABC School District does not implement all of these strategies. Chapter five will suggest techniques to enhance the classroom walk-through observation process to include more beneficial elements.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis for this study was that the ABC School District classroom walk-through observations positively affect the school-wide academics and climate in the areas

of (a) scores on the MAP in the areas of Communication Arts and Math, (b) number of discipline referrals, (c) number of summer school placement, and (d) retention rates. This study will reveal a positive increase in the area of MAP scores, while also showing a decrease in the areas of discipline referrals, summer school placement, and retention. The correlation coefficient and t-test will be conducted to prove or disprove the hypotheses.

Research Questions

The following questions were addressed in the study:

1. What is the relationship between the number of classroom walk-through observations in a particular school and subsequent scores on the Communication Arts portion of the MAP?
2. What is the relationship between the number of classroom walk-through observations in a particular school and subsequent scores on the Math portion of the MAP?
3. What is the relationship between the number of classroom walk-through observations in a particular school and the total number of discipline referrals that occur at that school?
4. What is the relationship between the number of classroom walk-through observations in a particular school and the number of students enrolled in that schools summer school program?
5. What is the relationship between the number of classroom walk-through observations in a particular school and the number of students retained in that school at the end of that school year?

Null hypothesis #1. There will be no significant correlation between the number of classroom walk-through observations conducted each year and scores on the Communication Arts portion of the MAP test.

Null hypothesis #2. There will be no significant correlation between the number of classroom walk-through observations conducted each year and scores on the Math portion of the MAP test.

Null hypothesis #3. There will be no significant correlation between the number of classroom walk-through observations conducted each school year and the total number of discipline referrals at each middle school at the end of each school year.

Null hypothesis #4. There will be no significant correlation between the number of classroom walk-through observations conducted each school year and the total number of students enrolled in the summer school program of each middle school at the end of each school year.

Null hypothesis #5. There will be no significant correlation between the number of classroom walk-through observations conducted each school year and the number of students retained in his or her grade level at the end of each school year in each middle school.

Alternative hypothesis #1. There will be a positive correlation between the number of classroom walk-through observations conducted each year and scores on the Communication Arts portion of the MAP test.

Alternative hypothesis #2. There will be a positive correlation between the number of classroom walk-through observations conducted each year and scores on the Math portion of the MAP test

Alternative hypothesis #3. There will be a negative correlation between the number of classroom walk-through observations conducted each school year and the total number of discipline referrals at each middle school at the end of each school year.

Alternative hypothesis #4. There will be a negative correlation between the number of classroom walk-through observations conducted each school year and the total number of students enrolled in the summer school program of each middle school at the end of each school year.

Alternative hypothesis #5. There will be a negative correlation between the number of classroom walk-through observations conducted each year and the number of students retained in his or her grade level at the end of each school year in each middle school.

Independent Variables

ABC School District classroom walk-through observations. The independent variables of the study are the number of classroom walk-through observations conducted at each middle school. These data were analyzed by examining the forms completed by the administrators during the walk-through observations. The relationships between classroom walk-through observations and student achievement and classroom walk-through observations and school climate were analyzed over a two-year period during which classroom walk-through observations were conducted.

Dependent Variables

Communication arts portion of MAP test. The first dependent variable of the study was the seventh and eighth grade achievement data from the Communication Arts portion of the MAP Test measured in April of each year over a three-year period.

Math portion of MAP test. The second dependent variable of the study was the seventh and eighth grade achievement data from the Math portion of the MAP Test measured in April of each year over a three-year period.

Number of discipline referrals at each middle school. The third dependent variable of the study was the total number of discipline referrals written at each middle school during each year of the study.

Summer school enrollment numbers at each middle school. The fourth dependent variable of the study was the number of students enrolled in summer school at each middle school at the end of each year school year.

Number of students retained in their academic grade at each middle school. The fifth dependent variable of the study was the number of students retained in his or her academic grade at the end of each school year.

Limitations of the Study

There were a number of possible limitations with the classroom walk-through observations utilized by the ABC School District. The limitations were as follows:

1. There was a lack of training for the teachers and administrators. There was no formal training or workshop provided to those being impacted by the classroom walk-through observations.
2. There was no response on the observation form for assessments, including tests, quizzes, or common assessments. As a result, the observation results could infer that no instructional activity was observed during student assessments.

3. There was no procedural feedback for improvement based on data to the teachers or administrators. Teachers and administrators need the opportunity to discuss the observation in order to improve teaching practices.
4. The three buildings studied were inconsistent in the amount of observations performed.
5. There was variance in student enrollment and staffing among the three middle schools studied.
6. There was variance in student demographics and socioeconomic status among the three middle schools studied.
7. There was variance in the administrator per student ratio among the three buildings studied.
8. The administrator's perception of questions may have differed. This could have resulted in a poor reflection of exactly what takes place in the classroom.
9. There was no consistency in the allocation of classrooms visited by the administrator performing the observations among the three middle schools studied.
10. The first year of implementation required administrators to visit each classroom once per week and the second year of implementation requested administrators to visit each classroom once every two weeks.
11. There may be no specific connection that can be established between the classroom walk-through observations data and the test scores.

12. This study lends the possibility that the statistical data cannot render the desired information. There are many additional factors involved in the educational process that could impact the dependent variables.

Beyond the Data

Going beyond the quantitative data, this research team also analyzed and discussed the parts of the classroom walk-through observations that appeared most meaningful for their respective perceptions. Leslie determined the effectiveness and made suggestions for improvement from a classroom teacher-centered perspective. Tom determined the effectiveness and made suggestions for improvement from a student-centered perspective. I determined the effectiveness and made suggestions for improvement from a school climate-centered perspective. Individually, we also identified the strengths and weaknesses of the classroom walk-through observation process. It appeared to the team that the observation process could be a positive tool for improving teaching and learning but was missing necessary ingredients to be as effective as it could potentially be.

In chapter five, the team discusses and recommends suggestions for improvement to the observation form and process to make it both systematic and results driven. First, however, chapter two will review the literature of teacher evaluations, walk-through observations, school climate factors, and best practices.

Summary

As an assistant principal and U.S. citizen, I would say that the future of the United States depends on the quality of our public education system. So the question remains, how do school administrators analyze and improve instruction, prove and support what

works, and provide our students with the best educational opportunities, and do all of this while still maintaining daily operations and school-wide management tasks? Although there is no single or definite answer to this question, one strategy that is on the rise and is proving a positive impact on academic performance is classroom walk-through observations. School administrators are visiting classrooms more frequently and working with teachers and processes to improve instruction.

The purpose of this study, as determined by the research team, was to determine the effect of classroom walk-through observations performed by the ABC School District and student achievement and school climate. The collaborative team analyzed the correlation between classroom walk-through observations and student performance in the tested MAP areas of Communication Arts and Math, along with the school climate factors such as discipline referrals, summer school placement, and retention for the three middle schools in the ABC School District.

School administrators are no longer simply expected to be managers. The job description of principals and assistant principals is designed to recruit instructional leaders strong in curriculum, assessment, and teaching strategies. The walk-through observations allow school administrators to quickly and accurately gauge what takes place in a classroom in regards to the instructional climate supported by teaching and learning. With administrators spending more time in the classroom examining the effectiveness of instructional practices and providing learning and growth opportunities to teachers, there should be a dramatic impact on student achievement and school climate outcomes. Good data analysis, communication, and feedback can drive staff development opportunities to improve instruction.

Chapter 2 - Review of Literature

Introduction

If the data we have generated proves useful in addressing the need for improvement in the academic areas of Communication Arts and Math scores, and school climate areas of discipline referrals, summer school placement, and retention, then we need some background information from the literature on each of these areas. The first part of this literature review will examine past and current ideas and methods that address the need for improvement in the areas including the dependent variables. The general literature examines other studies about teacher evaluations and classroom walk-through observations. The general literature covers topics within the research with additional studies from my administrative perspective.

Teacher Evaluation

In the past, education was a given for the students and how well they performed was up to them. That is no longer the case. Teacher accountability is a key part in the success of the student's learning. Teacher observations are a way to see what is being taught in the class as well as the delivery method of the content being taught.

Two types of evaluations. Teacher observations are used to examine the delivery of the curriculum content as well as the behavior of the students (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). There are a variety of ways to evaluate a teacher. One way is for the teacher to evaluate themselves. This can be done by analyzing the data from the student's assessment on the lesson. They can see where their strengths and weaknesses lie. They can also have someone videotape their lesson for them to evaluate their instructional delivery. Another method for evaluating a teacher is peer evaluation. This can be done

within the grade level, school, or district. Another method of evaluation is for an administrator to perform teacher evaluations. A summative teacher evaluation is usually completed by an administrator or immediate supervisor. The formative evaluation is beneficial because it can help to inform the teacher of what was noticed during the evaluation. It would not be beneficial if an administrator used a formative evaluation as a means for assessing the teacher for a salary raise or for tenure. A plus to summative evaluations is that they are planned, and teachers and administrators have pre and post meetings in regards to the evaluation. A con to the summative method is that if a teacher is having a bad day their teaching is then measured on that bad day. Barrett's 1986 study (as cited in Mathers, Oliva, & Laine, 2008) stated, "A formative evaluation is a tool used to improve instruction" (p. 4). Formative reports are used by the principal to capture a moment in time in a classroom.

Formative and summative evaluations have been a topic of interest in recent literature. School administrators are realizing the importance of evaluations and how they play a large part in professional development. The formative evaluation can be used as a method to identify improvement needed. The summative evaluation can be used to evaluate a teacher's performance (Mathers et al., 2008). Both evaluations are important, but they should only be a part of analyzing the teachers' success. Feedback is one of the most important parts of an evaluation. A teacher can learn from the areas of weakness that were noticed and improve his or her teaching in that area. Without the feedback, a teacher would not know where he or she is falling short.

Formative and summative evaluations can be used as instruments to determine what professional development needs to be implemented. "Using evaluation results to

create and implement professional development plans may improve how current resources are being spent, send a message to teachers that their professional growth is valued, and decrease turnover rates" (Mathers et al., 2008, p. 12). Summative evaluations can be used as a diagnostic tool for administrators to make decisions regarding tenure and salary.

In the ABC School District, there is no formal training provided for the evaluators in regard to what they are to look for in classrooms during instruction. The evaluators do have an observation checklist that is used, but there may not be consistency in how it is used, which is an issue in other studies as well. The lack of professional development in the area of classroom walk-through observations jeopardizes the reliability of the observation. Administrators are put into the roles of principals, and assistant principals, and then told to observe the teachers. Unfortunately there has not been professional development in the area of teacher observations and evaluations for the administrators. Classroom walk-through observations procedures vary from school district to school district. What is important to one school district might not be important to another.

Reliability and validity of teacher evaluations. Reliability and validity are important in teacher evaluation. "An evaluation instrument is considered reliable if two or more evaluators use the same evaluation instrument and come to the same conclusion" (Mathers et al., 2008, p. 5). A way that reliability can be increased is to make sure that the observation tool has clearly defined methods of use and that it is straightforward in its directions. This can be achieved by using an evaluation instrument that is created by the observer and by attending professional development for using the instrument (Mujis,

2006). Without the professional development in the use of the evaluation instrument, the reliability of the classroom walk-through observation is threatened.

The evaluation instrument must also be valid. The instrument needs to measure what it is intended to measure. "With adequate data, developers can descriptively and statistically demonstrate the link between teacher performance and student outcomes such that the excellent teaching performance being measured in fact produces the desired improvement in student behaviors, performance, and learning" (Mathers et al., 2008, p. 5).

Teacher evaluation feedback. According to Sweeney and Manatt (1986), teachers who are non-tenured are usually evaluated annually, and teachers who are tenured are evaluated once in a five year period unless there has been an unsatisfactory on the previous evaluation. All teachers should receive frequent observations. Administrators are often too busy to get in the classroom to observe, and if they do get into the classroom and perform a classroom walk-through observation and do not give any feedback to the teacher, the number of classroom walk-through observations will not make a difference in student learning.

"Research convincingly demonstrates that when certain instructional strategies are implemented appropriately, they can increase student achievement" (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001, p. 1). The feedback from an evaluation is an integral part of the teacher evaluation. This will allow teachers to guide their development in the areas of their strengths and weaknesses. Laws mandate that teachers be evaluated, but unfortunately, many districts do it just to fulfill this requirement. "This compliance attitude toward teacher evaluation leads to inadequate allocation of time and resources necessary to

ensure effective evaluations" (Zerger, 1988, p. 512). The results from a classroom observation can help a teacher to become a stronger educator.

Research on teacher evaluation programs. Teachers should be involved in the creation of the evaluation instrument as well to be involved in the implementation of the evaluation instrument. Additionally, according to Marx (2007), classroom walk-through observations should relate to schools' mission statements as well as to teacher performance. Teachers need to be involved in the evaluation process, whether it be creating the classroom walk-through form, or conducting peer observations. Marx also stated that classroom walk-through observations should incorporate collaboration between the administrators, the teachers and the students.

Classroom Walk-Through Observations

Classroom walk-through observations are intended to be a quick and non-threatening way to give administrators a snapshot of student learning (Downey, Steffy, English, Frase, & Postson, 2004). Classroom walk-through observations are approximately three minutes in length. The classroom walk-through observations technique is based on the work of Carol Downey, who began researching this technique in 1992. Downey's technique is centered on the idea that it will promote professional dialogue between the teacher and the observer about the teacher's instructional delivery methods. These dialogue sessions will be a valuable learning tool for the educator in the classroom. The Downey classroom walk-through observation is based on relationships with all of the stakeholders in the educational system. The classroom walk-through observations technique is said to benefit both teachers and students. Carol Downey is a professor in California and was a former superintendent in Arizona.

Hopkins (2005) listed five benefits to classroom walk-through observations.

1. Principals get into the classroom more. This is a benefit because it allows administrators to see first-hand what is going on in the classrooms.
2. Effective use of a principal's time. This is a benefit because this can increase teacher effectiveness. When principals are visible and are conducting unscheduled classroom walk-through observations, the teachers and students never know when a classroom walk-through observation will occur. The teacher is accountable for the students learning and should be ready for a classroom walk-through observation at any time.
3. Enables administrators to really know teacher strengths and weaknesses. By being in the classrooms, an administrator can see what is going on. The administrator can identify strengths and weaknesses by conducting frequent classroom walk-through observations.
4. They improve rapport with the teachers as well as the students. By having an administrator in the classroom, it lets the students and the teachers know that the administrator really cares. The administrator wants to see the learning that is occurring as well as the climate of each classroom.
5. They provide a basis for reflection and sharing effective practices for staff as individuals and a faculty as a whole (para. 5).

Classroom walk-through observations should always be followed by a meeting with the observer and the teacher observed to discuss what was observed during the classroom walk-through observation. This is a very important aspect of the classroom walk-through observation. This dialogue can be valuable in bringing about change.

> The purpose of the classroom walk-through observation is to support teachers who are continuously improving their practice. After the goal of supporting teachers is reached, teachers are encouraged to set growth targets and to search out researched practices and try them. (Downey et al., 2004, p. 13)

Classroom walk-through observations give administrators a chance to see what content is being taught in the classrooms as well as interaction of the students and teacher. This classroom walk-through observation creates a dialogue that will improve the teacher's instructional methods as well as increase the students' achievement. If an administrator is visible in the classroom, it will keep the students and the teachers on task. If there is feedback after a classroom walk-through observation is performed, the teacher and administrator can work together to make sure that what is occurring is what is best for the students learning. Feedback from the classroom walk-through observation can help the teacher to be a reflective teacher that will work to be the best teacher they can be.

Ideally, there are no judgments made about the teacher's practice. It is a growing process. Reflection is a key factor in the classroom walk-through observations because it gives the person performing the observation a quick picture of the classroom and what takes place during instruction. It is the administrators' duty to make sure that there is time set aside for discussion and feedback during the observation process. The main purpose is to increase student achievement and that can be done by collaboration and reflection. Educators need to look at the positives as well as the negatives to make sure the students' needs are being met. Reflection is a way for teachers to analyze their classroom practice and take charge of their professional growth. Administrators should listen to what the

teacher has to say in regards to professional development. The teacher can take charge of their professional growth by attending professional development that would be beneficial to him or her (Johnston, 2006).

The goal of the classroom walk-through observation is to gather data in a short amount of time. An important to see if the students are on task and if they seem to understand what they are supposed to do. The administrator will look for the curriculum content that is being taught as well as the instructional methods used to teach the curriculum. Two main questions that teachers should keep in mind are as follows:

1. Is my lesson aligned with the grade level equivalents (GLE's)?
2. Are my students on task?

Further research by Downey et al. in 2004 revealed a five-step observation structure.

1. Student orientation to the work.
2. Focus on curricular decision points. The main objective of the lesson should be posted as well as the GLE.
3. Instructional decision point. The instructional practices conducted by a teacher are very important to a students learning of the curriculum content. A variety of strategies should be used in teaching the lesson to make sure to meet the needs of all students.
4. "Walk the Walls." As an administrator, I observe the classroom for evidence of learning. Some items I look for while conducting a walk-through are as follows: students work with a scoring guide, the stated objective, and the GLE that was covered in the prior lesson.

5. Safety and health issues. All classrooms should have a safe and orderly environment. As an assistant principal conducting the walk-through, I pay special attention to the physical and instructional climate of the classroom (p. 21).

In 1970, Hewlett Packard executives began a strategy that they called Management by Walking Around (Hopkins, 2005). This strategy allowed the management to get a quick view of what was going on in their company. The process did not take much of the executive's time, but it allowed them to see just what was going on in all aspects of their company. This is a holistic leadership approach. Peters and Waterman (1982) found that companies who use this strategy are a step ahead of their competition. Classroom walk-through observations are based on the same philosophy as Management by Walking Around. When people are out and about and observe first-hand what is going on, steps can be taken to be successful in every endeavor. The primary goal, of course, is student achievement.

Johnston (2006) concluded that

> Administrators are expected to coach, mentor, and support teachers as they approach the difficult task of promoting high levels of student achievement. In a standards-based, accountability-oriented environment, one of the most promising strategies for providing this leadership is the classroom walk-through observations. (para. 2)

The more classroom walk-through observations are conducted, the more likely the teacher is going to be teaching the students the content that needs to be taught. Classroom

walk-through observations can gather data on the content being taught as well as the instructional delivery of the teacher.

Marsh et al. (2005) reported on research of an in depth study conducted by the Rand Corporation. The study was of three urban school districts. The results of their findings were that teachers did not find the classroom walk-through observations as useful as the administrators. This is primarily because feedback was rarely given to the teacher. A teacher would not benefit from a classroom walk-through observation if there was never dialogue on the observation. As an administrator, I hope that teachers value the feedback that is given to them. The intention of the feedback is to allow them to grow as a teacher and without that feedback, they may not know where they fall short.

History of Assessments

History of the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP). According to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE),

> The Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) is one of several educational reforms mandated by the Outstanding Schools Act of 1993. As a result of this legislation, the State Board of Education directed the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to identify the knowledge, skills, and competencies that Missouri students should acquire by the time they complete high school and to assess student progress toward these academic standards. DESE staff worked with educators, parents, and business professionals from throughout the state to develop the Show-Me Standards and to create the MAP as a tool for evaluating the proficiencies represented by the Standards. (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [DESE], 2008, p. 2)

DESE created a measuring instrument to determine the reliability of the MAP test. Teachers have voiced their concerns over being measured by this one test. According to Table 1, the reliability of the test is at a high margin. It compares favorably with other standardized tests.

Table 1

MAP Scale Score Reliability and Coefficients

	1997	1998	1999	2000
Mathematics				
Grade 4	.919	.921	.915	.913
Grade 8	.931	.927	.927	.929
Grade 10	.936	.940	.929	.940
Communication				
Arts				
Grade 3		.920	.915	.913
Grade 7		.932	.905	.907
Grade 11		.939	.919	.917
Science				
Grade 3		.907	.903	.903
Grade 7		.915	.875	.918
Grade 10		.916	.908	.882
Social Studies				
Grade 4			.918	.923
Grade 8			.906	.921
Grade 11			.925	.885

Note. From *Missouri assessment program: Technical report 2005 supplement* (p. 7a), by CTB/McGraw Hill, 2005.

The MAP data is used to determine how well the students perform in comparison with the GLE's and the Missouri Show Me Standards. The MAP data's importance has been on a steady increase in the last decade. This is because of the NCLB Act. The NCLB Act holds teachers accountable for the students learning.

Instructional Strategies

Principals and assistant principals are expected to be instructional leaders. In the past, "They have tended to focus on the content of instruction rather than the process of instruction" (Jones, 2007, p. 322). The ABC School District, however, focuses their classroom observations on the instructional strategies that are used. While researching the different instructional strategies to include on the classroom walk-through observation form, the primary focus was on the Marzano strategies. The Marzano strategies are based on the beliefs of Robert J. Marzano. "There is more than thirty years of research that provides some highly consistent answers to the question of what types of instructional strategies work best to improve student achievement" (Marzano, 2001, p. 1). Marzano stated that there are nine instructional strategies proven to improve student achievement (2001, p. 1). These strategies are included on the ABC School District classroom walk-through observations observation form. They are as follows:

1. Identifying similarities and differences
2. Summarizing and note taking
3. Reinforcing effort and providing recognition
4. Homework and practice
5. Representing knowledge
6. Learning groups

7. Setting objectives and providing feedback
8. Generating and testing hypothesis
9. Cues, questions, and advance organizers (p. 1)

As an educational researcher, Marzano is involved in translating research and theory into classroom practice for educators throughout the United States. If the administrators use the form to evaluate teachers based on the data that has been gathered, then administrators should use the classroom walk-through observation to help the teacher to grow as an educator. Research based practices prove that feedback is one of the most important components of a classroom walk-through observation.

According to the National Staff Development Council, appropriate professional development will help educators use teaching strategies that will best fit their students' needs (Killion, 2000). There are a variety of teaching strategies that teachers can use that will make sure that each child can learn. In the classroom as an administrator, I always look for a variety of teaching strategies. The students should be exposed to different strategies and my district focuses on all of Marzano's strategies, but the primary focus is on identifying similarities and differences, summarizing and note taking, and reinforcing effort and providing recognition. When analyzing the GLE's that were on the MAP test, there are more of the three strategies listed than any of the others. The learning outcome of the students is the primary focus of educators, and a teacher should follow the curriculum content for the grade level that is being taught.

Solomon (2005) strongly supported that educational reform is a difficult accomplishment in education today but we need to learn from collaborative efforts as well as mistakes that have occurred in the past. Educators never give up trying to do their

best for the students. Educators need to concentrate on fixing the system that is so vitally important to the future of our country (Solomon).

Academic Predictors

Student discipline. Student discipline consumes much of the time of teachers and administrators. Discipline referrals are always a problem in the public school system. Quite often, assistant principals are used as disciplinarians instead of assisting the principals. Discipline referrals can affect student achievement due to the amount of instructional time that is missed. There are many policies that school districts follow to handle discipline issues. One such policy is the Zero Tolerance Policy. This policy came about after the 1994 Gun-Free Schools Act was written. This federal law requires that school districts suspend or expel any student that brings any kind of weapon to school. According to Black (2002), under the Gun Free Schools Act of 1994, nearly 3.2 million students, approximately 7% of the school population, were suspended in 1995 alone. According to the National Center for Statistics in 2007,

> Forty-eight percent of public schools reported taking at least one serious discipline action against a student including suspension of five days or more, transfer to a specialized school, or expulsion during the 2005-2006 school year. Out of approximately 39,600 schools reporting these incidents, there were a total of 830,700 serious disciplinary actions taken. The most recurring incident resulting in serious discipline action was physical attacks or fights, with 32%. The percent of violations for possession of weapons other than a firearm was 19%, compared 54to 17%, during the 2003-2004 school year. The numbers are staggering in comparison to the 35% of public schools reported taking discipline

action for a physical fight or assault during the 1999-2000 school year. Student discipline is on the rise and is becoming more and more of a deterrent to the educational process. (p. 2)

DESE promotes a Positive Behavior System. The outline of the school-wide positive behavior program is listed below:

1. Incorporates the best practice in professional development and system change (teams).
2. Emphasizes the use of assessment information to guide intervention and management decisions.
3. Focuses on the use of a continuum of behavioral supports.
4. Focuses on increasing the contextual fit between problem context and what we know works.
5. Focuses on establishing school environments that support long term success of effective practices (3-5 years). (DESE, 2007, p. 18)

The staff must be trained in this program. This program is often used in the Missouri School Improvement process. The ABC School District uses the Positive Behavior System. It is used in many districts throughout Missouri. One of the factors of this study is to see if classroom walk-through observations have a decrease in discipline referrals. The findings will be discussed in chapter 4.

Summer school. "Nationwide, about five million students, or 10% of students attending elementary through high school attended summer school and the continuing demand is rising" (Cooper, 2001, p. 4). In the school district in which I work, students are required to attend summer school if they receive three to five semester F's. In other

school districts, such as the one Leslie works in, students attend summer school if they do not read at grade level. The student's reading level is tested at the end of summer school again, and if they are at grade level, they will be promoted to the next grade. If they are not reading on grade level, they will be retained. My school district is not the only district that has this policy. Mathews (2000) found that many school districts follow this same procedure. During summer break, Cooper (2001) believed that students lose one month of instruction (p. 4). This information was obtained from a meta-analysis study from a University of Missouri Professor. Cooper (2001) stated:

> The main subject areas in which this loss occurs are mathematics and spelling. An explanation of this result rests on the observation that both math facts and spelling skills involve the acquisition of factual and procedural knowledge, whereas other skill areas-especially math concepts, problem solving, and reading comprehension-are more conceptually based. (para. 5)

Retention. According to Jimerson, Anderson, & Whipple (2002), "Approximately 2.4 million students or 10% of school age children are retained every year. The United States spends approximately 13 billion dollars to retain these students" (p. 445). The benefit of retaining a student should be analyzed before the retention is put into place.

> There are more boys retained than girls. More minority students are retained than White students. Retained students are more likely to display aggressiveness, to have a history of suspension or expulsion, to act out in the classroom, or display behaviors associated with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Conduct Disorder. (Jimerson et al., 2002, p. 450)

When it comes to long-term outcomes of retained students, there does not seem to be any positive impact on the student. Students who are retained have higher standardized test scores for the next year or two, but the benefit of retention usually stops there. Students who have been retained have a much larger drop-out rate than students who have been promoted to the next grade level. Jimerson et al. (2002) also found that retention was one of the largest predictors of high school drop outs. Students who were retained in any grade were two to eleven times more likely to drop out of school than students who were not retained.

To reduce the number of student retentions, educators need to start with early identification and interventions. Quite often, this does not happen until the fourth grade and above. One intervention that occurs often is summer school placement. Student are required to attend summer school to improve their reading score so they are able to be promoted to the next grade.

School climate. Cohen (2006) suggested that school climate is primarily a feeling of a student's experience in school. Freiberg (1999) and Cohen (2006) have reviewed research and came up with ten dimensions that have a strong impact on school climate. The ten dimensions are listed below:

1. Environmental
2. Structural
3. Safety
4. Teaching and learning
5. Relationships
6. Sense of school community

7. Morale
8. Peer norms
9. School-home-community partnerships (mutual support and ongoing communication
10. Learning community. (Cohen, 2006, p. 214)

School climate can have a major impact on all of the stakeholders involved in education. Character education programs can have a positive impact on school climate. Berkowitz and Bier have studied the research on school climate. Their findings are that in order to have a responsive school climate, there needs to be prevention for the at-risk students and proper health care combined with a safe learning environment for the students (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005).

Education plays a vital part in molding a person and influencing them to help determine their future. Education is a way for students to change the path that they are on. Students who live in lower socio-economic backgrounds can work to break the cycle (Green, 2005). Recent research indicates that minorities are performing well below non-minority students on standardized tests. This creates an achievement gap between subgroups (Green). Students in the ABC School District are predominantly in the lower socio-economic class, and many are African American. These are the same subgroups that are often not meeting the standards on achievement tests. Research also finds that teachers who educate students from an urban setting have more challenges than teachers who educate students that live in a rural setting. Most cities also experience problems such as lower socioeconomic background, an unstable home environment, as well as gang activity. Green also states that it is hard for students and parents to build a

relationship between home and school and to realize that everyone should be working together to achieve the common goal of promoting productive, ethical decision making adults.

NCLB of 2001 began to hold schools, teachers, and school districts more accountable for academic success among all of their students. However, we question whether or not this took in to account all of the possible attributes of failing schools. Many subgroups have since been identified and labeled as "failing." These subgroups, for example are categorized by race, socioeconomic, and disability. The question that we then must ponder is how do educators provide quality education to these students and bring their academic performance up to meet and exceed standards and expectations? In the book *The Art and Science of Teaching*, Marzano (2007) referred to the 2001 work of Pickering and Pollock by stating

> There are certainly other aspects of classroom pedagogy that affect student achievement. In fact, we might postulate that effective pedagogy involves three related areas: (1) the instructional strategies used by the teacher, (2) the management techniques used by the teacher, and (3) the curriculum designed by the teacher. (p. 6)

Although there is no single strategy that will provide instant academic gains and satisfaction, there are several characteristics of effective schools that result in improvement. "Effective schools have effective leadership" (Green, 2005, p. 14). Sullivan and Glanz stated, "Supervision is a dynamic, ongoing, and collaborative process that involves strategies to enhance instructional improvement" (as cited in Glanz, 2004, p. 77). The principal and assistant principals are responsible for promoting school-wide

improvement and carrying out the building's mission, vision, and values. "Whether a school operates effectively or not increases or decreases a student's chances of academic success" (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005, p. 3). Effective leaders tend to be highly task oriented with a clear definition of the mission of the school. High expectations are maintained for teachers and students. School principals must also maintain a business-like atmosphere that is safe, professional, and conducive to learning (Green). Safety must be instilled in the staff and students to establish and maintain a safe and orderly environment so that teaching and learning can occur. Marzano et al. (2005) identified some action steps to develop a safe and orderly environment.

1. Establish rules and procedures for behavioral problems that might be caused by the school's physical characteristics or the school's routine. The rules that are by the school district should be followed and remain consistent from building to building.
2. Establish school-wide rules and procedures for general behavior. Classroom walk-through observations make the administrator more visible throughout the school building and the visibility of the administrator is often a deterrent for inappropriate behavior.
3. Establish and enforce appropriate consequences for violations of rules and procedures. Follow through is an important aspect of education.
4. Establish a program that teaches self-discipline and responsibility to students. A character education program can be integrated throughout the curriculum. The administrator can see at a quick glance if there is a rapport between the students and the teachers.

5. Establish a system that allows for the early detection of students who have high potential for violence and extreme behaviors. (p. 88)

Marzano et al. (2005) also cited the 2003 work of Cotton as identifying categories of principal behavior that positively affect academic climate including dependent variables such as student achievement, attitudes, behaviors, and dropouts, teacher attitudes, and behaviors. The categories are

1. Vision and goals focused on high levels of student learning
2. High expectations for student learning
3. Visibility and accessibility
4. Positive and supportive climate
5. Communication and interaction
6. Shared leadership, decision making, and staff empowerment
7. Collaboration
8. Instructional leadership
9. Discussion of instructional issues
10. Classroom observation and feedback to teachers
11. Support of teacher autonomy
12. Professional development opportunities and resources
13. Protecting instructional time
14. Monitoring student progress and sharing findings
15. Use of student progress for program improvement
16. Recognition of student and staff achievement. (Marzano et al., 2005, pp. 24-25)

For a teacher, along with teaching the content must come the ability to communicate clearly identified learning objectives. When a classroom walk-through observation is performed, the administrator should be able to identify with the Marzano (2005) 16 categories. In a classroom with minimal disruptions, the level of success is likely to be much higher than a classroom with frequent interruptions. When a classroom walk-through observation is performed, the administrator quietly walks into the room and sits and observes. There is no interaction between the administrator and the teacher. The teacher should continue on with his or her lesson so the administrator can gather the information of the lesson as well as the climate of the classroom. It is important for the school and district to offer continuing education opportunities and professional development. This is particularly important in the areas of weakness.

The stakeholders in education need to all understand that they must work together in a collaborative manner. Communication needs to play a vital role in the education of students. Parental involvement is very important to the success of students and when the parents have a voice, they feel involved. It is important to promote community involvement so that all of the stakeholders can reach a common goal, which is the education of the students. Everyone needs to see and have access to the positive things taking place in schools.

Instructional Leadership

There is a growing demand for principals and assistant principals to be instructional leaders rather than simply managers. In Glanz' (2004) book, *The Assistant Principal's Handbook*, he referred to the 2002 work of Weller and Weller, stating that administrators should become more involved in instructional implementation of the

curriculum, not just the administrative aspects. A seemingly intractable problem still faces assistant principals, the improvement versus evaluation dilemma. Assistant principals often deal with the discipline issues and thus do not get to focus on the improvement aspect of the school system. This dilemma creates the conflict of evaluating teachers and assisting them to become great instructors. In some instances, teachers may not want to address issues with the principal because they do not want to appear incompetent or inadequate in regards to their job performance. Instructional leaders must create an environment that lends itself to collaboration and effective communication. The classroom walk-through observations could be the non-evaluative tool needed to assist in instructional improvement and practices.

A modern approach to teaching and learning is collaboration. For instance, Professional Learning Communities encourage and offer the time and structure for collaboration among teachers, grade level teams, and subject areas. This model encourages teachers to move away from the past notion of teachers teaching in isolation. Glanz (2004) referred to the 2000 work of Sullivan and Glanz when he stated that "the history of supervision as a principal or assistant principal indicates a progressive movement away from bureaucratic inspectional approaches to more democratic participatory" (p. 12). There needs to be a shift from isolation and bureaucracy in education to teamwork in a collaborative environment. Glanz believed that principals and assistant principals can overcome the dilemma of improvement and evaluation. He offered the following suggestions to make the necessary changes to evaluate and improve instruction:

1. Acknowledge the past and articulate a vision for the future. Classroom walk-

through observations give educators the chance to look at what has been done in the past and what could be done better.

2. Create a democratic learning community. Classroom walk-through observations give the administrator a snap shot of the climate in a classroom.
3. Serve as a role model by encouraging collegiality. When an administrator meets with teachers for their feedback session, this creates collaboration between the individuals.
4. Support shared governance opportunities. Teachers work hard in their classrooms and throughout the school in general. Teachers like to know that they have a voice and that their voice is heard and respected.
5. Focus on fundamental instructional issues. Teachers must use a variety of teaching strategies and on the ABC School District walk-through form, the strategies are identified.
6. Communicate an "ethic of caring." Students need to know that the teacher cares about them. An administrator can see the rapport of the students and teachers from a classroom walk-through observation.
7. Empower others and give them the credit. Classroom walk-through observations are a way for administrators to identify this aspect. During the feedback session, the administrator can acknowledge what was observed and commend the teacher for their expertise in the process of educating children.
8. Build trust by your actions. An administrator should always lead by example. (Glanz, pp. 12-13)

Summary

> With the changes in times including increased violence and drug use, job loss and poverty, the mixing of cultures, community struggles, and the advances in technology, education has sometimes struggled to keep up in the United States. This has sparked a concern for teacher effectiveness. An educational leader should offer her or his expertise by both formally and informally observing classroom interaction. (Glanz, 2004, p. 78)

Whether formal or informal, teachers have been supervised in one form or another since the onset of education. "Observations play a key role in supervision" (Glanz, p. 78). Recent struggles in public education have called for dramatic changes to improve instruction. At times, the results of this have been seen as causing a sense of division between teachers and administrators. Things seem to constantly change, and due to all the demands, changes, and initiatives placed in front of them, teachers have felt overwhelmed, frustrated, and unappreciated. Teachers and administrators need to work in a collaborative capacity that provides a feeling of support through genuine help and assistance. The formal evaluation process does not necessarily provide the sense of support and encouragement.

Standardized tests have been implemented nationwide to determine the success of schools and districts. The federal government has placed high stakes on these tests as they can determine the worth of a school or district to the point of labeling them as "in need of improvement." This places much of the focus on the test and how to align curriculum to meet the standards of the test, which often results in a great deal of time spent catering to the test rather than simply doing what is right and in the best interest of

students. This causes educators to operate out of fear and intimidation rather than rational thought. Discipline, summer school placement, retention, and dropout rates are increasing, and students are not reaching their full potential from an education standpoint. These are some of the areas that need to be addressed, and that must start with effectiveness in the classroom to engage the students in learning.

There have been many attempts at dealing with necessary school reform and educational improvement, but no one particular initiative that resulted in the outcomes that meet the requirements set forth by the federal, state, and local governments. The intent of this study was to identify one strategy that could be very beneficial to school leaders and administrators across the country. That strategy is the classroom walk-through observation. The classroom walk-through observation can provide a quick non-evaluative collection of data. This time-efficient process makes sense as it allows principals and assistant principals the time to efficiently observe classrooms while at the same time maintaining management operations.

Chapter Three - Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this causal-comparative study was to investigate and evaluate the effect of structured classroom walk-through observations on student achievement (MAP scores on Communication Arts and Math), and school climate areas including discipline referrals, summer school placement, and retention of students. A causal-comparative study attempts to determine the causative relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable. The ABC School District has accumulated, recorded, and generated data on classroom walk-through observations for the school years of 2006-2007 and 2007-2008. Prior to that point, the district had no formal way of assessing student and teacher engagement or measuring the classroom climate in regards to effective teaching strategies. The classroom walk-through observations have been intended to serve the purpose of identifying strengths and weaknesses in order to modify and provide instruction, assessment, and programming that will assure that all children receive the best educational opportunities possible. This study evaluated and analyzed data to determine potential relationships between walk-through observations and the dependent variables. This analysis used correlation coefficients and t-tests to assess classroom walk-through observations as an effective instructional tool. In chapter 5, I will discuss improvement of the classroom walk-through observation process and walk-through form.

The data gathered from the observations has been organized into a variety of categories to analyze best practices in teaching and learning. The observation data may be broken down categorically by school, grade level, subject, group size, teacher materials,

instructional delivery, instructional strategies, technology, depth of knowledge, and classroom learning environment. The categories developed on the observation form have been created based on the knowledge, research, and findings of educational experts such as Marzano, Waters, and McNulty, authors of the book entitled *School Leadership That Works* published in 2005. In this book, the authors stated, "Whether a school operates effectively or not increases or decreases a student's chances of academic success" (p. 3). With this in mind, it is the mission of the ABC School District to ensure that all students are well equipped with the knowledge base and learning experiences necessary to provide positive contributions to this ever-changing global society. The hypotheses of this research study suggest that the number of walk- through observations performed would correlate with statistically increased MAP scores for Communication Arts and Math, fewer discipline referrals, fewer students requiring summer school, and fewer students being retained.

Hypothesis

The central hypothesis was that the ABC School District classroom walk-through observations would positively correlate with the school-wide academics and climate in the areas of achievement on the MAP in the areas of Communication Arts and Math, discipline referrals, summer school placement, and retention. The hypothesis of this research study suggests that the number of walk-through observations performed would correlate with (a) statistically increased MAP scores for Communication Arts and Math, (b) a fewer number of discipline referrals, (c) a fewer number of students requiring summer school, and (d) a fewer number of students being retained.

In order to gauge the effectiveness of the classroom walk-through observations, this causal-comparative study analyzed whether or not a correlation between observation reports and student achievement does exist. The results of the classroom walk-through observations have been used to compare with the student performance outcomes in the MAP areas of Communication Arts and Math, in addition to school climate factors such as discipline referrals, summer school placement, and retention.

Participants

The participants in this study were all teachers and students of the ABC School District at the middle school level. The District administrators, primarily including building level principals and assistant principals, completed an observation form each time they performed a classroom walk-through. The observation form gauges the observer's perception of the level of teaching and learning that takes place during the time of the walk-through. This process is meant to evaluate the classroom physical environment, student and teacher engagement, and overall productivity by both teachers and students that participate.

Students were not recruited since the source of the information used in this study was from the MAP data located on the DESE website, as well as student record data regarding discipline referrals, summer school placement and retention. District administrators were not recruited either as they have implemented walk-through observations as a standard practice since the school year of 2006-2007.

During this research study, there was no significant change in the secondary administrative staff involved at either the middle school or district level. Both school years analyzed included the same working administrative staff including seven assistant

principals, three head principals, one director of secondary education, and one superintendent. That being the case, if there was a standard approach and expectation of how to specifically conduct the classroom walk-through observations, there should have been consistency in programming and the performance of the classroom walk-through observations.

Sampling Procedure

During the 2006-2007 school year, the ABC School District superintendent, along with the support of the cabinet (consisting of all assistant superintendents), requested that all classrooms be observed once per week for approximately five minutes by the principal or assistant principal. That request however, was transformed for the 2007-2008 school year (second year of the study). During the second year of research in this study, principals and assistant principals were requested to then observe each classroom once every two weeks for approximately five minutes rather than once per week like the previous year. This alteration to the observation schedule was a result of assistant principals claiming that they did not have enough time to perform that amount of observations and still allot enough time to deal with student discipline and other organizational tasks.

Each observation reflects multiple areas of emphasis in classroom teaching and learning. The data is compiled through the utilization of the district observation form. Building level principals are then responsible for collecting and turning all completed observation forms in to the district's central office. The director of technology services then logs all data onto the district's intranet server that can be viewed by district administrators. Classroom walk-through observation data is also shared periodically at

cabinet meetings, all administrator meetings, assistant principal meetings, with department heads, and also at each building. The data from the classroom walk-through observations shall also provide the district with ideas and concepts for providing professional development to the teachers by identifying strengths and weaknesses in instructional strategies.

The sequence of procedure for this causal comparative study was data collection and generation from classroom walk-through observations completed by principals, assistant principals, and other district administrators for the 2006-2007, 2007-2008 school years. Data collected was a comparison of the number of students advanced and proficient on the Communication Arts and Math portion of the MAP test during the 2005-2006, 2006-2007, and 2007-2008 school years. Additionally, the study compared the number of discipline referrals, summer school placements, and retentions for the 2005-2006, 2006-2007, and 2007-2008 school years.

Research Setting

The ABC School District is located in suburban St. Louis, Missouri and covers 92 square miles across the heart of North St. Louis County. The district is state wide and nationally recognized as an innovative and progressive school district, as it is one of the highest achieving districts in the state of Missouri with its demographics. The district is made up of a hard working community of families that encompasses all or nearly all of 11 municipalities. Within the district, there are a total of 23 schools, seventeen of which are elementary school buildings, three middle schools, and three high schools. All three levels of education including elementary, middle, and high have been recognized under

The Exemplary Schools Program, sponsored by the United States Department of Education.

The research setting included all ABC School District middle school classrooms. The range of grades consisted of grades seven and eight. All subject areas were observed. Allocation of classrooms to administrators for performing classroom walk-through observations varied from building to building and on a yearly basis. Each building had the freedom to delegate classroom observation responsibilities as they wished or saw as necessary. During the first year of classroom walk-through observations, each building was responsible for observing or attempting to observe every classroom once per week. As administrative duties require much time spent on discipline and other managerial type responsibilities, the observation requirement was scaled back to one visit to each classroom every two weeks for the second year that the classroom walk-through observations were performed. This could cause a limitation for the study due to the change in one of the few consistencies in performing the observations.

The ABC School District typically carries an enrollment of approximately 12,000 students throughout the entire district. The district is very diverse in both ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Of those 12,000 students, approximately 2,100 attend one of the three middle schools. Over the three-year focal window of this project, The ABC School District had an enrollment of 12,264 students during the 2005-2006 school year, 12,165 students during the 2006-2007 school year, and 12,104 students enrolled, during the 2007-2008 school year. During all school years that have been studied, the building administration remained the same. Middle School A had a head principal and three

assistant principals, Middle School B had one head principal and three assistant principals, and Middle School C had a head principal and one assistant principal.

Middle School A had a total enrollment of 961 students during the 2005-2006 school year. Of those 961 students, 617 or 64.2% were identified as Black, 313 or 32.6% were identified as White, 15 or 1.6% were identified as Hispanic, 12 or 1.2% were identified as Asian, and four or 0.4% were identified as American Indian. The January membership for Middle School A indicated that 406 of the 937 students enrolled at that time were classified as free and reduced lunch students, which made up a total of 43.3% of the student body. During this school year, Middle School A maintained a total of 845 students enrolled the entire school year for a stability rate of 88% (see Figures 1-4).

Middle School A had a total enrollment of 980 students during the 2006-2007 school year. Of those 980 students, 662 or 67.6% were identified as Black, 296 or 30.2% were identified as White, ten or 1.0% were identified as Hispanic, 11 or 1.1% were identified as Asian, and one or .1% were identified as American Indian. The January membership for Middle School A indicated that 464 of the 972.5 students enrolled at that time were classified as free and reduced lunch students, which made up a total of 47.7% of the student body. During this school year, Middle School A maintained a total of 879 students enrolled the entire school year for a stability rate of 90% (see Figures 1-4).

Middle School A had a total enrollment of 895 students during the 2007-2008 school year. Of those 895 students, 620 or 69.3% were identified as Black, 252 or 28.2% were identified as White, 12 or 1.3% were identified as Hispanic, 11 or 1.2% were identified as Asian, and zero were identified as American Indian. The January membership for Middle School A indicated that 435 of the 890 students enrolled at that

time were classified as free and reduced lunch students, which made up a total of 48.8% of the student body. During this school year, Middle School A maintained a total of 814 students enrolled the entire school year for a stability rate of 91% (see Figures 1-4).

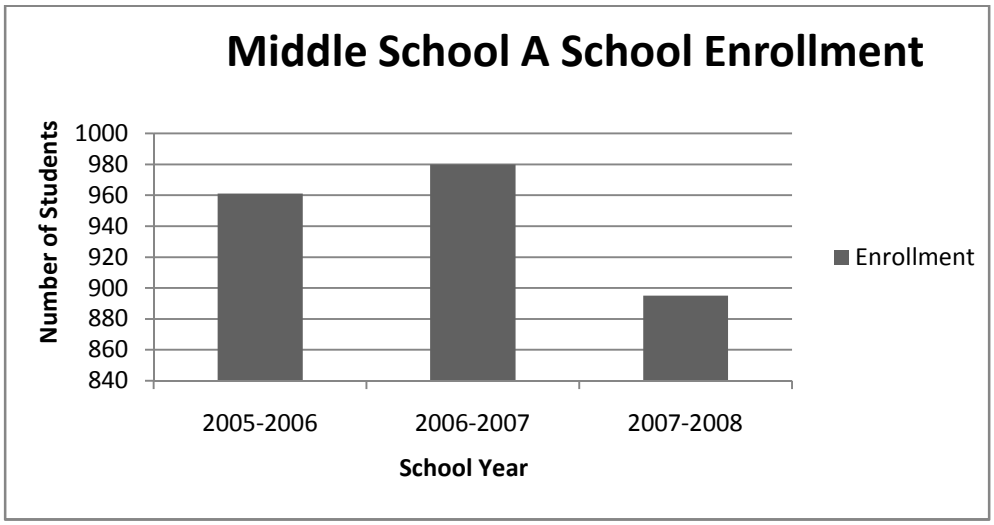


Figure 1. Middle School A school enrollment

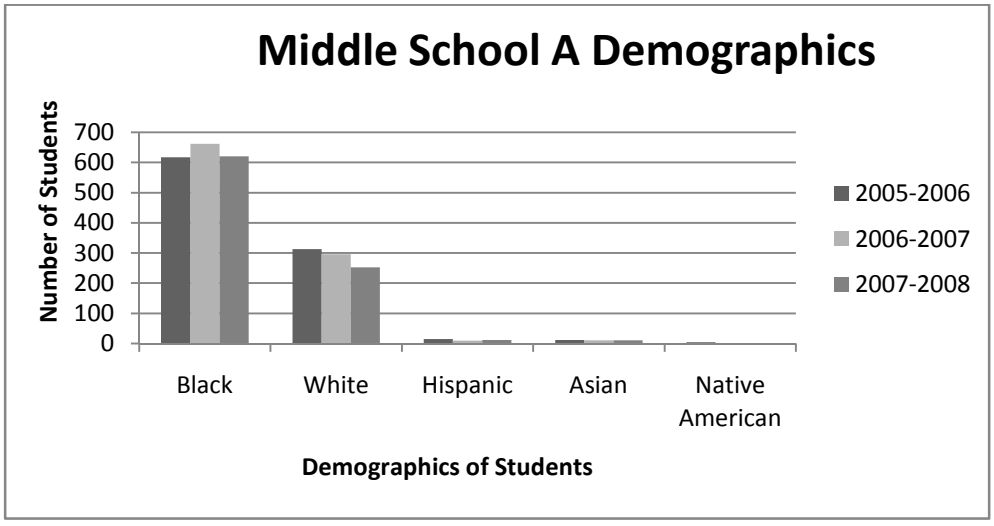


Figure 2. Middle School A demographics

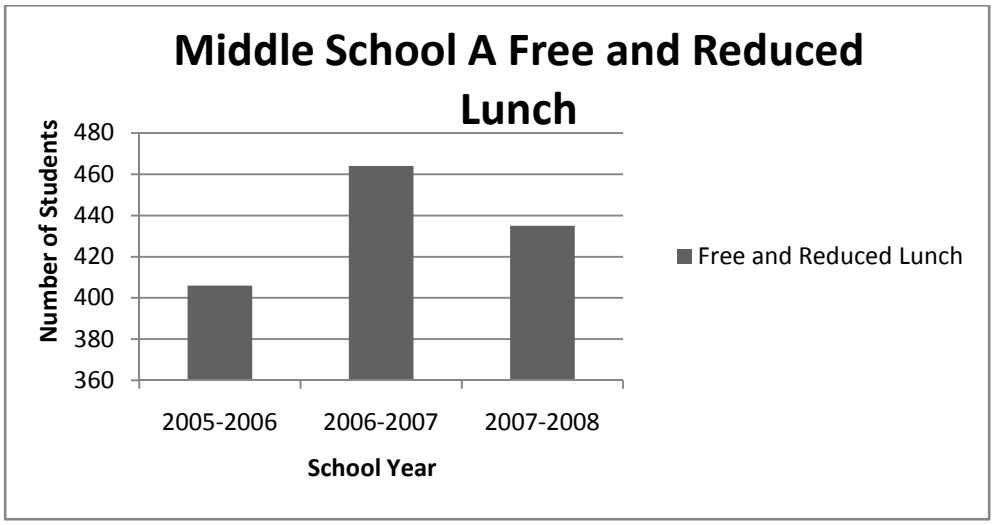


Figure 3. Middle School A free and reduced lunch.

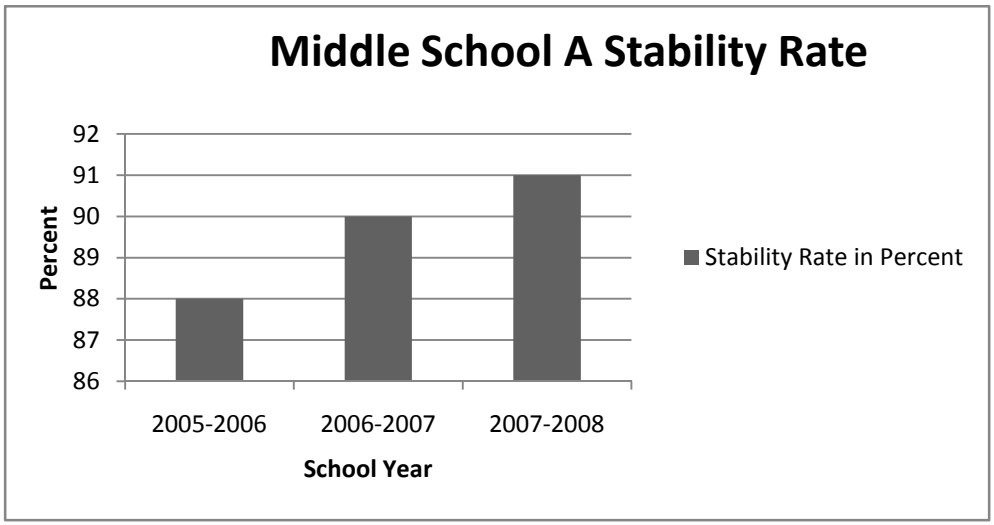


Figure 4. Middle School A stability rate

Middle School B had a total enrollment of 769 students during the 2005-2006 school year. Of those 769 students, 631 or 82.1% were identified as Black, 120 or 15.6% were identified as White, 12 or 1.6% were identified as Hispanic, five or 0.7% were identified as Asian, and zero were identified as American Indian. The January membership for Middle School B indicated that 559 of the 769 students enrolled at that

time were classified as free and reduced lunch students, which made up a total of 72.6% of the student body. During this school year, Middle School B maintained a total of 680 students enrolled the entire school year for a stability rate of 88% (see Figures 5-8).

Middle School B had a total enrollment of 715 students during the 2006-2007 school year. Of those 715 students, 609 or 85.2% were identified as Black, 98 or 13.7% were identified as White, three or 0.4% were identified as Hispanic, five or 0.7% were identified as Asian, and zero were identified as American Indian. The January membership for Middle School B indicated that 494 of the 705 students enrolled at that time were classified as free and reduced lunch students, which made up a total of 70.1% of the student body. During this school year, Middle School B maintained a total of 560 students enrolled the entire school year for a stability rate of 78% (see Figures 5-8).

Middle School B had a total enrollment of 703 students during the 2007-2008 school year. Of those 703 students, 605 or 86.1% were identified as Black, 84 or 11.9% were identified as White, seven or 1.0% were identified as Hispanic, six or 0.9% were identified as Asian, and one or 0.1% was identified as American Indian. The January membership for Middle School B indicated that 510 of the 697 students enrolled at that time were classified as free and reduced lunch students, which made up a total of 73.2% of the student body. During this school year, Middle School B maintained a total of 591 students enrolled for the entire school year for a stability rate of 84% (see Figures 5-8).

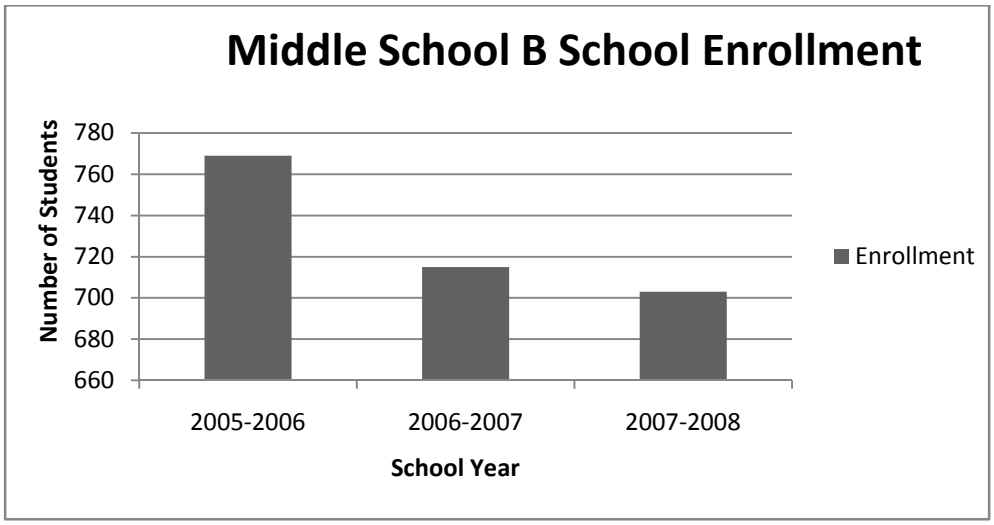


Figure 5. Middle School B school enrollment

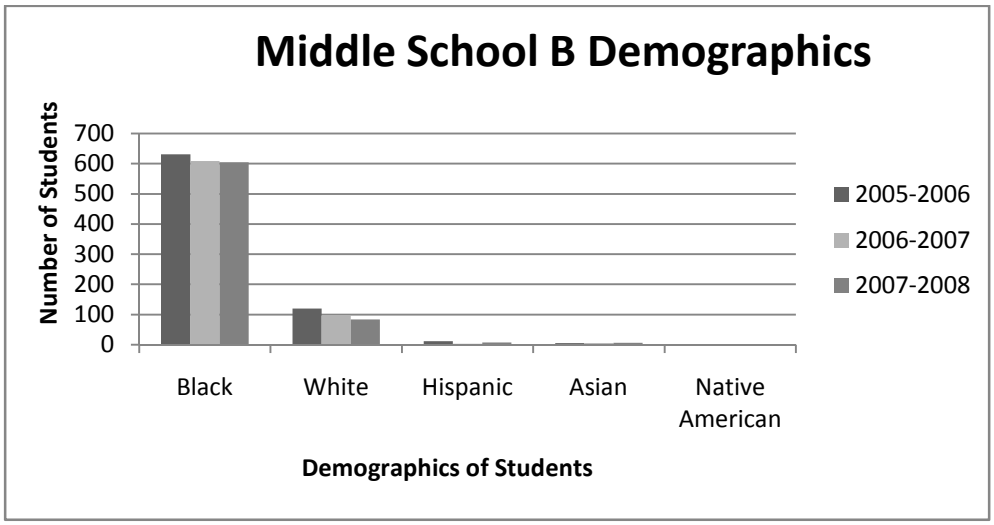


Figure 6. Middle School B demographics

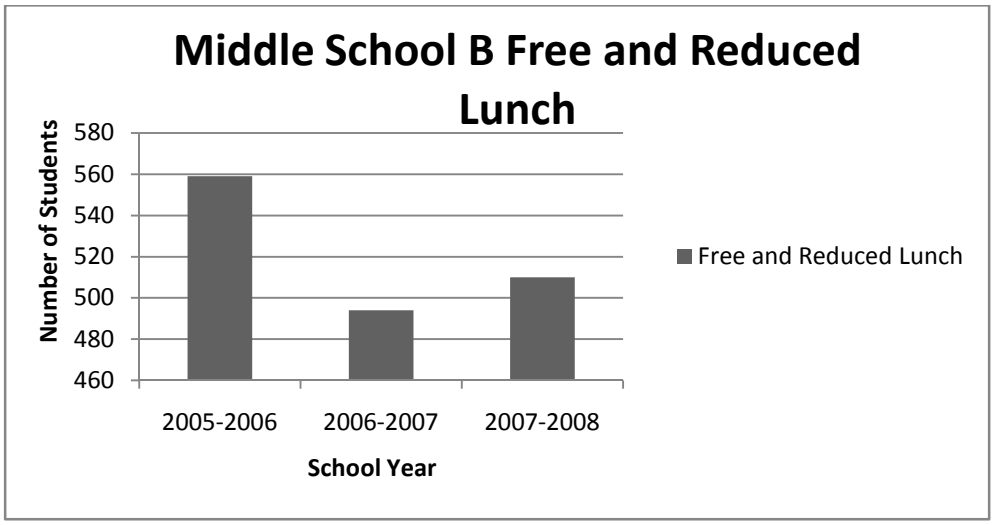


Figure 7. Middle School B free and reduced lunch.

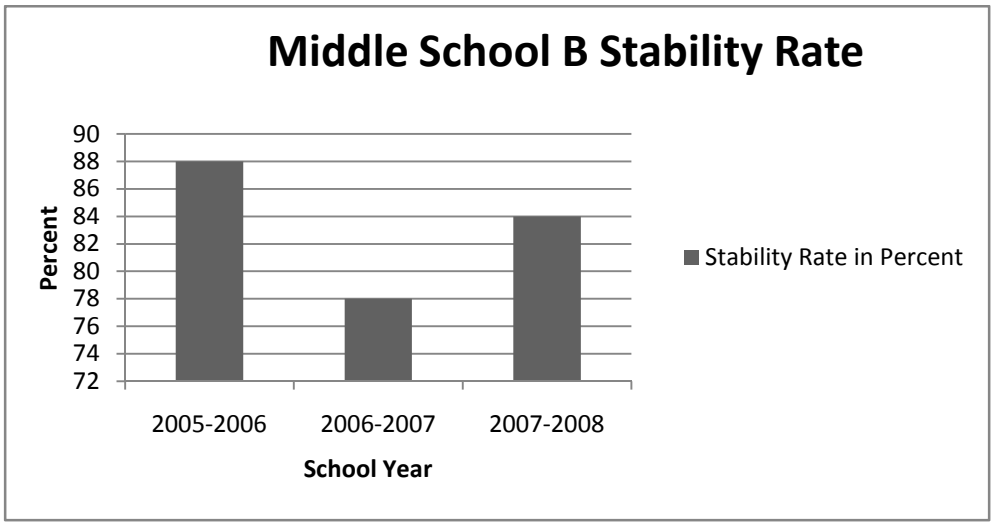


Figure 8. Middle School B stability rate.

Middle School C had a total enrollment of 390 students during the 2005-2006 school year. Of those 390 students, 377 or 96.7% were identified as Black, ten or 2.6% were identified as White, one or 0.3% was identified as Hispanic, one or 0.3% was identified as Asian, and one or 0.3% was identified as American Indian. The January membership for Middle School C indicated that 322 of the 373 students enrolled at the

time were classified as free and reduced lunch students for January membership, which made up a total of 86.3% of the student body. During this school year, Middle School C maintained a total of 291 students enrolled the entire school year for a stability rate of 75% (see Figures 9-12).

Middle School C had a total enrollment of 368 students during the 2006-2007 school year. Of those 368 students, 355 or 96.5% were identified as Black, 13 or 3.5% were identified as White, zero were identified as Hispanic, Asian, or American Indian. The January membership for Middle School C indicated that 318 of the 359 students enrolled at the time were classified as free and reduced lunch students, which made up a total of 88.4% of the student body. During this school year, Middle School C maintained a total of 282 students enrolled the entire school year for a stability rate of 77% (see Figures 9-12).

Middle School C had a total enrollment of 364 students during the 2007-2008 school year. Of those 364 students, 348 or 96.5% were identified as Black, 15 or 4.1% were identified as White, zero were identified as Hispanic, one or 0.3% was identified as Asian, and zero were identified as American Indian. The January membership for Middle School C indicated that 303 of the 342 students enrolled at that time were classified as free and reduced lunch students, which made up a total of 88.6% of the student body. During this school year, Middle School C maintained a total of 283 students enrolled the entire school year for a stability rate of 78% (see Figures 9-12).

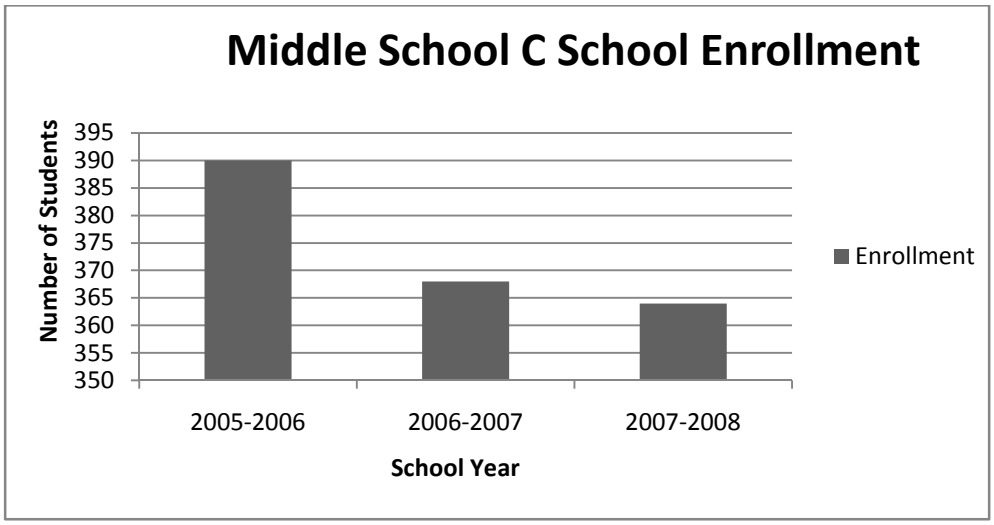


Figure 9. Middle School C school enrollment.

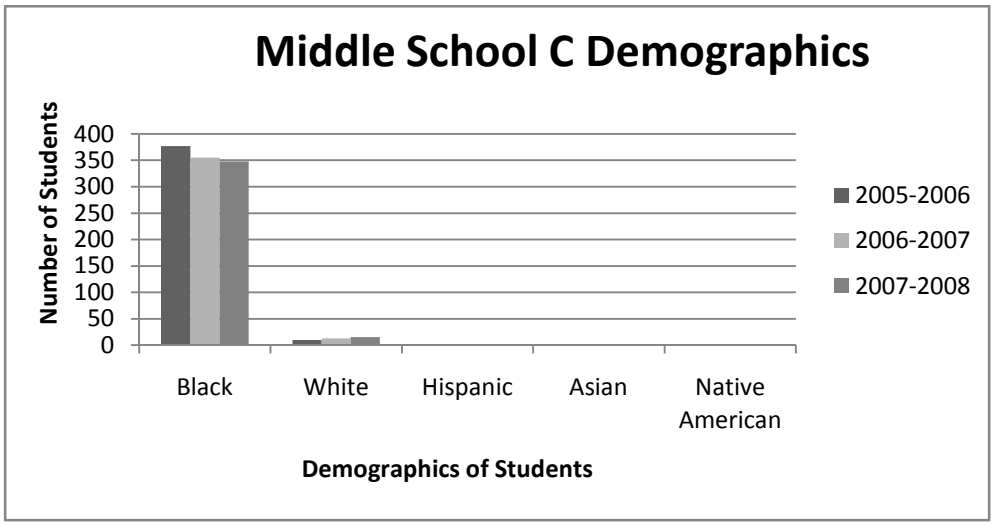


Figure 10. Middle School C demographics.

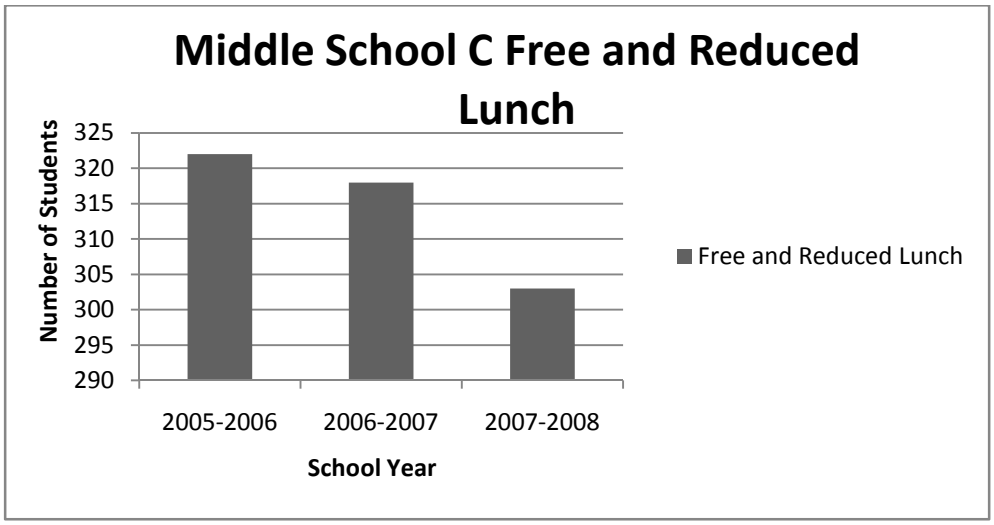


Figure 11. Middle School C free and reduced lunch.

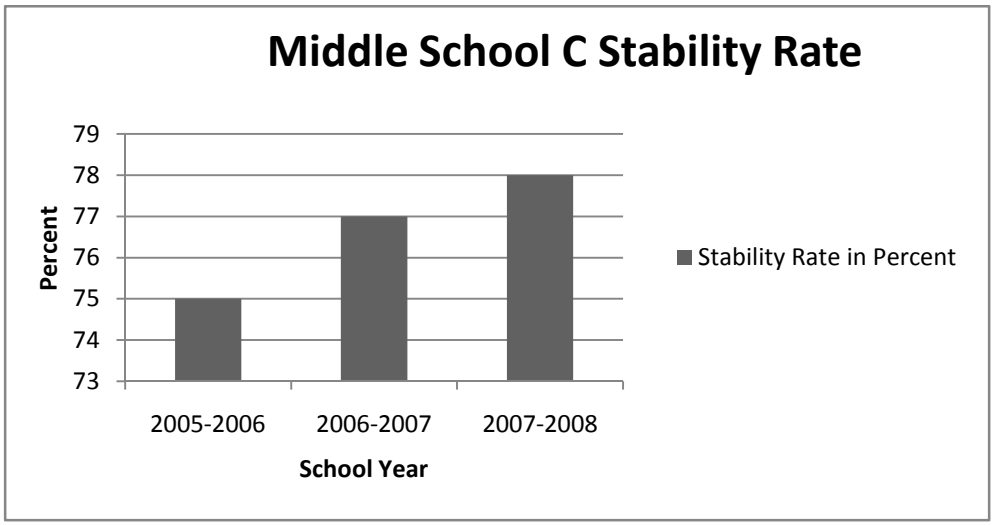


Figure 12. Middle School C stability rate.

The ABC School District has a very diverse student, teacher, and community population. The district is known for its outstanding persistence and accomplishments in education by embracing the diverse community that it serves. The district has a task force to address racial issues known as High Achievement for All. High Achievement For All

is made up of administrators, teachers, students, parents, and community members. This study was designed to provide clarity to the effectiveness of The ABC School District classroom walk-through observations and further validate the district's motto "High Achievement for All."

Research Design Procedure

The ABC School District developed a classroom walk-through observation form under the leadership of Dr. Hafa, Superintendent of Schools. The initial meeting took place with Dr. Hafa to gain knowledge of the history of classroom walk-through observation and current procedures for the implementation of them. Dr. Hafa encouraged and supported this study.

This causal-comparative educational research study investigated the relationship between the independent and dependent variables along with the reasons, or causes, for the existing condition by performing the correlation coefficient and t-tests. The study has been considered ex post facto (after the fact) since both the effect and alleged cause have already taken place and the study is in retrospect. The variables have not been manipulated. The treatment groups are pre-existing so individuals were not randomly assigned, but were simply established, identified, and compared as the three existing middle schools in the ABC School District. The hypothesis predicted that a relationship existed between the independent variable--the ABC School District classroom walk-through observations--and the dependent variables--MAP scores in the content areas of Communication Arts and Math, number discipline referrals, number of summer school placements, and number of students eligible for retention.

Each of the three schools had the same characteristics, but to differing degrees. For example, for the three years studied, the student population of Middle School A ranged from 895-980, whereas Middle School B ranged from 703-769, and the range for Middle School C was 364-390. The prevailing subgroup of all three schools was that of Black students. White students were the second largest subgroup for each school; however, a large gap existed population-wise between the two groups. Over the three years studied, Middle School A had 67.03%, Middle School B had 84.47%, and Middle School C had 96.57% Black students. The population of White students for Middle School A was 30.33%, for Middle School B was 13.73%, and for Middle School C was 3.4%. The free and reduced lunch count for Middle School A was 46.6%, for Middle School B was 71.97%, and for Middle School C was 87.77%.

In an effort to reduce the achievement gap, and avoid the label of "In need of Improvement," school districts nationwide have implemented many new initiatives such as the classroom walk-through observation. This project included gathering and analyzing data from the ABC School District in regards to the classroom walk-through observations that were performed by each school's principal and assistant principals. Over ten thousand classroom walk-through observations were performed throughout the twenty-three schools throughout the district during the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years. This study did, however, focus on just the three participating middle schools in the ABC School District: Middle School A, Middle School B, and Middle School C.

The classroom walk-through form identified multiple factors indicating a positive educational experience including the following: teacher resources including textbooks, curriculum guides and verification sheets, supplemental materials, instructional

strategies, teacher and student engagement, student work, instructional delivery, depth of knowledge, technology, and classroom learning environment. Much of Marzano's research stated that if these correlates of effective schools are evident in both the classrooms and building wide, then students have a greater chance of achieving at high levels.

In particular, this causal-comparative study focused on analyzing all collected data pertaining to the three middle schools based on the classroom walk-through observation reports. The study then attempted to identify the possible correlation of the classroom walk-through observations to improved MAP scores in the areas of Communication Arts and Math in addition to a decrease in discipline referrals, summer school placement, and retention.

Summary

States all across the country have attempted to establish academic benchmarks and mandate rigorous standardized testing in an attempt to improve student achievement. The drive to set higher academic standards had a death grip on most schools and school districts, potentially becoming unaccredited schools. Unaccredited schools risk the potential of being run by the state or even shut down. With the stakes rising and the urgent need for school reform, The ABC School District has implemented a very detailed classroom walk-through observation form that allows principals and assistant principals the opportunity to spend more instructional observation time in the classroom to evaluate teacher effectiveness and student learning. Unfortunately, there is no supportive process for structuring the way classrooms are observed or providing timely teacher feedback. When utilized, the ABC School District classroom walk-through observation tool

provides a realistic snapshot of the classroom that is gathered over a rather short amount of time, typically lasting between five and ten minutes. The purpose of the snapshot is to collect and respond to data collected in regards to teaching and learning behaviors taking place throughout the entire district. Once data is collected, it can be analyzed and used to determine strengths, weaknesses, and assist in identifying professional development activities and opportunities. The response to the data, and the feedback from the data, are two weaknesses of the classroom walk-through observation. Green (2005) referred to his prior work in 2002 stating,

> Staff development is important to improving achievement, and also in helping teachers overcome racial, ethnic, religious and social class biases that may negatively impact teaching and learning. Effective teachers do not accept failure on the part of their students, and they accept responsibility when their students fail to learn. They do not blame parents, resources, or other factors beyond their control when students fail to learn. (p. 17)

The methodology of this research was based on the data gathered by the classroom walk-through observations as well as the MAP results in the areas of Communication Arts and Math, discipline referrals, and summer school and retention data. Teachers must be equipped with the proper resources for success. In addition to effective resources, a teacher must support the resources with effective teaching strategies and engaging activities in order to produce high achievement and student outcomes. When teachers are effectively utilizing class-time and incorporating identified instructional strategies that work, then achievement on many levels of student performance will rise. The classroom walk-through observations provide an instructional

tool that can collect, analyze and distribute data. If used properly, in a systematic way, the results and response to the data may enhance the learning experience and outcomes for all students regardless of race, gender, or disability. By providing such valuable information, it makes it possible for the district to carry out the vision of all students having the knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes to become productive citizens and lifelong learners in a changing global society.

Chapter Four - Results

Introduction

In an effort to raise achievement, classroom walk-through observations were implemented in all ABC School District schools in 2006-2007. Before that time, there had been no formal way of collecting data on classroom observations. This study has been condensed to only the three middle schools in the district. Since implementation, there have been 1,052 classroom walk-through observations performed at the middle school level. The classroom walk-through observations in the ABC School District have been performed by district administrators, including principals and assistant principals. The number of observations performed varied for each middle school as did the number performed in each subject area. As a research study team, we compared the impact of the independent variable, classroom walk-through observations, on the dependent variables of academic performance in the MAP areas of Communication Arts and Math and school climate factors of discipline referrals, summer school placement, and retention at grade level. To determine the causal relationship between the independent and dependent variables, we utilized the correlation coefficient and t-test calculations with the data.

There were no classroom walk-through observations performed in the 2005-2006 school year and 1,052 were performed over the next two school years. We compared the baseline year of no classroom walk-through observations and the two years that the observations were performed to the three years of data including MAP scores in Communication Arts and Math with the 2005-2006, 2006-2007, 2007-2008 MAP scores. We looked at the comparison to determine if there was an improvement in scores due to the classroom walk-through observations. In addition to the academic element, we also

compared the total number of discipline referrals, summer school placements, and total number of retained students for the same school years.

Participants

The participants in this study were all teachers and students of the ABC School District at the middle school level. The District administrators, primarily including building level principals and assistant principals completed an observation form each time they performed a classroom walk-through. The observation form gauges the level of teaching and learning that takes place during the time of the walk-through. This process measures the classroom physical environment, student and teacher engagement, and overall productivity by both teachers and students that participate.

Students were not recruited since the source of the information used in this study was from the MAP data located on the DESE website, as well as student record data regarding discipline referrals, summer school placement and retention. District administrators were not recruited either because they have implemented classroom walk-through observations as a standard practice.

During this research study, there was no significant change in the secondary administrative staff involved at either the middle school or district level. Both school years analyzed included the same working administrative staff including seven assistant principals, three head principals, one director of secondary education, and one superintendent. That being the case, there has been a lot of consistency acknowledged in programming and the performance of the classroom walk-through observations.

Hypothesis

The ABC School District classroom walk-through observations positively affect the school-wide academics and climate in the areas of: achievement on the MAP in the areas of Communication Arts and Math, discipline referrals, summer school placement, and retention. This study revealed a positive increase in the area of MAP scores, while also showing a decreased number in the areas of discipline referrals, summer school placement, and retention.

Research Questions

The following questions were addressed in the study:

1. What is the relationship between the number of classroom walk-through observations in a particular school and subsequent scores on the Communication Arts portion of the MAP?
2. What is the relationship between the number of classroom walk-through observations in a particular school and subsequent scores on the Math portion of the MAP?
3. What is the relationship between the number of classroom walk-through observations in a particular school and the total number of discipline referrals that occur at that school?
4. What is the relationship between the number of classroom walk-through observations in a particular school and the number of students enrolled in that schools summer school program?

5. What is the relationship between the number of classroom walk-through observations in a particular school and the number of students retained in that school at the end of that school year?

Null hypothesis #1. There will be no significant correlation between the number of classroom walk-through observations conducted each year and scores on the Communication Arts portion of the MAP test.

Null hypothesis #2. There will be no significant correlation between the number of classroom walk-through observations conducted each year and scores on the Math portion of the MAP test.

Null hypothesis #3. There will be no significant correlation between the number of classroom walk-through observations conducted each school year and the total number of discipline referrals at each middle school at the end of each school year.

Null hypothesis #4. There will be no significant correlation between the number of classroom walk-through observations conducted each school year and the total number of students enrolled in the summer school program of each middle school at the end of each school year.

Null hypothesis #5. There will be no significant correlation between the number of classroom walk-through observations conducted each school year and the number of students retained in his or her grade level at the end of each school year in each middle school.

Alternative hypothesis #1. There will be a positive correlation between the number of classroom walk-through observations conducted each year and scores on the Communication Arts portion of the MAP test.

Alternative hypothesis #2. There will be a positive correlation between the number of classroom walk-through observations conducted each year and scores on the Math portion of the MAP test

Alternative hypothesis #3. There will be a negative correlation between the number of classroom walk-through observations conducted each school year and the total number of discipline referrals at each middle school at the end of each school year.

Alternative hypothesis #4. There will be a negative correlation between the number of classroom walk-through observations conducted each school year and the total number of students enrolled in the summer school program of each middle school at the end of each school year.

Alternative hypothesis #5. There will be a negative correlation between the number of classroom walk-through observations conducted each year and the number of students retained in his or her grade level at the end of each school year in each middle school.

Research and Analysis of Data

The analysis of the correlation coefficient and t-test calculations addressed the following questions and related hypothesis.

Independent Variables

ABC School District classroom walk-through observations. The independent variables of the study are the number of classroom walk-through observations conducted at each middle school. The relationship between classroom walk-through observations and student achievement and classroom walk-through observations and school climate

was analyzed over a two-year period that classroom walk-through observations were conducted.

Dependent Variables

Communication arts portion of MAP test. The first dependent variable of the study was the achievement data from the Communication Arts portion of the MAP Test measured in April of each year over a three-year period.

Math portion of MAP test. The second dependent variable of the study was the achievement data from the Math portion of the MAP Test measured in April of each year over a three-year period.

Number of discipline referrals at each middle school. The third dependent variable of the study was the total number of discipline referrals written at each middle school during each year of the study.

Summer school enrollment numbers at each middle school. The fourth dependent variable of the study was the number of students enrolled in summer school at each middle school at the end of each year school year.

Number of students retained in their academic grade at each middle school. The fifth dependent variable of the study was the number of students retained in his or her academic grade at the end of each school year.

Treatment of the Data

Correlation coefficient calculations and t-test analysis were applied to determine if a strong linear relationship exists between the independent and dependent variables. Following the analysis, the correlation coefficient was used to calculate a t-test in order to determine the significance of the correlation coefficient. This allowed us to look for a

statistically significant correlation between the independent and dependent variables. This model allowed an exploration of the relationship between classroom walk-through observations and achievement on the MAP test, discipline referrals, summer school placement, and retention. In 2005-2006, there were no classroom walk-through observations performed. Over the next two school years, a combined 1,052 observations were performed in the three middle schools.

Beyond the Data

Going beyond the data, this research team also analyzed and discussed the parts of the classroom walk-through observations that appeared most meaningful for their respective perceptions. Leslie determined the effectiveness and made suggestions for improvement from a classroom teacher-centered perspective, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the classroom walk-through observation process. Tom determined the effectiveness and made suggestions for improvement from a student-centered perspective, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the classroom walk-through observation process. I determined the effectiveness and made suggestions for improvement from a school climate-centered perspective, also identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the classroom walk-through observation process. It appeared to the team that the observation process could be a positive tool for improving teaching and learning but was missing necessary ingredients to potentially be an effective tool. The team discussed and recommended suggestions for improvement to the observation form and process to make it both systematic and results driven (see chapter five).

Conclusion

The correlation coefficient indicated that a correlation exists between the independent and dependent variables. The critical value of the t-test is 12.706. The t-test calculations did reveal a significant difference between the value of r and 0 in several cases, thus indicating the relationships are not likely due to chance (see Tables 4-17). For the dependent variable of MAP scores, we rejected the null for all three middle schools for both subjects. In those cases, we accepted the alternate hypothesis and the difference between r and 0 was not due to chance. School C showed the strongest correlation of .9233 between classroom walk-through observations and MAP scores in the subject area of Communication Arts. School A showed a slightly weaker correlation of .870 between classroom walk-through observations and Math. The highest t-test value was school C with a value of 2.399, which falls short of the critical value of 4.303. Correlation coefficients and t-test calculations are summarized in Tables 4-6.

Results

Middle School A performed 346 in 2006-2007, and 213 in 2007-2008 totaling 559 or 53.14% of the total observations. Middle School B performed 180 in 2006-2007, and 291 in 2007-2008 totaling 471 or 44.77% of the total observations. Middle School C performed the smallest number of classroom walk-through observations among the three middle schools over the period of time studied. They performed a total of 12 classroom walk-through observations in 2006-2007, and 10 in 2007-2008, totaling 22 or 2.09% of the total observations (see Table 2 and Figure 13).

Table 2

Classroom Walk-Through Observations by School

SCHOOL	2006-2007 Frequency	2007-2008 Frequency	2-YEAR Frequency	Percentage Of Total
Middle School A	346	213	559	53.14%
Middle School B	180	291	471	44.77%
Middle School C	12	10	22	2.09%
Total	538	514	1052	

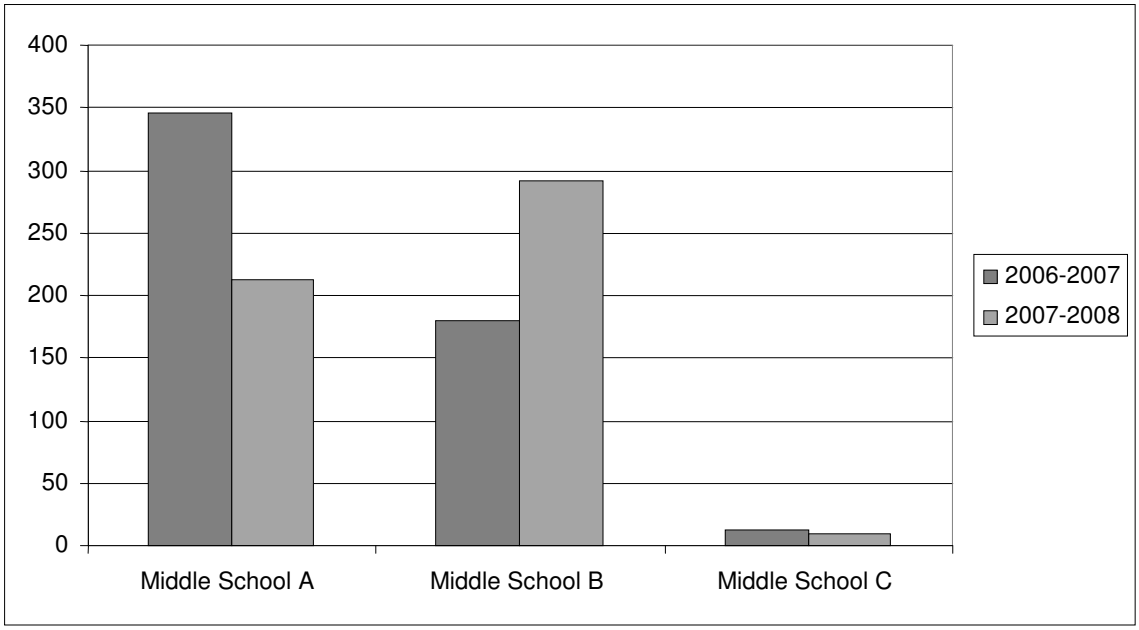


Figure 13. Number of classroom walk-through observations performed at each school during each school year.

The number of observations in each subject area varied by school and school year performed. The majority of observations were concentrated in the four core subjects,

Communication Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies, with a lower number observed in the elective subjects. Principals and assistant principals often concentrated their observations in the core areas since The MAP assesses Communication Arts, Math and Science (see Table 3).

A limitation to the study was the actual number of classroom walk-through observations compared to the expected number of classroom walk-through observations by the ABC school district. Middle School A had approximately 65 teachers during each of the school years studied. Over a 36-week school year, there were 2,340 expected observations for the 2006-2007 school year, with each class being observed once per week. The total number of observations performed fell well short with only 346 observations reported. For the 2007-2008 school year, it was expected that each classroom would be observed once every two weeks, bringing the expected total of observations to 1,170. The number of total observations was still well short of the expected total with only 213 observations reported. Middle School B had approximately 54 teachers during each of the school years studied. Over a 36-week school year, there were 1,944 expected observations for the 2006-2007 school year, with each class being observed once per week. The total number of observations performed fell well short with only 180 observations reported. For the 2007-2008 school year, it was expected that each classroom would be observed once every two weeks, bringing the expected total of observations to 972. The number of total observations still well short of the expected total with only 291 observations reported. Middle School C had approximately 38 teachers during each of the school years studied. Over a 36-week school year, there were 1,368 expected observations for the 2006-2007 school year, with each class being observed

once per week. The total number of observations performed fell short with only 12 observations reported. For the 2007-2008 school year, it was expected that each classroom would be observed once every two weeks, bringing the expected total of observations to 684. The number of total observations still fell well short of the expected total with only 10 observations reported. Due to the limited amount of data collected from Middle School C, it is possible that the results were skewed.

Table 3

Classroom Walk-through Observations by Subject and School

Subject	Frequency 2006-2007	Frequency 2007-2008	Frequency 2006-2007	Frequency 2007-2008	Frequency 2006-2007	Frequency 2007-2008
Middle School	A	A	B	B	C	C
Communication Arts	104	72	51	99	3	3
Mathematics	45	28	35	20	3	2
Science	48	33	33	38	2	2
Social Studies	43	32	33	70	4	3
Fine Arts	21	13	6	7	0	0
Health/P.E.	36	20	6	35	0	0
Practical Arts	13	4	9	5	0	0
Special Ed.	16	2	0	8	0	0
Foreign Language	9	8	6	4	1	0
Other	11	1	1	5	0	0
Total	346	213	180	291	12	10

MAP Scores

This study expected to find a statistically significant correlation between the numbers of classroom walk-through observations performed and MAP scores in Communication Arts and Mathematics for the 2006-2007, and 2007-2008 school years.

Student achievement on the MAP test was quantified by the number of students that earned advanced or proficient scores on the MAP assessments. In 2005-2006 there were no classroom walk-through observations performed. During the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years combined, 1052 observations were performed. The correlation coefficient test was computed to determine if a strong linear relationship exists between the number of classroom walk-through observations and the percentage of students scoring advanced and proficient on the Communication Arts and Math MAP tests (see Tables 4 -6).

Table 4

Middle School A MAP Scores and Classroom Walk-through Observations Performed for a 3-Year Period with Calculated Correlation Coefficient and t-Test

	Walk-through Frequency	Adv-Prof. Com. Arts.	Adv-Prof. Math.
2005-2006	0	41.30%	36%
2006-2007	346	42.90%	41.80%
2007-2008	213	43.90%	42.70%
	Correlation Coefficient r=	0.7094801	0.870312872
	t-Test t=	1.005	1.764

Note. Positive. Reject the null. Accept Alternative. Not due to chance.

Alpha: .05; r^2= .503 Communication Arts; r^2= .757 Math

We were 95% confident that the number of classroom walk-through observations explained 50.3% of the variability in Communication Arts and 75.7% of the variability in Math MAP scores.

Table 5

Middle School B MAP Scores and Classroom Walk-through Observations Performed for a 3-Year Period with Calculated Correlation Coefficient and t-Test

	Walk-through Frequency	Adv-Prof. Com. Arts.	Adv-Prof. Math.
2005-2006	0	24.60%	22.90%
2006-2007	180	22%	22%
2007-2008	291	29.30%	28.90%
	Correlation Coefficient r=	0.52450335	0.710978083
	t-Test t=	0.615	1.009

Note. Moderate positive. Reject null. Accept Alternative. Not due to chance

Alpha: .05; r^2= .275 Communication Arts; r^2= .505Math

We were 95% confident that the number of classroom walk-through observations explained 27.5% of the variability in Communication Arts and 50.5% of the variability in Math MAP scores.

Table 6

Middle School C MAP Scores and Classroom Walk-through Observations Performed for a 3-Year Period with Calculated Correlation Coefficient and t-Test

	Walk-through Frequency	Adv-Prof. Com. Arts.	Adv-Prof. Math.
2005-2006	0	14.20%	7.60%
2006-2007	12	19.40%	13%
2007-2008	10	21.10%	14%
	Correlation Coefficient r=	0.923041508	0.954767306
	t-Test t=	2.399	3.197

Note. Strong positive. Reject null. Accept Alternate. Not due to chance.

Alpha: .05; r^2= .852 Communication Arts ; r^2= .911 Math

We were 95% confident that the number of classroom walk-through observations explained 85.2% of the variability in Communication Arts and 91.1% of the variability in Math MAP scores.

Discipline Referrals

Each school records the number of discipline referrals for the academic year into a student information system. It was predicted that due to an increased presence by administrators in the classroom there would be a decrease in discipline referrals resulting

from inappropriate behavior. The study hypothesis stated walk-through observations will correlate with statistically significant fewer discipline incidents for the 2006-2007 academic school year (see Tables 7-9).

Table 7

Middle School A Number of Discipline Referrals with Calculated Correlation Coefficient and t-Test

	Walk-through Frequency	Discipline Referrals	School Enrollment	Average Incidents Per Student
2005-2006	0	3218	961	3.35
2006-2007	346	3376	986	3.42
2007-2008	213	4123	895	4.61
		Correlation Coefficient		
		r=	0.181148016	
		t-Test		
		t=	0.184	

Note. Mild positive. Reject null. Reject alternate. Not due to chance.

Alpha: .05; r^2= .033;

We were 95% confident that the number of classroom walk-through observations explained 3.3% of the variability in discipline referrals.

Table 8

Middle School B Number of Discipline Referrals with Calculated Correlation Coefficient and t-Test

	Walk-through Frequency	Discipline Referrals	School Enrollment	Average Incidents Per Student
2005-2006	0	4797	769	6.24
2006-2007	180	3254	721	4.51
2007-2008	291	2316	714	3.24

Correlation Coefficient		
r=		-0.99885995
t-Test	t=	-15.98

Note. Strong positive. Reject null. Accept alternate. Likely due to chance.

Alpha: .05; r^2= .996

We were 95% confident that the number of classroom walk-through observations explained 99.6% of the variability in discipline referrals.

Table 9

Middle School C Number of Discipline Referrals with Calculated Correlation Coefficient and t-Test

	Walk-through Frequency	Discipline Referrals	School Enrollment	Average Incidents Per Student
2005-2006	0	3265	390	8.37
2006-2007	12	2186	368	5.61
2007-2008	10	1829	364	5.02
		Correlation Coefficient		
		r=	- 0.948637595	
		t-Test	t= -2.98	

Note. Strong positive. Reject null. Accept alternate. Likely due to chance.

Alpha: .05; r^2= .898

We were 95% confident that the number of classroom walk-through observations explained 89.8% of the variability in discipline referrals.

Summer School Placement

Each year, middle school students in the ABC School District that fail three, four or five semester classes are required to attend summer school. Each Middle school enrolls their own students based on all students' semester grades. The study hypothesis stated

that classroom walk-through observations will reduce the amount of students that require summer school (see Tables 10-13).

Table 10

Number of Students Attending Summer School for Each Middle School as per Year Studied

Middle School	Summer 2005-2006 Number of Students	Summer 2006-2007 Number of Students	Summer 2007-2008 Number of Students
A	137	96	161
B	153	124	118
C	31	38	47

Table 11

Middle School A Percentage of Students Attending Summer School with Calculated Correlation Coefficient and t-Test

	Walk-through Frequency	Number of Students in Summer School	School Enrollment	Percentage of Students in Summer School
2005-2006	0	137	961	14.25%
2006-2007	346	96	986	9.73%
2007-2008	213	161	895	17.99%
	Correlation Coefficient	r=	-0.430780794	
	t-Test	t=	-.477	

Note. Moderate Negative. Reject null. Accept Alternate. Not due to chance.

Alpha: .05; r^2= .184

We were 95% confident that the number of classroom walk-through observations explained 18.4% of the variability in the number of students attending summer school.

Table 12

Middle School B Percentage of Students Attending Summer School with Calculated Correlation Coefficient and t-Test

	Walk-through Frequency	Number of Students in Summer School	School Enrollment	Percentage of Students in Summer School
2005-2006	0	153	769	19.80%
2006-2007	180	124	721	17.19%
2007-2008	291	118	714	16.53%
	Correlation Coefficient	r=	-0.980945138	
	t-Test	t=	-5.059	

Note. Strong negative. Reject null. Accept alternate. Not due to chance.

Alpha: .05; r^2= .960

We were 95% confident that the number of classroom walk-through observations explained 96% of the variability in the number of students attending summer school.

Table 13

Middle School C Percentage of Students Attending Summer School with Calculated Correlation Coefficient and t-Test

	Walk-through Frequency	Number of Students in Summer School	School Enrollment	Percentage of Students in Summer School
2005-2006	0	31	390	7.94%
2006-2007	12	38	368	10.33%
2007-2008	10	47	364	12.91%
	Correlation Coefficient	r=	0.763653077	
	t-Test	t=	1.84	

Note. Positive. Reject null. Reject Alternate. Not due to chance.

Alpha: .05; r^2= .583

We were 95% confident that the number of classroom walk-through observations explained 58.3% of the variability in the number of students attending summer school.

Retention

Each year students that fail six or more semester classes for the year are considered for retention in the same grade. From the grade data, each middle school determines the list of retained students. The study hypothesis stated that classroom walk-through observations will significantly decrease the number of students being retained in the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years (see Tables 14-17).

Table 14

Students Retained at Each Middle School

Middle School	2005-2006 Number of Students	2006-2007 Number of Students	2007-2008 Number of Students
A	83	57	51
B	64	70	5
C	32	16	5

Table 15

Students Retained at Middle School A Conducted with Calculated Correlation Coefficient and t-Test

	Walk-through Frequency	Number of Students Retained	School Enrollment	Percentage of Population Retained
2005-2006	0	16	961	1.66%
2006-2007	346	57	986	5.78%
2007-2008	213	70	895	7.82%
	Correlation Coefficient	r=	0.750514434	
	t-Test	t=	1.14	

Note. Positive. Reject null. Reject alternate. Not due to chance.

Alpha: .05; r^2= .563

We were 95% confident that the number of classroom walk-through observations explained 56.3% of the variability in the number of students retained.

Table 16

Students Retained at Middle School B Conducted with Calculated Correlation Coefficient and t-Test

	Walk-through Frequency	Number of Students Retained	School Enrollment	Percentage of Population Retained
2005-2006	0	5	769	0.65%
2006-2007	180	51	721	7.07%
2007-2008	291	5	714	0.70%
	Correlation Coefficient	r=	0.142337728	
	t-Test	t=	0.144	

Note. Mild positive. Reject null. Reject alternate. Not due to chance.

Alpha: .05; r^2= .020

We were 95% confident that the number of classroom walk-through observations explained 2% of the variability in the number of students retained.

Table 17

Students Retained at Middle School C Conducted with Calculated Correlation Coefficient and t-Test

	Walk-through Frequency	Number of Students Retained	School Enrollment	Percentage of Population Retained
2005-2006	0	32	390	8.2%
2006-2007	12	16	368	4.35%
2007-2008	10	5	364	1.37%
	Correlation Coefficient			
	r=	0.822142008		
	t-Test			
	t=	-1.45		

Note. Strong negative. Reject null. Accept alternate. Not due to chance.

Alpha: .05; r^2= .675

We were 95% confident that the number of classroom walk-through observations explained 67.5% of the variability in the number of students retained.

Summary Conclusions from the Data

Results of this study indicated a moderate correlation between the independent variables of classroom walk-through observations and dependent variables of Communication Arts and Math MAP scores, discipline referrals, the number of students required to attend summer school, and the number of students retained at grade level. For the dependent variable of MAP scores, we rejected the null for all three middle schools. In all three cases, we accepted the alternate hypothesis, and determined the difference between r and 0 was not due to chance. Although several correlations were close to one or negative one, four of five problems indicated a weak significant correlation.

For Middle School A, the correlation coefficient (r) for Communication Arts was 0.7094801 and 0.870312872 for Math. The t-test (t) for Communication Arts was 1.005 and 1.764 for Math. The correlation coefficient (r) for discipline referrals was 0.181148016 with a t-test result of 0.184. The correlation coefficient for summer school was -0.430780794 with a t-test result of -0.477. The correlation coefficient for retention was 0.750514434 with a t-test result of 1.14.

For Middle School B, the correlation coefficient (r) for Communication Arts was 0.52450335 and 0.710978083 for Math. The t-test (t) for Communication Arts was 0.615 and 1.009 for Math. The correlation coefficient (r) for discipline referrals was -0.99885995 with a t-test result of -15.98. The correlation coefficient for summer school was -0.980945138 with a t-test result of -5.059. The correlation coefficient for retention was 0.142337728 with a t-test result of 0.144.

For Middle School C, the correlation coefficient (r) for Communication Arts was 0.923041508 and 0.954767306 for Math. The t-test (t) for Communication Arts was 2.399 and 3.197 for Math. The correlation coefficient (r) for discipline referrals was 0.948637595 with a t-test result of -2.98. The correlation coefficient for summer school was 0.763653077 with a t-test result of 1.84. The correlation coefficient for retention was 0.822142008 with a t-test result of -1.45.

After analysis of the data, we determined the following: For the dependent variable of MAP scores, the null was rejected for all three middle schools. In all three cases, we accepted the alternate hypothesis and determined the difference between r and 0 was not due to chance. For the dependent variable of discipline referrals, for schools B and C, we rejected the null and accepted the alternate. For school B, our results were likely due to chance and School C results were not due to chance. For school A, we rejected the null and rejected the alternate. For the dependent variable of summer school, we rejected the null and accepted the alternate for schools A and B. For school C, we rejected the null, but also rejected the alternate due to the number of students requiring summer school increasing rather than decreasing. This caused our correlation and t-test scores to be positive instead of negative, therefore the alternate had to be rejected as well. For the dependent variable of retention, we rejected both the null and alternate for schools A and B due to increasing retention numbers. For school C, we rejected the null and accepted the alternate, and determined our results were not due to chance.

Therefore, the following conclusions were made: For all subject schools, there is a positive correlation between the number of classroom walk-through observations conducted each year and score on the Communication Arts portion of the MAP test. For

all subject schools there is positive correlation between the number of classroom walk-through observations conducted each year and scores on the Math portion of the MAP test. In Middle School B, a significant correlation exists between the number of classroom walk-through observations conducted each year and the total number of discipline referrals each school year. However, the result was positive when negative was the hypothesized. In schools A and C, there is a significant correlation between the number of classroom walk-through observations conducted each year and the total number of discipline referrals each school year. For all study schools, there is no significant correlation between the number of classroom walk-through observations conducted each year and the number of students enrolled in summer school for each middle school at the end of each school year. For all study schools, there is a significant correlation between the number of classroom walk-through observations conducted each year and the number of students retained at the end of each school year.

The summary conclusions focus specifically on the data obtained from the study. We need, however, to reconsider the possibility that this study has hidden limitations.

Limitations of the Study

There are a number of possible limitations with the classroom walk-through observations utilized by the ABC School District. The limitations are as follows:

1. There was a lack of training for the teachers and administrators. There was no formal training or workshop provided to those participating in the classroom walk-through observations.
2. There was no response on the observation form for assessments, including tests, quizzes, or common assessments. As a result, the observation results

could have inferred that no instructional activity was observed during student assessments.

3. There was no procedural feedback for improvement based on data to the teachers or administrators. Teachers and administrators needed the opportunity to discuss the observation in order to improve teaching practices.
4. The three buildings studied were inconsistent in the number of observations performed.
5. There was variance in student enrollment and staffing among the three middle schools studied.
6. There was variance in student demographics and socioeconomic status among the three middle schools studied.
7. There was variance in administrator to student ratios among the three buildings studied.
8. The administrators' perception of questions could have differed. This could have resulted in a poor reflection of exactly what took place in the classroom and lack of reliability when the instrument was used.
9. There was no consistency in the allocation of classrooms visited by the administrator performing the observations among the three middle schools studied.
10. The first year of implementation required administrators to visit each classroom once per week, but the second year of implementation requested administrators to visit each classroom once every two weeks, reducing the number of classroom walk-through observations.

11. There may be no specific connection that can be established between the classroom walk-through observations data and the test scores.
12. This study lends the possibility that the statistical data cannot render the desired information. There are many additional factors involved in the educational process that could impact the dependent variables.

While all of these are possible limitations to the study, the next section will focus on possible limitations revealed by our research team.

In the beginning of this study, we were very enthusiastic about determining if the classroom walk-through observations had a potential impact on Communication Arts and Mathematics MAP scores, discipline referrals, summer school placement, and retention. We began the study by looking only at the impact that the classroom walk-through observations had on the above listed items. After we began the study, we realized that there were many factors that could possibly impact the above items, not just the walk-through observations.

Let us first look at the Communication Arts and Mathematics MAP scores. The difficulty in using the MAP scores as an indicator of increased student performance is that different groups of students are being compared from year to year. A possibility exists that the statistical data cannot provide the desired information. Dr. Vandenberg, in a personal memorandum to us (2009), stated that the study

> Assumes that the MAP scores provide reliable and valid evidence of improvement of academic achievement within the schools, although virtually everybody I speak to (and I think this includes the three co-researchers for this project) agree that the MAP scores really cannot be taken very seriously as indicators of school quality.

> So, how can the MAP scores serve as the sole evidentiary lynchpin for such a study?

Dr. Vandenberg (2009) further stated that:

> Schools are hugely complex institutions, and how they perform constitutes hugely difficult phenomena to understand and reduce to statistical data. The terminal danger of the one-treatment-produces-results approach to educational research is that it ignores the complexity of the phenomena in the hope that "one little treatment" will provide the lodestone.

The complexity of the educational system has been a concern from the beginning of our study. When we began looking at the data, comparing the data to the amount of classroom walk-through observations, we realized that there were so many more factors that could possibly impact educational outcomes that existed well beyond our previously determined limitations. In spite of these criticisms, we still believe that the classroom walk-through observations should still take place, but under a systematic approach to further enhance teaching and learning outcomes.

Chapter five will discuss the recommendations for improvement of the classroom observation form from an administrative perspective. It will also discuss research on effective instructional strategies that enhance student performance. Lastly, the chapter five will conclude with an approach that provides a systematic way to utilize the classroom walk-through observation as a school improvement tool.

Chapter Five – Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate and establish if there was a relationship between the number of ABC School District classroom walk-through observations and student achievement and school climate. Specifically, we focused on MAP scores, as reported by DESE in the subject areas of Communication Arts and Math, and district-collected data including discipline referrals, summer school placement, and retention of students. The number of ABC School District classroom walk-through observations served as the independent variable for this study. The study analyzed and determined the relationship of the independent and dependent variables based on data collected from classroom walk-through observations over a two-year period. Although there were over one thousand observations performed over that time period, the study was limited to only the observations conducted at the middle school level. The ABC School District consisted of three middle schools, Middle School A, Middle School B, and Middle School C.

The research study team consisted of Leslie McEntire, Tom Sorensen, and me. Performing this study as a collaborative team allowed us to examine the effects of classroom walk-through observations from three different perspectives. Leslie, being a classroom teacher, examined the effect and recommended potential enhancement suggestions to the observations from a teacher-centered perspective. Tom, being a counselor, examined the effect and recommended potential enhancement suggestions to the observations from the student-centered perspective. I examined the effect of the

classroom walk-through observations from a learning climate-centered perspective. Later in this chapter, I will discuss pertinent information from all three perspectives.

Reporting of the Findings

This causal-comparative study revealed a correlation between the independent variable (classroom walk-through observations) and the dependent variables. It was determined that there was an increase in student achievement in the academic areas of Communication Arts and Math, while there was also noted improvements in the school climate factors of discipline referrals, summer school placement, and retention at grade level. However, this is probably due to a variety of reasons.

A limitation to the study was the actual number of classroom walk-through observations compared to the expected number of classroom walk-through observations by the ABC school district. Middle School A had approximately 65 teachers during each of the school years studied. Over a 36-week school year, there were 2,340 expected observations for the 2006-2007 school year, with each class being observed once per week. The total number of observations performed fell well short with only 346 observations reported. For the 2007-2008 school year, it was expected that each classroom would be observed once every two weeks, bringing the expected total of observations to 1,170. The number of total observations was still well below the expected total with only 213 observations reported. Middle School B had approximately 54 teachers during each of the school years studied. Over a 36-week school year, there were 1,944 expected observations for the 2006-2007 school year, with each class being observed once per week. The total number of observations performed was still well below the expected with only 180 observations reported. For the 2007-2008 school year,

it was expected that each classroom would be observed once every two weeks, bringing the expected total of observations to 972. The number of total observations was still well below the expected total with only 291 observations reported. Middle School C had approximately 38 teachers during each of the school years studied. Over a 36-week school year, there were 1,368 expected observations for the 2006-2007 school year, with each class being observed once per week. The total number of observations performed was below the expected with only 12 observations reported. For the 2007-2008 school year, it was expected that each classroom would be observed once every two weeks, bringing the expected total of observations to 684. The number of total observations was well below the expected total with only 10 observations reported (see Table 18). Middle School C has a principal and only one assistant principal, which may be an indicator of why the numbers were so few. However, their student population is significantly lower.

Middle School A administrators performed the largest number of classroom walk-through observations with a total of 559 over the two years of classroom walk-through observations studied. During the 2005-2006 school year, with no classroom walk-though observations performed, the school scored 41.30% advanced and proficient in Communication Arts while scoring a 36% in Math. The following school year, 2006-2007, Middle School A posted scores of 42.90% in advanced and proficient in Communication Arts while scoring 41.80% in Math. Both Communication Arts and Math showed gains from the previous year with no classroom walk-through observations performed.. During the 2007-2008 school year, Middle School A scored 43.90% in advanced and proficient in Communication Arts and scored 42.70% in advanced and proficient in Math, while performing 213 classroom walk-through observations. Once

again, both Communication Arts and Math showing a gain in MAP scores from study year one to study year two.

Middle School B performed the second largest number of classroom walk-through observations with a total of 471 over the two years of classroom walk-through observations studied. During the 2005-2006 school year, with no classroom walk-though observations performed, the school scored 24.60% advanced and proficient in Communication Arts while scoring a 22.90% in Math. The following school year, 2006-2007, Middle School B posted scores of 22% in advanced and proficient in Communication Arts while scoring 22% in Math. Both Communication Arts and Math showed gains from the previous year with no classroom walk-through observation and study year one while 180 classroom walk-through observations were performed. During the 2007-2008 school year, Middle School B scored 29.30% in advanced and proficient in Communication Arts and scored 28.90% in advanced and proficient in Math, while performing 291 classroom walk-through observations. Once again, both Communication Arts and Math showing a gain in MAP scores from study year one to study year two.

Middle School C performed the least number of classroom walk-through observations with a total of 22 over the two years of classroom walk-through observations studied. During the 2005-2006 school year, with no classroom walk-though observations performed, the school scored 14.20% advanced and proficient in Communication Arts while scoring a 7.60% in Math. The following school year, 2006-2007, Middle School C posted scores of 19.40% in advanced and proficient in Communication Arts while scoring 13% in Math. Both Communication Arts and Math showed gains from the previous year when no classroom walk-through observations were

performed. During the 2007-2008 school year, Middle School C scored 21.10% in advanced and proficient in Communication Arts and scored 14% in advanced and proficient in Math, while performing 10 classroom walk-through observations. Once again, both Communication Arts and Math showing a gain in MAP scores from study year one to study year two.

Table 18

Number of Projected Classroom Walk-through Observations per School Each Year Studied

School	# of teachers	Weeks/school	Yr. 1	Yr. 2
A	65	36	2340 (346)	1170 (213)
B	54	36	1944 (180)	972 (291)
C	38	36	1368 (12)	684 (10)

Note. The above list of data was collected from all three middle schools studied during the first two years of classroom walk-through observation implementation.

Conclusion of Data Collection

The correlation coefficient indicates that a correlation exists between the independent and dependent variables. Therefore, the classroom walk-through observations did have a positive impact on student achievement. The t-test calculations did reveal a significant difference between the value of r and 0 in several cases, thus indicating the relationships were not likely due to chance, but were rather as a result of

the classroom walk-through observations. For the dependent variable of MAP scores we rejected the null for all three middle schools for both subjects. In those cases, we accepted the alternate hypothesis and the difference between r and 0 was not due to chance, but likely due to the performance of classroom walk-through observations. School C showed the strongest correlation of .9233 between the number of classroom walk-through observations and MAP scores in the subject area of Communication Arts. However, School C also had the lowest amount of classroom walk-through observations performed over the years studied. This indicated that other programs or variables could have caused the increase in student achievement. School A showed a slightly weaker correlation of .870 between the number of classroom walk-through observations and Math. Ironically, School C had the highest number of classroom walk-through observations performed. The highest t-test value was school C with a value of 2.399, which is less than the critical value of 4.303. Correlation coefficients and t-test calculations are summarized in Tables 4-6.

Implications for Effective Schools

The data collected and analyzed through this study indicates the possibility that classroom walk-through observations were a contributing factor that might correlate with an increase in Communication Arts and Math MAP scores and a decrease in discipline referrals, summer school placement, and retention. It was assumed by administrators that teachers were held more accountable for how and what they taught as they were more frequently observed. It was also assumed that while conducting these observations, the principals and assistant principals became more visible and deterred negative student behaviors while also being given the opportunity for providing immediate assistance and

feedback to teachers. However, this quite possibly could not be the case for School C which showed an increase in student achievement and decrease in discipline referrals while performing only 22 classroom walk-through observations over the time studied. That amount of classroom walk-through observations does not provide support for the teachers in instructional strategies or classroom management. Another problem is that there is no follow up or feedback given to the teachers to assist in classroom management or improve instructional delivery or strategies. The ABC School District does not have a specific approach to providing feedback, which presents the item of feedback as a limitation.

This time-efficient approach to gathering instructional data could, however, provide a system of informing teachers in regards to best practices and the current reality of instructional effectiveness if utilized effectively. This could be achieved by (a) staff development on performing the evaluations and the use of the observation form, (b) a routine and consistent way of observing classrooms, (c) a systematic approach to providing the teacher with feedback, (d) presentations to staff of data analysis, (e) observation data to drive staff development for teachers, and (f) evaluation and modifications to the observation forms to address limitations.

While there were many potentially beneficial outcomes to classroom walk-through observations, a few concerns existed that could have been preventing the observations from providing an efficient systematic tool to improve teaching and learning. I will now discuss some areas of education that I feel should be of major emphasis when performing classroom walk-through observations. From the school climate-centered perspective, I have identified three main topics including classroom

expectations, differentiated instruction, and feedback. Through discussion of research findings and opinion from an administrative perspective, I will offer some insight as to why these topics are important, along with how these topics should be presented and made evident in the classroom. In addition, I intend to offer suggestions for improvement to the classroom walk-through observation form as approaches to promoting these topics.

While the data analyzed in this study suggests the possibility that a correlation exists, there are multiple other district initiatives that have taken place also designed to promote best practices in teaching and learning. The impact of all or a few of them combined may be what has triggered a trend of academic improvement at the middle school level as measured by state tests. Over the years studied, the district implemented some new major initiatives such as, High Achievement For All, which is a district wide task force that discusses racial injustices and Culturally Responsive Training, which is an ongoing staff development designed to bring to light the art of accepting and teaching African American students, conducted by Dr. Sharroky Hollie, and Professional Learning Communities, with an emphasis on the work of Robert Marzano and his teaching strategies collaboration and intervention. Many additional initiatives have also been implemented such as: Algebra for All, Tungsten, Academic labs, and summer reading and transition programs, so it is difficult to say that any one in particular is the reason for academic gains. More likely, it is a combination of all efforts to improve teaching and learning.

Classroom Expectations

Disruptive behavior can often lead to the loss of instructional time while creating a classroom that is not conducive to learning (Pearson Education Development Group, n.d.). High expectations must be held for all teachers and students. A professional staff member will believe that all children can learn and achieve at high levels, and will strive to provide each child with the same educational opportunities as they would want for their own child. From that point on, everyone must do whatever it takes to ensure success for all students, by all means necessary. So, how do we gauge whether or not a teacher believes that all children can learn at high levels? The walk-through observation gets administrators into the classroom, but this does not give them insight into the teachers' perceptions. While administrators can never say for certain how an individual feels, we can examine their relationships with students, incentives and interventions provided to students through observation. We can then further promote high expectations by addressing our observations and having courageous conversations about teaching, learning, and student outcomes.

What a teacher does during the first few class sessions can have a major impact on that classroom for the remainder of the school year. "Students learn best in student-centered classrooms where they are actively involved not only with the subject matter but also with their classmates and their teachers" (Center for Teaching Effectiveness, n.d., para. 2). It is important to develop that type of atmosphere from the onset of class. Classroom walk-through observations should be done frequently at the beginning of each school year to ensure that this philosophy is supported.

All students are different. All people in general are different. It is important to be sensitive to individual differences. Quality teaching will meet the needs of students by varying the rate, amount, and nature of the instruction. Students are more likely to participate when they feel comfortable with their teacher and feel that their teacher considers their needs.

Students should be fully aware of the teacher's expectations after the first day of class. Setting the tone from the onset of class can make a huge difference in the way that the students behave and the choices they make in the classroom. Teachers should provide a specific set of classroom rules and expectations that all students must follow (Center for Teaching Effectiveness, n.d., para. 8). The standard classroom rules and consequences should be revisited regularly with the students to allow them input. Does the teacher have a set of classroom rules and expectations posted and frequently revisited in the classroom? Does the teacher allow students to have input in to what the rules are and the consequences that follow? Does the teacher have a systematic way of dealing with class disruptions? These are all questions that s administrators, should be evaluating, discussing with, and asking of our teachers.

Teachers should also be available to offer assistance to students both before and after class in addition to the regular scheduled class. Most often, this extra time would have to be scheduled before or after school, which is the most effective, or simply by brief conversation during passing time and supervision. Teacher availability builds relationships and assists in creating a positive climate. Students feel more comfortable asking questions and expressing concerns on an individual basis as opposed to in front of the entire class (Center for Teaching Effectiveness, n.d., para. 10).

Teachers must create a safe environment for student participation. All students need to feel smart and feel that they are offered opportunities for success. Students who make negative comments towards others need to be confronted. “Teachers should reinforce positive participation for those who add to the productivity of the classroom” (Center for Teaching Effectiveness, n.d., para. 12).

Many would agree that subject matter should be taught from the first day of class, to show the students that the subject matter is important. “Teachers should set the tone by enlisting student interest, inviting participation, and building a sense of classroom community” (Center for Teaching Effectiveness, n.d., para. 19). This approach, along with setting classroom expectations both academically and behaviorally should enhance the climate and improve teaching and learning. The ABC School District classroom walk-through observation form had no item to identify classroom rules posted or enforced and no way of evaluating discipline situations that occur.

Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction is an in-depth approach to providing all students with options to learn. “To differentiate instruction is to recognize students varying background knowledge, readiness, language, preferences in learning, interests, and to react responsively” (Hall, 2002, p. 1). This form of instruction goes well beyond the act of simply stating the routine or agenda for the day. “There are simply too many differences among students for a teacher to be able to teach all of them the same thing at the same time” (Center for Teaching Effectiveness, n.d., para. 2). To truly utilize differentiated instruction, teachers must completely value and respect all aspects of learning including meaningful choice (Benjamin, 2006). Many times, students need to be provided with

choices. Students need learning choices that encourage them to make a commitment to learning through self-determination.

Differentiation depends on whether or not a teacher provides a classroom environment full of ritual and variety. “There is no one size fits all prescription for education, yet that is exactly what most students receive in a public school” (Education-Portal, 2007, para. 7). Students can become more excited about learning, and furthermore, find themselves engaged in the lesson if offered choices in learning opportunities. Providing a differentiated experience will spark excitement and enjoyment among the students in the classroom.

In order for a school to fully embrace and facilitate differentiated instruction, the principal and other leaders of the building must value a variety of assessments. This includes assessments outside of traditional tests and quizzes. Students who are graded on different criteria, such as performance events, scoring guides, peer and self- assessments, may meet or exceed expectations as opposed to criterion-referenced tests where they often find themselves less successful. Teachers will offer a variety of activities, projects, and assessments if they are truly following the path of differentiated instruction. Soon, all involved will see the benefits and student growth in the learning outcomes related to such accommodations. The students will be more likely to experience success through a broad spectrum of personal expression.

Planning and paperwork can be overwhelming and lead to burn out for many teachers. Attempting to differentiate instruction is just one more thing added to the multitude of expectations placed on teachers. Meeting the needs of all children is no easy task. Differentiated instruction can be very time-consuming and demanding. In order to

encourage this type of classroom environment, the building needs to provide teachers with strategic team and department planning times throughout the day. “This does not mean conversations in the copy room or having lunch together” (Benjamin, 2006, p. 59). Of course this time must be planned, focused, and structured in order to meet the professional demands of the teachers. This common planning time will encourage teachers to communicate, collaborate, build relationships, and avoid teaching in isolation.

> The professional isolation of teachers limits access to new ideas and better solutions, drives stress inward to fester and accumulate, fails to recognize and praise success, and permits incompetence to exist and persist to the detriment of students, colleagues and teachers themselves. (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996, p. 5)

This theory aligns perfectly with that of Professional Learning Communities. Just to name a few benefits, Professional Learning Communities allow time to plan for differentiated instruction, develop common assessments, build ongoing professional conversation, and collaboratively assess and design teaching to reach a common goal.

Student discussion, engagement, and what can sometimes appear to be chaotic activity needs to be embraced by principals when they walk into a differentiated classroom. This is often awkward, but is actually a good indicator that the teacher is providing an interactive, dynamic, and communicative environment for kids to interact, learn, and grow academically. Not all differentiated instruction lessons will end with exact closure. This will provide open-ended thinking and conversation in addition to promoting higher-level individual thinking.

Taking risks is a major part of establishing a differentiated classroom. Principals and administrators must support teachers in their efforts to venture outside of the norm

and also away from their own comfort level. Leaders should act as resources and value that role immensely. A good leader should communicate openly, provide feedback frequently, and open themselves up to support teachers in their efforts to improve teaching and learning in their classroom. Also, educators should support one another and use each other as a resource, making learning a good experience for all children. I see differentiated instruction as a necessity for ensuring that all students achieve, whereas The ABC School District classroom walk-through observation form simply asks for a response of whether or not differentiated instruction was observed. This presents a limitation to the potential effectiveness of the observation process, as it provides no further information as to the differentiated strategies utilized, and so provides no constructive feedback to the teacher.

Feedback to Teachers

It is a leader's responsibility to provide staff with not just feedback, but effective feedback and communication. "Effective feedback (1) can be heard by the receiver, (2) keeps the relationship intact, open and healthy, and (3) validates the feedback process for future interactions" (Haas Center for Public Service, n.d., para. 1). Effective feedback can be both positive and negative. Feedback can create a constructive way to communicate strengths and weaknesses that can ultimately assist in improving job performance and outcomes. The following are ten tips for giving effective feedback (Brodie, 2007).

1. Catch people doing things right
2. Look for the signals that the employee wants feedback
3. Feedback as early as possible
4. Focus on behaviors

5. Avoid feedback that cannot be acted upon
6. Check the feedback is understood
7. Give the opportunity to the other party to discuss how the feedback might be improved
8. Use non-threatening language
9. Be a role model
10. Set up a date for follow up. (Brodie, 2007, pp. 1-3)

When providing feedback, the administrator should focus on the behavior rather than the person and establish an understanding of the effect that their behavior has on others, while being descriptive of specific behaviors. Providing feedback allows leaders to establish and maintain two-way communication with others while providing valuable information. The problem with the ABC classroom walk-through observation process is that it provides no systematic opportunity for productive feedback. “Feedback matters. The only way for people to get better at what they do is for the people they work for to provide candid, timely performance evaluations” (Imperato, 2007, para. 4). One suggestion is that teachers should receive feedback from their students and colleagues, as well as self-evaluation. Regardless of where it comes from, feedback should be frequent and timely in order to be more effective.

The ABC School District classroom walk-through observation form provides no platform system of providing such a beneficial piece of improvement as feedback. Quality feedback provides the possibility to strengthen teachers as professionals as well as build relationships with their supervisors. “Any educational reform strategy that improves relationships has a chance of succeeding; any strategy that does not is doomed

to fail" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998, p. 90). Many attempts at educational reform often end up failing. Fullan and Hargreaves list some reasons for the failure of attempted educational reform.

1. The problems themselves are too complex, and not easily amenable to solutions given the resources at hand.
2. Time lines are unrealistic because policy-makers want immediate results.
3. There are tendencies toward faddism and quick-fix solutions.
4. Structural solutions (eg. redefining the curriculum, increasing assessment and testing) are often preferred, but they do not get at underlying issues of instruction and teacher development.
5. Follow through support systems for implementing policy initiatives are not provided.
6. Many strategies not only fail to motivate teachers to implement improvements but also alienate them further from participating in reform. (p. 13)

Attempts at school reform must be well thought out, designed appropriately, and constantly evaluated in order to be effective.

Recommendations

Staff development in the area of classroom observations is a must for all school administrators who utilize this tool. In particular, it is crucial to train administrators on such a tool as the classroom walk-through observation form. It is very important that all individuals using this form interpret it in the same way to avoid discrepancies. Besides knowing how to use the form itself, training in how to interpret and then relay the data to teachers should also be addressed. Ideally, staff development for teachers would stem

from the evaluations of strengths and weaknesses throughout each school building based on the observation data in relation to teacher and student performance.

The observation form itself also has some items that need to be addressed. For instance, one item that needs to be added to the form is assessments. There is no instructional item on the form to indicate any form of assessment such as quiz, test, or common assessment. The lack of that information that the current classroom walk-through observation form provides could potentially skew the data because it indicates that no classroom activity occurred during the time observed. There also needs to be more elaboration on differentiated instruction efforts and classroom expectations set forth and followed through with by the teacher. My primary recommendation would be to survey the principals and assistant principals, those who actually use the classroom walk-through observation form, and make necessary adjustments to improve this process. The action plan to improve the classroom walk-through observation process and the revision of the classroom walk-through observation form could be at the forefront of academic improvement for all schools (see Figure 14).

There are many of inconsistencies in who observes what classrooms and even how often each classroom is observed. Observations should be assigned to administrators with a purpose to establish routine and consistency. A team of administrators, no more than two or three should visit the classroom at the same time. This will give a more accurate snapshot of the teaching and learning environment observed from multiple perspectives.

Summary

Public schools have been considered on a downward spiral for many years, judging by supposedly standardized test scores. Regardless of the criteria by which they are evaluated, whether or not we agree, schools are in the spotlight of the media more than ever before. State testing initiated by the federal government has exploited many weaknesses among nearly every school in the country but offered very little in the support of improving teaching and learning to promote positive gains in academic achievement. We must wonder if this is simply a government ploy to blame teachers rather than offering the necessary funding and other educational assistance in order to promote academic gains for all students and take on some form of accountability as well. The ABC School District put forth the initiative to improve the education that all of their students receive and refuses to accept the label of "failing" or "in need of improvement." The district believes that all children can learn at high levels when given the proper environment and learning opportunities to do so.

Although some form of teacher and classroom observations has existed since the beginning of schools, there has only been formal and very informal ways of observing teachers without fully analyzing and determining instructional effectiveness. The classroom walk-through observations have just recently caught on as a timely and effective way of gauging instruction effectiveness. When these observations are performed in a systematic way and used for data driven decision-making, including staff development opportunities in teaching strategies and classroom climate, and providing productive teacher feedback, instructional climate and academic outcomes will improve.

Following my initial investigation, I decided to develop an action plan for school improvement that incorporated a revised classroom walk-through observation instrument.

Action Plan: ***ABC School District School Improvement Strategies:*** *Goal #1.*

Statement. Implement a teacher observation system that is time efficient for administrators and produces supportive data for instructional improvement, staff development decisions, and timely teacher feedback.

Area. Teacher performance.

Core belief. With the proper support and tools, teachers can improve their teaching strategies and improve student achievement.

Strategies. Form a group of teachers and administrators to (a) research current educational studies to determine effective teaching practices, (b) survey teachers and administrators to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the ABC classroom walk-through observation form, (c) align the current classroom walk-through observation form with finding from current research of effective teaching practices and survey results, (d) establish a system of classrooms to be visited on a scheduled basis, (e) determine how feedback will be presented to the teacher in a timely manner, (f) determine how feedback will be presented to the staff as a whole, and (g) develop a team that will analyze observation data and determine staff development opportunities.

Individuals responsible.

1. Superintendent
2. Assistant Superintendents
3. Principals
4. Assistant Principals

5. Teachers

Monitoring activities.

1. Monthly observation results reported to each building to be presented to staff.
2. Survey the teachers and administrators again at the end of the year to compare to initial survey.
3. Provide a list of staff development opportunities that have been provided as a result of the observation data.

Benchmark.

1. Two point increase in MAP scores in Communication Arts and Math.
2. 20% decrease in the number of discipline referrals.
3. 25% decrease in the number of students in summer school.
4. 25% decrease in the number of students retained.

Expected outcomes. To improve our system of performing classroom walk-through observations so that they may guide our staff development decisions to meet the needs of the teachers and students.

As a part of this project, I created a classroom walk-through observation form that includes the most important items to me as an assistant principal (see Figure 15). The first main item on the form is the lesson objective. When I walk into a classroom, I want to know that the teacher has a "big idea" behind the lesson and know what they want to reinforce with the students. The lesson objective should be expressed both verbally and written. After the objective is covered, it is crucial that the lesson aligns with the objective.

The next item on the observation form includes the instructional strategies utilized during the observation. I felt this section was important to determine the presentation and potentially the effectiveness of the instructional delivery. After the instructional strategies section, there is a brief reflection to elaborate on the instructional delivery.

The next item on the observation form is the DOK. The DOK level matches the one used by DESE. The DOK level may vary throughout the lesson. Vandeven (2006) lists the DOK levels as:

1. Level 1-Recall
2. Level 2-Skill/Concept
3. Level 3- Strategic Thinking
4. Level 3-Strategic Thinking
5. Level 4-Extended Thinking

I find the DOK level particularly important as it indicates whether or not students are being challenged to higher order thinking skills.

The next item on the observation form is student engagement. A brief visual survey of the students in the classroom will provide this. Students are either on task or off task. The high level should indicate 90% or above on task. The moderate level should indicate 75-89% on task. The low level should indicate 50-74% on task. The disengaged level indicates below 50% on task.

The next item is classroom environment. It is critical to the learning process that the classroom conditions are conducive to learning. This includes student behavior and the physical attributes to the classroom.

The next item is for a summary of the observation. This section provides an opportunity to briefly discuss any other pertinent information that is not identified on the observation form but may be important to improving teaching and learning. This section can provide for valuable reflection, conversation, and feedback.

The last item on the form is setting up an appointment for the feedback to the teacher. The ABC School District's form is missing this vital piece. The new form will have a date and time for the feedback session. The feedback session should be brief, but it is important that it occurs.

School _____Grade_____Date_____

Teacher_____Observer_____

Lesson Objective

- Verbally stated or posted	Yes	No
- Instruction is aligned with objective	Yes	No

Instructional Strategies

Identifying Similarities and Differences	Yes	No
Summarizing and Note Taking	Yes	No
Homework and Practice	Yes	No
Learning Groups	Yes	No
Generating and Testing Hypothesis	Yes	No
Cues, Questions, and Advance Organizers	Yes	No
Differentiated Instruction	Yes	No

Other _____

*Description of Instructional Delivery*_____
_____

DOK Level 1 2 3 4

Form of Assessment Test Quiz Common Assessment

Student Engagement High Moderate Low Disengaged

Classroom Environment Conducive Somewhat Conducive Not Conducive

*Summary of Walk-through Observation*_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Teacher/Observer Discussion Appointment

Date _____*Time*_____

*Teacher Comments/ Signature:*_____*Date:*_____
_____
_____

Figure 14. MW School District Classroom Walk-through Observation Form.

When I sent a copy of my new instrument to my colleagues for comment, Leslie McEntire (personal communication, 2009) responded with the following:

> This form follows along closely with the ABC School District's form. Your form is much more user friendly and would be easy to complete in such a short amount of time. The extra information gathered can go into the comment section.

Tom Sorensen (personal communication, 2009) responded:

> I like the clarity of the form, however, I would be interested in a place for administrators to gauge overall interactions between the teacher and students, both positive and negative. This could be related to the classroom being conducive to learning.

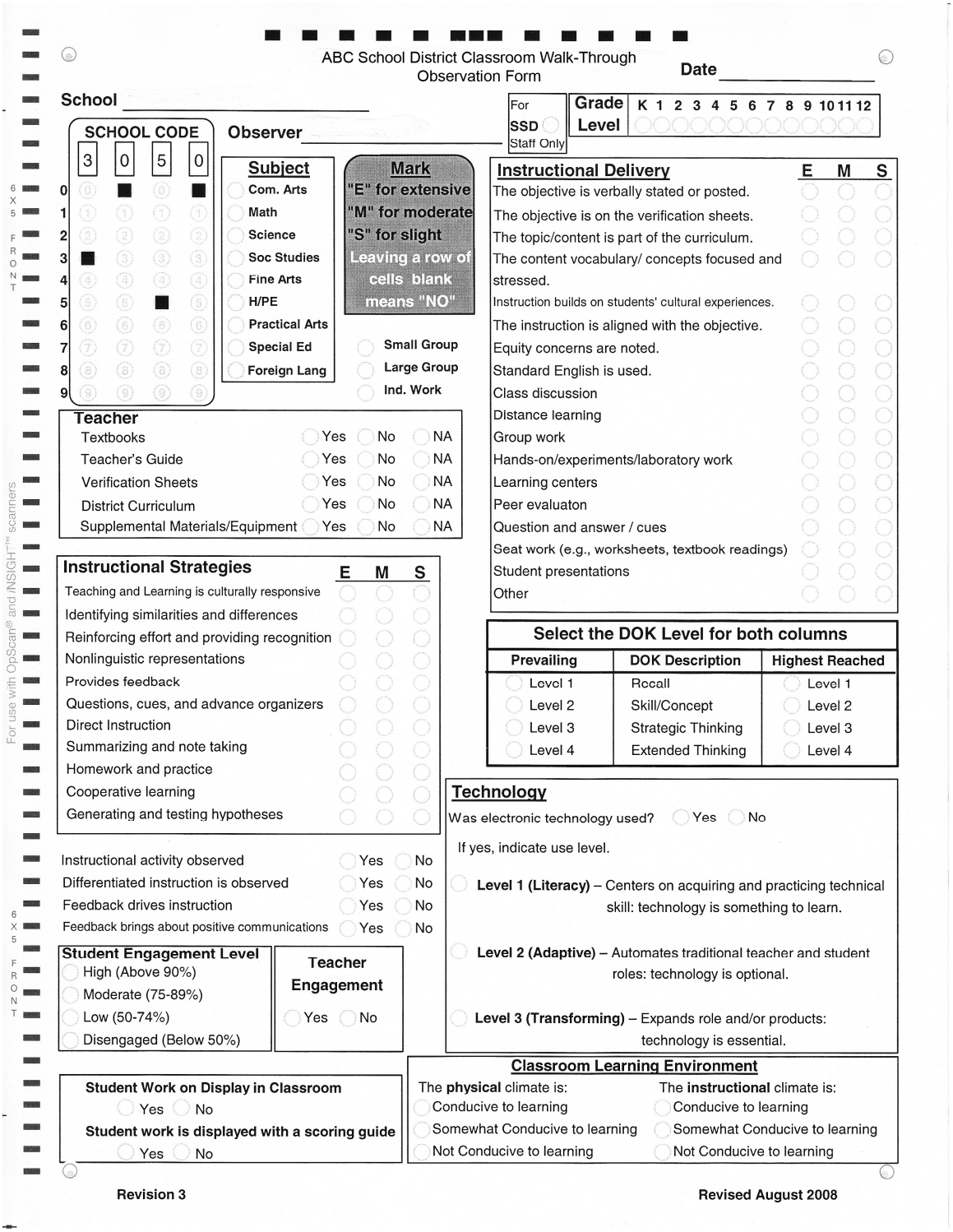
Dr. Vandenberg (personal communication, 2009) commented:

The form looks nice with some good detail, but should offer a place for teachers to comment after the discussion appointment. Since the biggest missing piece to the existing form is the lack of communication and feedback given to teachers.

Concluding this research study, I would like to report my findings from an administrative perspective. I believe there is a possible correlation between the number of ABC School District classroom walk-through observations and the dependent variables, although possible limitations still exist. Despite the statistical questions, I am confident that using the classroom walk-through observations as part of a school improvement is potentially a good idea. Therefore, the observation process could be beneficial if revised and used systematically to overcome these limitations to improve teaching and learning practices and outcomes.

Appendix A

ABC School District Classroom Walk-through Observation Form



ABC School District Classroom Walk-Through Observation Form

Date _____

School _____

For SSD Staff Only

Grade Level K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

SCHOOL CODE 3 0 5 0

Observer _____

Subject
- Com. Arts
- Math
- Science
- Soc Studies
- Fine Arts
- H/PE
- Practical Arts
- Special Ed
- Foreign Lang

Mark
"E" for extensive
"M" for moderate
"S" for slight
Leaving a row of cells blank means "NO"

- Small Group
- Large Group
- Ind. Work

Teacher

Textbooks	Yes	No	NA
Teacher's Guide	Yes	No	NA
Verification Sheets	Yes	No	NA
District Curriculum	Yes	No	NA
Supplemental Materials/Equipment	Yes	No	NA

Instructional Delivery

	E	M	S
The objective is verbally stated or posted.			
The objective is on the verification sheets.			
The topic/content is part of the curriculum.			
The content vocabulary/ concepts focused and stressed.			
Instruction builds on students' cultural experiences.			
The instruction is aligned with the objective.			
Equity concerns are noted.			
Standard English is used.			
Class discussion			
Distance learning			
Group work			
Hands-on/experiments/laboratory work			
Learning centers			
Peer evaluaton			
Question and answer / cues			
Seat work (e.g., worksheets, textbook readings)			
Student presentations			
Other			

Instructional Strategies

	E	M	S
Teaching and Learning is culturally responsive			
Identifying similarities and differences			
Reinforcing effort and providing recognition			
Nonlinguistic representations			
Provides feedback			
Questions, cues, and advance organizers			
Direct Instruction			
Summarizing and note taking			
Homework and practice			
Cooperative learning			
Generating and testing hypotheses			

Select the DOK Level for both columns

Prevailing	DOK Description	Highest Reached
Level 1	Recall	Level 1
Level 2	Skill/Concept	Level 2
Level 3	Strategic Thinking	Level 3
Level 4	Extended Thinking	Level 4

Instructional activity observed	Yes	No
Differentiated instruction is observed	Yes	No
Feedback drives instruction	Yes	No
Feedback brings about positive communications	Yes	No

Technology

Was electronic technology used? Yes No

If yes, indicate use level.

- **Level 1 (Literacy)** – Centers on acquiring and practicing technical skill: technology is something to learn.
- **Level 2 (Adaptive)** – Automates traditional teacher and student roles: technology is optional.
- **Level 3 (Transforming)** – Expands role and/or products: technology is essential.

Student Engagement Level
- High (Above 90%)
- Moderate (75-89%)
- Low (50-74%)
- Disengaged (Below 50%)

Teacher Engagement
Yes No

Student Work on Display in Classroom
Yes No

Student work is displayed with a scoring guide
Yes No

Classroom Learning Environment

The **physical** climate is:	The **instructional** climate is:
Conducive to learning	Conducive to learning
Somewhat Conducive to learning	Somewhat Conducive to learning
Not Conducive to learning	Not Conducive to learning

Revision 3

Revised August 2008

For use with OpScan® and iNSIGHT™ scanners

6 X 5 FRONT

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Vitaé

Mark J. Weller currently serves his fifth year as assistant principal for Ferguson Middle School in the Ferguson-Florissant School District. Prior to assistant principal, teaching experiences included six years as Physical Education and Health teacher. Specific areas of interest are student discipline, rapport and relationships, and data management.

Educational studies have resulted in a Bachelor of Science Degree in Physical Education from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, a Master of Arts in Educational Administration from Lindenwood University, and a Doctor of Education Degree from Lindenwood University.