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Balanced School Calendar (BSC)

Teacher and Administrator Perceptions of a Balanced School  
Calendar and its Effects on Students in Poverty

Christopher S. Smith

March 31, 2009

A Capstone submitted to  
The Education Faculty of Lindenwood University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of  
Doctor of Education  
School of Education

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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

Full Legal Name: Christopher S. Smith

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

*Christopher Smith*


Date: \_\_\_\_\_

8-4-09


TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS OF A BALANCED SCHOOL  
CALENDAR AND ITS EFFECTS ON STUDENTS IN POVERTY

Christopher S. Smith


This capstone has been approved as partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education  
At Lindenwood University by the School of Education

  
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Aug 4, 2009  
Date

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I would like to acknowledge the patience and support of all my friends and family, which has been fundamental to me during this educational endeavor. After graduating high school I was content with being done with school, however, thanks to the encouragement of my family I continued. Now, after an undergraduate degree and three advanced degrees I am able to look back and appreciate the support and encouragement of my family to continue my education.

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Finally, I would like to thank my research partner, Kevin Huffman. Year-Round education started as a vague thought in the back of our minds as something we would like to learn more about. And now, after a year of researching, trips to California, and numerous interviews year-round education may just keep the doors of the Robberson Elementary, the school we both care for so much, open for many years to come.

DEDICATION

*I want to dedicate this Capstone  
to my Grandmother (Catheryn) Higdon.  
Who, during all my struggles in school reminded  
me every day that drive and determination  
are every bit as important (if not more) as ability.*

Teacher and Administrator Perceptions of a Balanced School  
Calendar and its Effects on Students in Poverty

by

Christopher S. Smith

*Abstract*

The creation of this study came out of a need to increase achievement and support services for students living in poverty in the selected school district in Missouri. Due to the large amount of academic regression over the long summer break and the lack of consistent support services for students who live in poverty, a Balanced School Calendar (BSC) was investigated. The researchers conducted surveys and interviews to assess the level of support from parents, teachers, and administrators for a BSC school choice program as an option for implementation at a K-5 elementary school in the selected school district in Missouri. The findings of this study show that there is a significant difference in the perceptions of administrators and teachers about the concept of a BSC, especially in the areas of regression, discipline, support services, teacher stress, relationship building, and willingness to teach in a BSC school.

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*Abstract*

The creation of this study came out of a need to increase achievement and support services for students living in poverty in the selected school district in Missouri. Due to the large amount of academic regression over the long summer break and the lack of consistent support services for students who live in poverty, a Balanced School Calendar (BSC) was investigated. The researchers conducted surveys and interviews to assess the level of support from parents, teachers, and administrators for a BSC school choice program as an option for implementation at a K-5 elementary school in the selected school district in Missouri. The findings of this study show that there is a significant difference in the perceptions of administrators and teachers about the concept of a BSC, especially in the areas of regression, discipline, support services, teacher stress, relationship building, and willingness to teach in a BSC school.

## CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

After the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, the need for a free, appropriate education surfaced. Consequently, the traditional nine-month school calendar was created (Wildman, 1999). This nine-month calendar was designed to meet the growing need for an educated work force for business in conjunction with the families' needs to have children home helping on the farm (Hartman, 2006). As the twentieth century ended, the country moved away from agriculture and turned in the direction of factory production. This created more free time than the American family had previously experienced. Families with school-age children filled the summer months with family travel, summer camps, summer play, and summer reading programs (Wildman, 1999).

The three summer months, which were once seen as a haven of leisure for students and families in the 1950's, are no longer the reality enjoyed today. In a personal interview with Juan Romo, principal of the Golden Hill Elementary School, San Diego California (2007), he stated, "For many students today, summers are dangerous times where many unsupervised hours are spent with other youth.

Students who are very young are engaging in activities which are far from academic and don't represent the 'Norman Rockwell' America we all like to think exists for our children."

The theory of having an abundance of free time for the American family sounds desirable. However, for families in poverty, enriching summer activities do not often occur (Payne, 2002). For example, families from affluent communities are three times more likely to visit libraries or book stores than their counterparts who live in poverty (Bracey, 2002). During this long break, many children in poverty never open a book, visit a library, or take a family vacation. For children in poverty this long break causes a major regression in the academic progress made during the prior year. This regression has been documented and quantified. "On average, children's grade level equivalents on achievement test scores was at least one month lower when they returned to school in the fall than when they left in the spring" (Borman & Boulay, 1998). According to Borman & Boulay in their book *Summer Learning*, the widening achievement gap between social economic groups lends support to the contention that schools magnify the inequities by rein, forcing outside sources of disadvantages, which, of course, puts children living in

poverty at an extreme disadvantage. Children in poverty do not visit libraries, bookstores, or participate in other enriching activities to the extent of children who come from families with the financial resources, time, and support to take advantage of these enriching activities (Borman, Boulay, 1998). The Balanced School Calendar (BSC) curriculum, however, can provide enrichment and/or assistance programs both during the school term and the short breaks between terms. One such example comes from the Cambridge-Isanti School District with, in a personal interview (J. Anderson, personal interview, November, 2008), Jill Anderson stated, "During the breaks between terms, which are call intercessions, students can get special help. Community Education also provides popular field trips for which families pay fees."

Brent Davies and Trevor Kerry revealed more troubling facts about the summer learning loss from the Cooper & Valentine Study (Cooper, Valentine, Charlton, & Barnett, 2003).

- At best, students show little or no academic growth over the summer; and at worst they lose, on average, between one (1) and three (3) months of learning.
- Summer learning loss is greatest in mathematics.

- Computation and spelling are the individual skills more affected by overly long summer breaks.
- Factual and procedural knowledge is more prone to decay than conceptual understanding.
- Summer vacation increases the disparities between middle class and disadvantaged students' reading scores.
- The detrimental effect of the summer vacation appears to increase in line with grade level up to grade seven (7) and eight (8) (12 and 13 year olds).

In addition to academic repercussions, when schools follow a traditional calendar, children in poverty will spend an entire summer without consistent meals, physical activities, medical attention, and proper supervision. Therefore, the traditional calendar does not meet the needs of students, especially those in poverty (Robinson, 2001). It is the rationale of the researchers that the implementation of a balanced school calendar (a calendar that rotates nine weeks of instruction followed by a three week break) is one option of Year-Round Education (YRE) for it will limit the regression of academic skills over the summer, allow year-round access to much needed social and



medical programs, provide an increase in overall academic achievement, and help resolve the problem of inadequate supervision.

BSC has become increasingly popular in the United States with more than 2500 schools in 41 states implementing some form of BSC (Davidson, Seo, Davenport, Butterbaugh, and Davidson, 2004). With the fragile nature of children in poverty and the increasing pressure for schools serving children in poverty to have high accountability, many school districts are turning to a BSC to ensure curriculum efficiency and improve student achievement. There is also escalating financial pressure on school districts, which forces them to consider more efficient use of existing physical facilities. Because of these pressures, school administrators are reevaluating a BSC and multi-track school calendar model.

#### *Purpose of the Study*

It was the purpose of this study to provide a review of the current literature and to survey teachers and administrators to obtain their perceptions of a BSC. The extended purpose of this study is to obtain information that will be presented to the School Board and Administration of the selected school district in Missouri. Armed with the information contained in this study, the

administration can make an informed decision as to the implementation of a balanced school calendar choice within the district. Also contained within the parameters of this study are the aspects of students, poverty, administrators, teachers, and achievement.

Due to the action research nature of this project, the researchers collaborated heavily throughout this Capstone. Further, because the extended purpose of this study is the possible implementation of a BSC in the selected School District, the researchers took two separate avenues of study that are defined in chapter four. Researcher 'A' focused on teacher perceptions and willingness to teach in a BSC school. Researcher 'B' investigated the concept of a BSC from the perspective of administrators. Upon completion of this study, it was the intent of the researchers to present the findings to the Board of Education of the selected school district to give them a well-rounded viewpoint of a BSC. The researchers had the authorization from both district administration and the Board of Education to pursue this endeavor of BSC implementation.

This study provides both advantages and disadvantages of a BSC and the implementation of a balanced school calendar. This study is based on scholarly literature and

is supported by a mixed design method using both quantitative and qualitative research. The quantitative data comes from surveys that were furnished to administrators and teachers to gather their perceptions of a BSC and their willingness to work in a school implementing that type of calendar. The qualitative portions of this study were gleaned from interviews and documents collected from administrators and teachers who currently work in a BSC as well as other experts in their respective fields.

Definitions of terminology used in this report are included as well to help give a more complete understanding of a BSC. An appendix section listing survey questions, various charts and tables, and chapters four and five of the co-researcher is included to strengthen the understanding of the study. Also, at the end of the report there will be an all-encompassing bibliography/reference section to help future researchers explore areas of personal relevance in greater depth. It is the intention of the researchers that the contents found in this report will contribute to the determination, evaluation, and implementation of a BSC at their particular elementary school in the selected school district.

*Conceptual Underpinnings*

In reviewing the research in the area of a BSC, it has been found that this approach to scheduling offers many measurable academic, psychological, social, and physiological advantages. According to Educational Services Institute (2000) study of Kentucky school districts implementing YRE models, advantages of BSC include each of the following:

- higher student self-esteem
- better attitudes towards reading and math
- lower student dropout rates

The study not only lists advantages for students attending schools implementing BSC, but also for teachers working in schools using BSC. Some of those benefits consist of the following:

- Teachers feel like they can cope better with new situations.
- Teachers report that they are less tired throughout the year because of the more frequent breaks.
- Teachers feel like they are teaching in a less stressful working environment.

After reviewing this research, it was validated that a BSC was the best course of action for the intended specific

elementary school. In this study, the position that there are many positive outcomes with a BSC will be taken. With this position in mind, the researchers will investigate a BSC to see if there is a measurable difference in the way administrators and teachers view and support a BSC.

*Statement of the Problem*

The traditional school calendar, based on nine months of school and three months of vacation, is the current practice in most American schools (Black, 2002). However, with new data-driven accountability standards as a result of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the traditional calendar is not conducive to meeting the demands of today's students (Black, 2002). Furthermore, the traditional nine-month calendar also leads to higher levels of teacher burnout, inferior student attitudes toward school, fewer curriculum inspections, and less flexibility for students to make up missed work (Mussatti, 1997). The traditional school calendar is especially challenging for students in poverty. Not only do students in poverty have an academic lapse, but they also do not receive vital basic needs such as consistent meals and medical attention for the duration of the summer. Knowing the dearth of issues facing students in poverty, the concept of a BSC seemed a plausible and important line of study.

*Purpose of the Study*

It is the purpose of this study to review the research on the positive outcomes that come with the implementation of a BSC, especially as it pertains to high poverty schools. Schools employing a BSC have seen robust gains in student achievement (Cooper, et al., 2003). With this in mind, this study examined teacher support of a BSC and the willingness of teachers to work in a school that is implementing a BSC. Also, this study examined administrators' perceptions of a BSC school and its effects on students and teachers.

*Proposed Research:*

1. Frequency and response to each research question by Likert scale of teachers and administrators currently in the teaching profession
2. A survey of teachers to determine how and to what degree they would support and be willing to teach in a school implementing a BSC
3. A survey of administrators to determine their perceptions of a BSC school

*Research Questions*

1. Is there a difference in the level of support teachers would give to a BSC when compared to the level of support teachers would give to a traditional calendar school?
2. Is there a difference when comparing administrators' perceptions of a BSC to administrators' perceptions of a traditional calendar school?

*Null-Hypothesis*

There is no difference in teacher or administrator perceptions of a BSC and its effects on students in poverty when compared to teacher and administrator perceptions of a traditional calendar.

*Definitions of Terms*

*Balanced school calendar.* A calendar that has been arranged to have 45 days of school followed by 15 days of vacation

*Dual-track.* Schedule that incorporates one traditional track and one year-round track simultaneously

*Intersession/off-track/vacation.* These are designated days wherein students or teachers are not in school

*Intersession* (literally, between sessions). Period for scheduled summer school

*Multiple-track/multi-track.* Tracks into which the student body is divided. The instructional and vacation periods of each track are staggered so that at least one track (group) is on vacation at all times. This plan is often utilized in overcrowded schools. It can increase capacity up to 50%. It also alleviates the need to build costly new buildings and saves on operating cost of those new buildings.

*Non title-school.* School where 44% or fewer of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch

*On-Track.* Days students and teachers are in school

*Single-Track.* All students and teachers in the school attend classes and have vacations on the same schedule. It is not meant to save space but is used primarily to provide consistent periods of instruction

*Track.* Organized sequence of days in school and on vacation to which a student or teacher has requested assignment or is assigned

*Traditional Calendar.* School calendar where students meet between 170-180 calendar days divided over nine months beginning in August/September and ending in May/June

*Title-I School.* School where 45% or more of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch



*Two-Track.* Similar to the multi-track option with two separate seven hour schedules in one day, one starting early in the morning and the other starting later in the day

*Year Round Education.* Reorganizing of the school year to provide continuous learning by breaking up the long summer vacation into shorter, more frequent vacations and evenly distributing the 170-180 student contact days over all twelve months

#### *Summary*

Although many different configurations of year round education are available, the researchers focused their study on the single-track model of implementation. In our review of available literature and through personal interviews, we found that other schedules (multi-track, dual-track, etc.) are employed primarily for their ability to alleviate overcrowded facilities. The single-track was examined for this study due to the potential educational and social benefits for children and families living in high poverty situations.

#### *Design of the Study*

This study was based on data provided by two surveys. One was distributed to 250 teachers teaching in Title-I schools for the selected school district. The other survey

was given to 250 principals in a Midwestern state. This study also relied on data collected through interviews conducted with principals and superintendents currently working in an urban school district in Southern California implementing BSC as well as other administrators, teachers, various professionals whose input was sought due to their particular expertise in their given field.

### *Sampling*

The teacher survey was administered to 250 educators in twenty Title-I schools located in a Midwestern state. Administrator surveys were mailed to 250 randomly selected administrators in the same Midwestern state. These administrators work in various schools across the state representing schools of different sizes and socio-economic levels. Follow-up data was also gathered through personal interviews with administrators and other practitioners from the same Midwestern state.

### *Instrument*

Teacher surveys were given to educators in Title-I schools in the selected school district. Administrator surveys were mailed to 250 administrators in a Midwestern state. These surveys assessed teachers' and administrators' perceptions of a BSC in the areas of student achievement, student discipline issues, and teaching opportunities,

among other areas. Additionally, teachers were surveyed concerning their willingness to work in a BSC school. A list of the survey questions is included in the appendix.

#### *Data Analysis*

Teacher surveys were administered during school staff meetings. Administrator surveys were mailed. After the surveys were collected, A Statistical Program (ASP) software was used to obtain the Chi Square, difference, and P-Value to interpret the responses and reject the null-hypothesis.

#### *Anticipated Benefits*

The anticipated benefits of this study are to, first, help teachers and administrators better understand the concept of a BSC and how a BSC can improve the educational and social opportunities of students living in poverty. Next, the researchers want to educate teachers and administrators about a BSC. Also, it is the plan of the researchers to inform the Board of Education (BOE) of the selected school district of the benefits and need for BSC schools and help them implement BSC as a school choice program for the district.

Finally, it is the aspiration of the researchers to be able to implement a BSC at their elementary school, a PreK-

5<sup>th</sup> grade elementary building located in a Midwestern state. The specific elementary school is a small, neighborhood school with a population of approximately 275 students. The school serves a population where approximately 90% receive a free or reduced lunch. Along with the high poverty rate, the school also has one of the highest concentrations of minority students in the selected school district. Over the long summer break, many of the students who attend this elementary school go without consistent meals, medical attention, and physical activity. The researchers feel that if a BSC can be implemented, the time students go without these services will be lessened.

#### *Limitations*

This study was limited in its application by focusing only on Title-I schools. It was the objective of the researchers to heighten the awareness within the school district of an alternative scheduling approach that might improve the educational and social opportunities for students in poverty. The assumption was made that if a BSC is beneficial for students in poverty, it would also benefit those students who are not in poverty. However, this study will not focus on the learning styles or outcomes of students who are not in poverty.

*Contribution to Education:*

The National Association for Year-Round Education (2006) identified time as the missing element in the school reform debate. Time is one of nine factors identified that increases learning (Walberg, Bakalis, & Baer 1988), and so it is necessary to include time in a theory of educational productivity (Walberg, 1984). Because of chronic stress, students and families living in poverty often have less time for academic pursuits than their counterparts who do not live in poverty. Adopting a BSC is one way to restructure learning to boost academic achievement.

Highly impoverished schools are always searching for resources to meet the educational, physical, and emotional needs of students being served. A BSC approach to education seems to be a conduit for meeting the needs of the students in poverty. Through this study, the researchers hope to further investigate the possibility of proposing a BSC approach for students to the Board of Education of an urban neighborhood school in a Midwestern State.

CHAPTER TWO  
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

*Introduction*

To be change agents for the future, educators must examine the positive possibility that there are options available that are better suited to the learning styles of our students. Taking this stance, it is imperative to then believe that what is appropriate for one demographic might not be appropriate for another. Therefore, the researchers have examined the theory of a balanced calendar from many perspectives but have concentrated the application of such a calendar on the demographic of students living in poverty. For this study, poverty will be defined as the extent in which people go without resources (Payne, 2006). The traditional nine-month calendar is an artifact of our agrarian 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century past when students worked in the fields to harvest the crops (Stenvall, 2001).

The great French Marshall Lyautey once asked his gardener to plant a tree. The gardener objected that the tree was slow growing and would not reach maturity for 100 years. Then Marshall replied, "In that case, there is no time to lose; plant it this afternoon" (Kennedy, n.d.)!

The previous quote, cited above by John F. Kennedy (n.d.), indirectly addresses the urgency of the topic of restructuring the educational calendar. Just as it takes a tree several years to reach maturity, it also takes years to reap the benefits of the education we pour into children. Jaques Barzun (n.d.) is quoted as saying "In teaching you cannot see the fruit of a day's work. It is invisible and remains so, maybe for twenty years." John W. Gardner states it similarly when he says, "Much of education today is monumentally ineffective. All too often we are giving young people cut flowers when we should be teaching them to grow their own plants" (Gardner, n.d.). If we are to reap the benefits of our efforts, we must be deliberate with the time we are investing. The following statements from *Prisoners of Time*, the 1994 study published by the National Commission of Time and Learning, reflect the need to examine the way in which educators organize instructional time for their students. By relying on time as the matrix for school organization and curriculum, we have built a learning enterprise on a foundation of sand on premises educators know to be false. Some of those assumptions are as follows:

- The assumption that students arrive at school ready to learn in the same way, on the same schedule, all in rhythm with each other.
- The pretense that because yesterday's calendar was good enough for us, it should be good enough for our children -despite major changes in larger society.
- The myth that schools can be transformed without giving teachers the time they need to retool themselves and reorganize their work.
- It is reasonable to expect "world-class academic performance" from our students within the time-bound system that is already failing them.

Clearly, the need for transformational reorganization is here (Shields, 1999). What that reorganization will look like is dependent upon the vision of those bold enough to blaze the new territories, break the old, established routines, and reframe the future (Shields, 1999).

In this review of literature, we will examine four different areas. First, the researchers will define Year Round Education and give some general background about the creation of a BSC. Next, we will explore some of the different calendar configurations that fall under the



umbrella of a BSC. Third, we will obtain a specialist's viewpoint about BSC from professionals currently working in BSC schools. And finally, we will explain how the implementation of BSC affects students living in poverty.

#### *Historical Perspective*

The prevailing school calendar used by the mainstream schools in America today grew out of a primarily agrarian society. For the purpose of this research study, that calendar will be called a traditional calendar. This school calendar was originally utilized in America to accommodate the needs of the farming community and a traditional family structure (Warrick-Harris, 1995).

To give a better understanding of the evolution of how schools have allocated time for instruction, the researchers will give a brief timeline of the development of school calendars in America. This perspective will begin with the American Colonies. Next, the researchers will examine how Congress affected school schedules, and finally, end with the emergence of Year Round Education.

John Dewey states, "Education, in its broadest sense, is the means of this social community of life" (Dewey, 1941). From the time the Pilgrims arrived at Plymouth Rock, a need for standardized education was apparent. However, due to a lack of specified guidelines, each colony was

individually responsible for its own educational system and the requirements for implementation (Barger, 2004). In most areas, townships and communities primarily operated their own schools. Many problems arose with this system including inconsistent curriculum and ill-trained teachers.

Additionally, the price to operate these small township based schools was exorbitant. For nearly 100 years, as colonies grew or faded, the township based system was the rule of the land. In an effort to consolidate schools and make education mandatory, Congress enacted the Land Ordinance of 1785 that set aside land for the establishment and maintenance of public schools. Becoming a good citizen and helping maintain a strong government was very important to Congress, and legislators knew that education played an essential role in helping students meet those goals (Barger, 2004).

As varied as America was during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, so were the academic school calendars. A typical school year would be ten months long and divided into summer and winter terms. As an example of calendar variances, in Massachusetts, for example, only girls attended school in the summer as the boys were needed to do farm work (Ballinger, 1988). As another example, in 1840, schools located in urban areas such as Philadelphia,

Detroit, and Buffalo remained open from 251 to 260 days per year (Weiss and Brown, 2003).

This varied school calendar caused many problems across the country. In response to this problem, one state, New York, passed a Code of Public Instruction in 1856 that established a minimum calendar requirement of at least six months for all state-funded schools (Weiss, & Brown, 2003). Because of this ruling and the facts that there were no compulsory education laws and State funding was based on student attendance, schools promoted summer vacation as an official part of the school calendar when absenteeism was high (Weiss, & Brown, 2003).

#### *Westward Expansion*

As the population of America migrated westward, the issue of public schools and their calendars continued to be a primary concern. The inconsistency among schools and states ran virtually unchecked. In 1872, while urban schools were open an average of 41.3 weeks a year, rural schools were only open an average of 32.4 weeks per year (Weiss, & Brown, 2003). Therefore, urban students were getting an average of nine more weeks of instruction (almost one full quarter of school) per year. The sparsely populated Midwestern states had fewer resources and fewer children to serve. To attest to this, in 1885, for example,

the state of Nebraska passed a law stating that if a town or township had more than 200 students, schools must be open for at least nine months. If the student population was 75-200, the school must be open six months, and if the student population was fewer than 75, the schools must be open three months (Weiss, & Brown, 2003). In the rural Ozarks, schools were generally situated approximately ten miles apart and served fifteen to twenty students in various grades all in one classroom. These one-room schoolhouses would typically be open from the Tuesday after Labor Day and end the Friday before Memorial Day. However, sometimes the teacher traveled among the schools and held sessions for 3-4 weeks at a time before moving on to the next school.

Throughout the United States, educational ideologies and methodologies developed differently depending on location (Barger, 2004). The early schools of the Northeast placed an emphasis on religion, while the Midwest and West believed that schools provided an educated citizenry. The South viewed education as purely a family or personal matter (Barger, 2004). A universally adopted calendar and curriculum would not occur until late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The mobility of families and the growing integration of the economy necessitated the need for a standardized

calendar. Families had to be able to transfer their children into a similar learning situation with peers of similar age. Because of this, a compromise adopting the current nine-month school calendar was adopted (Borman and Boulay 1998).

### *Time for Learning*

Educational psychologists have long held the belief that all children can learn if given enough time (Davidson, et al., 2004). The traditional school calendar utilized by a majority of American schools does not provide the additional time needed for some children to keep up with their fellow students (Davidson, et al., 2004). Researchers for the National Association for Year-Round Education (2006) proposed that modifying the current traditional academic calendar is the answer for appropriate time utilization. Many times "at-risk" students, minority students, and high-poverty students enter school without the necessary skills to achieve at mastery level and remain behind due to the lack of additional time required to address this deficiency (Davidson, et al., 2004). The National Association of Year-Round Education (2006) suggests that the issue of time utilization should be adjusted to meet the individual needs of the students rather than the administrative convenience of adults.

In the early 1990's, the National Commission on Time and Learning (1994) reported as shown in Chart 1, from the U.S. Department of Education 1993 data, that students from France, Germany, and Japan allocate twice as much time in core academics as students in the United States. As seen in Chart 1, students in the United States spend 1,400 hours in academic time compared to 3,260, 3,628, and 3,170 hours for students in France, Germany, and Japan, respectively.

Chart 1

Country	Instructional Time (In Hours)
France	3260
Germany	3628
Japan	3170
United States	1400

This chart clearly indicates that schools in France, Germany, and Japan allocate more instructional time than American schools. The assumption is that additional instruction time leads to improved learning. According to *A Nation at Risk*, as reported by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983), students in America perform at a lower level than students than other countries. Although there are many factors that play into statistics, many believe the lack of instructional time provided by the American education system will continue the trend of students from foreign countries outperforming American

students (National Association of Year-Round Education, 2006).

With this overview of the evolution of school calendars in mind, we can now define Year Round Education (YRE). YRE in the United States has deep colonial roots extending back to 1645 when the town of Dorchester, Massachusetts, mandated that children attend school all year (Zykowski, Mitchell, Hough, and Gavin, 1991). The children attended school daily from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. for the first seven months and from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. for the remaining five months (Hermansen & Gove, 1973). YRE continued to increase in popularity during the 1800's with the influx of immigrants who were desperate for education, particularly in the areas of facilitating the learning of the English language and to integrate their children to the American culture.

Beginning in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, summer education opportunities became more prevalent in the United States (Zykowski, et al., 1991). In 1888, the State Commissioner of Education endorsed summer school for the purposes of technical and vocational training. Detroit, Cleveland, and Buffalo adopted a 260-day year-round schedule. In 1904, the town of Bluffton, Indiana, became the first city in the United

States to implement year-round education hoping to increase student achievement, alleviate overcrowding, and reduce learning loss (Kasnic, 1999; Palmer & Bemis, 1999).

Year-round education increased in popularity as school districts across the country employed the calendar for a variety of reasons (Zykowski et al., 1991). In 1912, Newark, New Jersey, implemented the year-round calendar in an effort to teach English to immigrant children. Minot, North Dakota, introduced a summer program in 1917 (National Association of Year-Round Education, 2006) in an effort to reach errant children.

In 1925, the city of Omaha, Nebraska, operated year-round vocational training, and in 1926, Nashville, Tennessee, developed a year-round calendar to improve the overall quality of education. Finally, in 1928, Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, applied summer programs to better utilize their facilities (Zykowski et al.). Many of these ground-breaking school districts in the early twentieth century implemented some form of year-round education to overcome many of the same needs faced by today's school districts (low achievement, overcrowding, and summer learning loss). At the onset of the Great Depression (1933-1939), the popularity of year-round education came to a quick halt due



to a need to improve the general quality of vocational education and to the difficult economic times. The public simply was not ready to pay for enrichment opportunities with taxpayer money (Hermansen and Gove, 1973).

At the beginning of World War II, a nationwide trend of schools initiated a nine-month calendar consisting of 180 instructional six-hour days. The new school calendar revolved around the harvesting and planting of crops and allowed students to work in the fields, with teachers assisting where needed (Kasnic, 1999). The need for an agrarian school calendar later became obsolete as the farming population in America suffered a drastic decline (Huitt, 1995). The education system did not bring a subsequent change as schools continued to operate on an agrarian-based calendar leaving the months of June, July, and August as scheduled vacation time from formal instruction. As a result of extreme heat and humidity during summer months, the climate appeared to be the primary reason schools continued to operate on a traditional calendar (Glines, 1990).

A surge toward redesigning the school calendar occurred in 1964 with the Education Commissioner of Virginia, James E. Allen. In the late 1960's and the early

1970's, Allen's direction and inspiration led to the development of the single-track and multi-track year-round education programs still utilized today. In 1968, Howard, California, implemented California's first year-round school (Zykowski et al., 1991). This rebirth of the year-round concept continued to expand to other school districts in Missouri, Illinois, and Minnesota marking the beginning of the resurgence of year-round education and a rapid escalation in the number of schools converting to a year-round calendar.

In the early 1970's, year-round education generated a great deal of interest throughout the country. By 1976, the number of schools in the United States operating a year-round calendar reached 539. However, by the end of the 1970's, sparked by a lull in population and pressure for uniformity, the schools operating on a year-round calendar dropped to a national low of 287. According to Zykowski et al. (1991), none of the schools cited poor achievement as a reason for abandoning year-round education.

Year-round education saw a period of rejuvenation commencing in the early 1980's and in the 1990's. One new calendar configuration that came with this rejuvenation was the Balance School Calendar (BSC). This BSC model divided the instructional days across the calendar year. In the

1980's, schools shifted to BSC, not particularly for its space utilization, but for the potential education benefits. By 1992, 1,668 public and private schools in 23 states were implementing some form of year-round education (Glines, 1990). Research documents the primary reasons school systems shifted to a BSC during the early 1990's included increasing student achievement, alleviating overcrowding, and reducing summer learning loss (Ritter, 1992). Furthermore, Rodgers (1993) cited that the lack of success from the traditional school system prompted the move of restructuring the American Educational System. Today, according to the National Association for Year-Round Education (2006), approximately 3,000 schools and 400 school systems in 46 states utilize year-round education.

The question of schedule was addressed by practicing teacher Chris Pultz, a third and fourth grade teacher at Trailblazer Elementary in Douglas County, Colorado. Mr. Pultz was quoted as saying, "I can go full tilt for the entire nine weeks, realizing that I have a three-week break coming up. I cannot even imagine maintaining the high level of individual instruction for longer stretches of time. We spend a day, maybe two, reviewing when we come back to school after a three-week break, then it's off to the races!"

In another article, "Year-Round Schools Look Better All the Time" by Vanessa Gerard (2007), it suggests that the end of a session during the year-round schedule corresponds with the beginning of a break. So, instead of returning from winter break to teach for just a few weeks in January before closing out the grading period, teachers following BSC schedules simply wrap up the unit before the break (Gerard, 2007). In another similar response through a phone interview concerning BSC scheduling, Jill Anderson, Cambridge-Isanti School District, stated "that burnout was much less for the students as well as for teachers in the BSC program over the traditional school calendar".

Still another advantage of the BSC program that Jill Anderson noted after teaching in the BSC system was a sense of completion in the learning process, which was not felt in the traditional system. She explained in more detail about the nine-week learning cycle in the following manner: "Teachers plan a nine-week unit that must be completed before the three-week break begins. The unit is covered with the testing for the unit completed on the last days of the term, thus both students and teachers have the positive feeling of successfully completing a unit of study". The traditional system often results with the end of a quarter but not the end of a unit of study, thus the students do

not experience the feeling of completion or end of a grading cycle. An all too often example of this situation occurs over the winter break in the traditional mid-term at Christmas time; students must come back from break only to face finals during the last week of the first semester of study. The stress of having to return to school to face semester finals increases student anxiety.

For the less advantaged student, the loss of information from the winter break reduces the chance of a successful result from the testing. A problem identified by Juvenile Officer, Catheryn Smith (C. Smith, personal communication, November, 2008), concerning the winter break and her clients was the frequent occurrence of families in poverty moving during school breaks such as the winter and spring breaks. A student not completing the quarter or semester before moving not only must deal with the trauma of switching schools, but also may lose the credit of study because of incompleteness of the semester or quarter.

Smith further stated the loss of credits because of frequent moves increased the potential for the students to become a high school dropout. Having insufficient credits to graduate within the scheduled thirteen years of traditional public education caused a feeling of personal

failure. A typical client response to her was "why bother to go to school, I can't graduate anyway, I'm too dumb."

Research strongly supports the fact that there is a substantial amount of academic regression for students in poverty during the summer months, causing a decrease in overall test scores. Despite summer programs, many students in poverty do not access educational opportunities in the summer months. With a BSC, the extended break in the summer would be shortened and the opportunity for regression would be diminished. Additionally, the shorter breaks between quarters would allow for enrichment opportunities before students get too far behind.

Socially, emotionally, and physically, a BSC would give students the much needed access to year-round services such as a school counselor, school nurse, and year-round physical education programs. Once again, the Cambridge-Isanti School District's successful program, as described by Jill Anderson, identifies another advantage of the year-long (or a BSC method of learning) over the traditional method.

Anderson's school district utilizes the homeroom method of student grouping. This grouping has two very important elements that separate it from just reporting to the same room everyday during the school year. The first

important difference in the Cambridge-Isanti school method is that each student is assigned to a homeroom teacher on his/her first day of school and remains with that homeroom teacher from kindergarten through the fifth grade. Anderson stated that she has had the pleasure of working with families, not just a single student. Often her students' parents will ask to have her for their other children because of the feelings of teacher/ family attachment, trust, and camaraderie created with the extended homeroom experience developed with the BSC program. The positive feelings between parent and family cannot be achieved with the traditional school system method, which switches a student yearly, ending any developing relationship between the student/family and the homeroom teacher.

The second element which homeroom adds at the Cambridge-Isanti school is the amount of time and the help given to the student both educationally and socially. Anderson meets with her homeroom students three times a day, with the first meeting at the beginning of the school day. During this thirty-minute homeroom experience, she visits with her students about what happened the night before, checks to make sure all homework assignments were completed, and if they were not, offers assistance and generally discusses what is going on in their lives. The

goal is to help the student prepare for the upcoming challenges of the day. The students return to homeroom just before lunch. At this gathering they eat lunch together as a social group - a family. The students and teachers discuss a variety of topics from the most recent movie watched to the new puppy at home. It is a time to learn the social customs of dinner conversation and behavior.

The final homeroom meeting occurs at the end of the school day. Although this meeting is only ten minutes in length, it is enough time to double check whether students have the materials needed to complete homework assigned that day and to add a snack to their backpacks if needed. This format builds on Ruby Payne's theory that children living in poverty need and depend on relationships (Payne, 1996). Ruby Payne's theory on relationships for impoverished students is applied in this example of a BSC program since impoverished students have year-round access to building relationships during this nutritious breakfast and hot lunch program.

In previous sections, and throughout this paper, many citations to Dr. Payne's theory of relationship building will be referenced (Payne, 1996). The table below, Table 1, (see also appendix A) displays a side by side comparison of



how families in wealth, middle class, and poverty view the world (Payne, 1996).

Table 1	Poverty	Middle Class	Wealth
Possessions	People	Things.	One-of-a-kind objects, legacies, pedigrees.
Money	To be used, spent.	To be managed.	To be conserved.
Personality	Is for entertainment. Sense of humor is highly valued.	Is for acquisition and stability. Achievement is highly valued.	Is for connections. Financial, political, social connections are highly valued
Social Emphasis	Social inclusion of people they like.	Emphasis is on self-governance and self-sufficiency.	Emphasis is on social exclusion.
Food	Key question: Did you have enough? Quantity is important.	Key question: Did you like it? Quality is important.	Key question: Was it well presented? Presentation is important.
Clothing	Clothing is valued for individual style and expression of personality.	Clothing is valued for its quality and acceptance into norm of middle class. Label important.	Clothing is valued for its artistic sense and expression. Designer important.
Time	Present most important. Decisions made for the moment based on feelings r survival.	Future most important. Decisions made against future ramifications.	Traditions and history most important. Decisions made partially on basis of tradition and decorum.
Education	Valued and revered as abstract but not as reality.	Crucial for climbing success ladder and making money.	Necessary tradition for making and maintaining connections.
Destiny	Believes in fate. Cannot do much to mitigate chance.	Believes in choice. Can change future with good choices now.	Noblesse oblige.
Language	Casual register. Language is about survival.	Formal register. Language is about negotiation.	Formal register. Language is about networking.
Family structure	Tends to be matriarchal.	Tends to be patriarchal.	Depends on who has the money.
World View	Sees world in terms of local setting.	Sees world in terms of national setting.	Sees world in terms of international view.
Love	Love and acceptance conditional, based upon whether individual is liked.	Love and acceptance conditional and based largely upon achievement.	Love and acceptance conditional and related to social standing and connections.
Driving Force.	Survival, relationships, entertainment.	Work, achievement.	Financial, political, social connections.

As important as relationship building is for poverty students, the need for nutritious food for improved learning also plays a strong factor in student success. Frequently, the only nutritious meals in a day for students in poverty come from the free school breakfast and lunch program. Even though our government has worked diligently to help with the nutritional needs of the poor through the commodities program, food pantries, and food stamp programs, many times the knowledge of food preparation is a element missing in a poverty family. Nutritional food often goes to waste. The dietary patterns of the poor are often a detriment to the food purchased with food stamps; potato chips will be purchased instead of raw potatoes, ice cream instead of fresh fruit, and hot dogs instead of fresh meat.

Very often children in poverty live in a single-parent home with the parent working at a low-income job that takes the parent away from the home during meal times. The children must then, as the old saying goes, "fend for themselves" when it comes to meal preparation; and, as might be expected, the preparation of a hotdog, chips, and ice cream will be chosen over a more nutritionally balanced meal of fresh meat, vegetable or salad, fresh fruit, and dessert. During the long summer break, the poverty student

misses those two balanced meals per day which reduces learning potential.

As revealed in *Your Miracle Brain* by Jean Carper (Carper, 2004) the brain is a growing, changing organ; its capabilities and vitality are dependent to a large degree on how it is nourished and treated (Carper, 2004). For the first time in human history, scientists are beginning to understand how profoundly a person can influence the factors that control brain functioning - through food, supplements, and simple lifestyle changes, including mental and physical exercise. At one time, for example, it was thought that the brain and central nervous system were not readily affected by diet.

The mistaken assumption was that the blood/brain barrier was designed to discriminate carefully among nutrients in the blood so as not to continually upset the balance or homeostasis of the central nervous system. New research shows that nutrients, including glucose and fat, can have an almost immediate impact on brain cells and brain functioning, producing rapid changes in mood and monumental changes in long-term behavior (Carper, 2004).

With this new knowledge, the need for students, especially students living in poverty, to have at least two balanced meals as often as possible is vital. The BSC

educational model provides the nutritious meals necessary for good brain function on a less interrupted basis than the traditional educational model. An added note to the importance of brain function and nutritious meals can be realized as Carper continues with the statement, "It's almost mind-boggling to realize that the emergence from the dark ages of blind ignorance of the connection between brain functioning, behavior, and diet is but thirty years old-a mere eye-blink in the world of science"; thus future research may find an even stronger correlation between diet and brain function (Carper, 2004).

Finally, children in poverty are often at a higher risk for physical abuse than their counterparts in higher socio-economic levels. During an interview with C. Maria Smith, director of the North Central Missouri Children's Advocacy Center, the researchers were given new insights into child abuse (C.M. Smith, personal interview, November, 2008). It was brought to light that families living in poverty often do not have the resources to cope with stressful situations; because of this, physical abuse is very common. By implementing a BSC, students would spend shorter amounts of time at home (in possible abusive situations) and more time in a school setting.

While researching the various advantages of the BSC education model and the traditional education model, two fields outside of education, social work and law enforcement, were referenced to glean further insight into the effects of these two models on children. "The difference in the three week breaks between the nine week study unit verses the three month break in the traditional model has a definite impact on the children of poverty" in the above stated professions.

Smith noted that one area of concern for her was that the rate of child abuse and neglect reports and investigations go down during the long summer break. Smith stated that she feels these go down in the summer because children are not under the daily supervision of teachers. Many abuse and neglect claims that should be made do not get reported because children are hid away from the world. As shown in the following table, Table 2, taken from the 2007 Missouri Department of Social Services Children's Division Child Abuse and Neglect Annual Report, reports of child abuse and neglect go down considerably in June, July, and August. Mrs. Smith also noted the other lowest times for reported cases of abuse are November and December, also time when students are not in school consistently.

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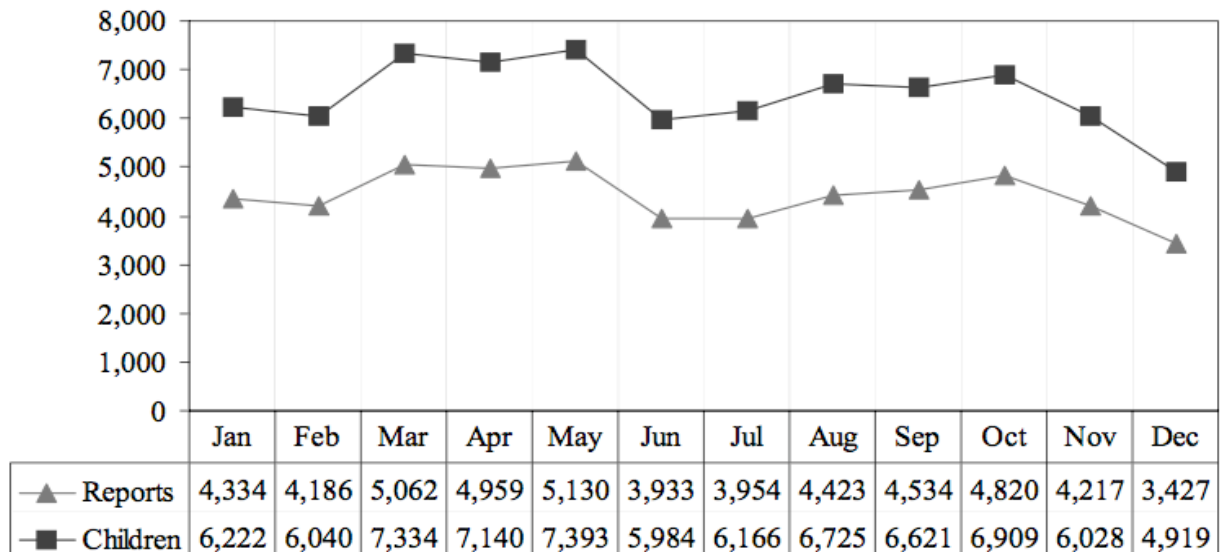


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## *Reports and Investigations/Family Assessments*

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**2007 Child Abuse/Neglect Reports and Children by Month of Report**



Smith also commented that she dreaded long school breaks when students are not in school (summer vacation, holidays, etc.). She stated that when students are not in school, teachers are not able to make neglect and abuse calls. A BSC approach to scheduling would alleviate this gap because the time students spend away from educators would be limited.

### *Juvenile Delinquency*

Catheryn Smith, juvenile officer, discussed the issues of delinquency and abuse as they pertain to the three-month summer break. She stated the number of vandalisms, shoplifting, and misdemeanor assaults increased as the summer progressed up to the return of students to school.

The juveniles with whom Smith worked found themselves with too much unstructured time to fill with activities. These young people often began meeting in groups at local parks and on the street to entertain themselves. One member of the group would dare another to do something illegal and then the next challenge would be issued and problems escalated. As an example from her experience, a group of young men were roaming the streets when one boy dared another to shoplift a game or toy from a local store. Before long, all the boys were involved in shoplifting to become a member of the group. By the end of the summer, several of the young men were new members of her caseload. The whole scenario occurred during late July and early August when the children had become bored due to the excessive amount of free time.

Smith discussed how this dangerous cycle of delinquency often began in the summer months for young men and women. Smith felt another factor to delinquent behavior and later adult crime was due to extended summer vacations.

Smith also noted a marked decline in the reports of abuse and molestation of children during this period. At first glance the reduction of abuse and molestation reports would seem like an advantage, but the advantage is not a product of the abating of the crime but of the non-

reporting of the crime. As Smith stated and as was reflected in statistical data from the Missouri Child Abuse and Neglect Calendar Year 2007 (see chart above) Annual Report, the incidents of abuse and molestation occurred as often or more often but were not reported since teachers, administrators, and nurses are the primary reporters of these offenses. Principals or other school officials are the second highest reporters of child abuse in the State of Missouri at 13.7%, and teachers the ninth highest group of reporters at 2.1%.

As a 30-year veteran of child crimes, Smith has worked with three generations of violated children. Smith has watched the debilitating affect abuse, and especially molestation, has on children as they become adults.

"The cycle of violence is handed down to the victims the violence was perpetuated upon; thus if a child is on break from school only three weeks instead of three months, the chances of a teacher or administrator reporting abuse and molestation increase. Limiting even a portion of the violence on a child will increase the victimized child's chances of a normal adulthood".

Smith also noted many of her clients come from impoverished backgrounds.



*Child Care*

Long summers versus shorter three-week breaks were a topic of discussion with Barbara Spencer, a Career Assistance Program (CAP) Coordinator for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program (B. Spencer, personal interview, February, 2008). As a CAP Coordinator, Spencer worked with many single parents, mostly females, preparing themselves for self-sufficient living after the 60 months of (TANF) expired. To be self-sufficient included finding and keeping employment.

Finding employment often was an easier goal than keeping the employment for Spencer's clients, especially during the summer months. As a requirement of CAP, a client is required to work at least 20 hours per week if there is a child under age six in the home and 30 hours per week if all children are age six years and older. The increase in work participation hours from 20 to 30 was based on a child entering school on or around the age of six. The success of the plan worked well until July and August when children were released from regular and summer school attendance. Spencer stated, "During July and August many of my clients would be fired for missed work due to lack of childcare, or the parent would not be able to pay the cost of childcare

for the children on the low paying employment available to him or her so they quit".

When Spencer heard about the BSC education model, she felt the success of her clients being able to maintain employment over the breaks would improve. The cost of finding childcare for three weeks could be worked into a very limited, already strained budget much easier than a twelve-week stretch.

Spencer's newly formed view of childcare issues suffered by people in poverty and the actual case scenario found to be evident in the afore-mentioned Cambridge-Isanti School District childcare results were very similar. Jill Anderson stated the parents of her BSC students found the program much easier with which to work in terms of the childcare issues than the traditional three months off utilized in traditional schools. Anderson clients started a babysitting pooling system among the parents of the BSC to resolve the childcare issues. Once again the parents could alternate childcare on a daily or weekly basis for a three-week period of time, which they could not do for a 12-week stretch of time. Another option used by BSC parents was to ask grandparents to help out with a week or two visit to watch and care for the grandchildren during the break. Another surprising result of BSC utilization reported by

many parents was they liked the vacation choices available to them during times other than just summer.

The feeling of being in a safe and secure environment is basic on Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1954) and must be met before students can learn. Therefore, these students in poverty can enhance their learning opportunities if their basic needs are met more consistently across the calendar year.

#### *Year-Round Education in Missouri*

Year-round school has a long, yet limited history in Missouri. Currently, there is only one school district employing this type of schedule. On January 8, 2009, the researchers interviewed Dr. Cindy Crigler, principal of John Weldon Elementary (Dr. C. Crigler, personal interview, January 8, 2009). John Weldon Elementary is in the Francis Howell School District, which is a K-12 district in the North East portion of the state.

Francis Howell has employed a year-round schedule for approximately 30 years, according to Dr. Crigler. She indicated that the original decision to implement a year-round schedule was so the Francis Howell District could use a multi-track schedule and relieve the over-crowding faced by the District in the elementary buildings. When Dr. Crigler became principal 16 years ago, the District was

still using the multi-track format. Since that time, however, all of the elementary schools have switched to a single-track/BSC format.

All of Dr. Crigler's administrative experience has been in a year-round school. She had, however, taught for nine years at a traditional schedule school before coming to the Francis Howell School District, so she had insight to offer when comparing student outcomes in a traditional calendar and a BSC. She also had the unique perspective to offer from a teacher's vantage point. Below is a transcript of an interview conducted with Dr. Crigler:

**1. Have you seen any change in behavior since**

**implementing the BSC schedule?** *I would say that you get a break just when everyone needs it. You still have your 'frequent behavior offenders,' but the regular visitors to the office get a fresh start with this schedule.*

**2. Have you seen a change in attendance patterns?** *Our school has a fairly high socio-economic status (SES) rate, so we don't really fight that very much. Our attendance is generally around 96-98%. If they have siblings in a traditional school, we often have attendance issues - missing days when the siblings are out of school. If they do not have siblings in a*

*traditional school, attendance is generally good.*

*(Note - Francis Howell District only employs the BSC in the elementary schools. Middle and High schools are on a traditional schedule).*

- 3. Have you seen a change in achievement?** *There is enough research out there to go either way on this one. I would say the students don't lose as much. I don't think we do as much re-teaching. The kids aren't out of the 'school mode' as much.*
- 4. How do you handle intersessions? (enrichment, etc?)** *We have a 21 day summer school. Most of our enrichment is done after school. Really, we try to keep it as time off. Some of our Professional Development is done during intersessions.*
- 5. How do teachers react to a BSC schedule as opposed to the traditional schedule?** *Most love it. Some drive from out of town just to work at this district and with this schedule. The School Board thought about returning to a traditional schedule a few years ago, and the teachers and parents really let their voices be heard. The parents are overwhelmingly in favor of keeping YRE.*
- 6. What changes can a principal expect when comparing a BSC to a traditional calendar?** *It's harder to get*

*your vacation days. For me, there are 30 days assigned, but it's difficult to take them.*

- 7. What other information is relevant about a BSC that we haven't discussed?** *Multi-track is horrible. You're always behind. There's never time to take a break when kids aren't here. It's stressful for teachers and administrators. You have to move classrooms every three weeks.*

To add further qualitative data, the researchers spoke to three administrative assistants with the Francis Howell School District as we attempted to connect with Dr. Crigler. Each time we explained who we were and what we were doing, we were met with the same enthusiastic "Oh, you'll love it" response. One assistant told us of her own children, who were now in their twenties, who had gone to elementary school at Francis Howell and how they had been able to take "lovely family vacations" at times of the year when other families were still in school. She also volunteered that she didn't know why everyone in the country didn't use that type of schedule.

As stated previously, there is only one school district currently using a BSC schedule in Missouri. There was, however, a mission school in urban Kansas City which employed a BSC until it closed its doors last year. St.

Monica's Catholic School was a mission school that was supported by four local parishes. The original St. Monica's was founded in 1910. It was in 1989 when the school was reorganized and became a BSC school. St. Monica's served the diverse cultural, economic, racial, and religious backgrounds of Kansas City's inner city until 2008, when financial constraints forced the parishes to close the doors.

An interview was conducted with Denise Cummings, former first grade teacher at St. Monica's. The following questions and answers were recorded:

**1. What factors played into the choice to become a BSC school?** *We were at a point where we knew that we had to do something really different for our students. Our students didn't fit the typical mold. We did some research about YRE and attended a conference in San Diego. The results we heard from other districts around the country sold us on the concept.*

**2. Did you see any change in behavior since implementing the BSC schedule?** *I believe our students could cope with shorter time frames a little better than traditional long hauls. Because of our neighborhood, we still had a lot of baggage that got brought into the classroom. But, I think this schedule helped kids keep*

*school rules and home rules a little more categorized in their mind. I know we didn't have to spend as much time in the fall going over procedures.*

**3. Did you see a change in attendance patterns?**

*Attendance was difficult for our students - not for any fault of their own, but due to their chaotic family situations. I don't know that going to a BSC made an impact on attendance. It's a battle we always seemed to fight. I will say, for some families who were really trying to break the cycle of poverty and all, this schedule allowed them to get a better quality job because we offered support during the intercessions, or they could find alternatives for short-term care. Sometimes grandparents would keep kids or parents would work out a rotating schedule to look after each others children. When we were on a traditional schedule, there was a long space in the summer when parents could not work because they didn't make enough at their job to afford to pay someone to watch their children. This really does become an issue when you have a low-paying job and a large family. It's cheaper not to work than it is to work.*

**4. How did you handle intercessions?** *We had two different types. One was purely enrichment and exploratory. The other was remediation. By offering*



*something for everyone, we could take care of a lot more children. We did charge for intersession classes, but most of the children qualified for some type of scholarship, which was provided through donations, grants, or from the parish.*

**5. How did teachers react to the schedule as opposed to the traditional schedule?** *Well, first you have to understand that we were all at St. Monica's because it was our mission. Many of us worked the intercessions as well as the regularly scheduled class sessions, because we believed in the mission of the school. However, teachers loved having quarters that were broken down into nine weeks with a break in between. Personally, I thought it created a very natural flow which was very age-appropriate for my children. Occasionally, when we really needed a break, and we didn't teach an intersession, that break seemed to come at just the right time.*

#### *Demographics of The District*

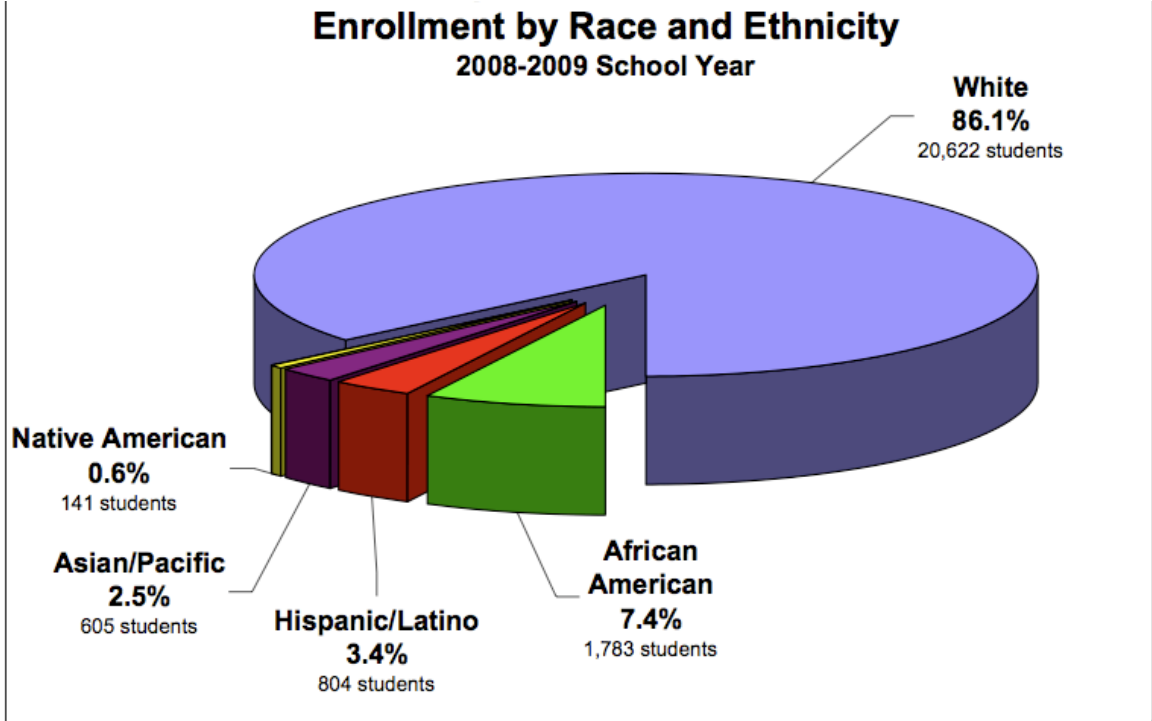
The following section includes demographical and other relevant information about the selected school district in Missouri considering the implementation of a BSC choice program. All the information, including charts and tables, was taken directly from the selected district's web site. The researchers believe this information adds to the

argument that a BSC approach to scheduling would cause positive change to the school culture and bring better support to the families living in poverty who will attend the BSC school. The researchers will discuss the federal guidelines set forth to qualify as a Title-I School and family income requirements to determine free and reduced lunch status.

The selected school district is the second largest school district within a large Midwestern state with a total enrollment of 23,995 students. These students are divided between 36 elementary campuses, 11 middle schools, and 5 high schools. The selected school district is the state's largest fully accredited school district.

The city of the selected school district itself has a low concentration of racially or ethnically diverse students, as shown in the table below. Table 6, displays the ethnic diversity of the selected school district.

Table 6



When looking at Table 6, it is obvious that the largest ethnic group is white. However, when looking at the minority population, the largest minority group is African-American, which encompasses 1,783 students, or 7.4%, of the total population. Falling far behind that population is the Hispanic/Latino population which is 804 students, or 3.4%. Close behind that are the 605 Asian/Pacific students, which make up 2.5% of the total population. Only 141 students, or 0.6%, are reported to be Native-American.

*Free and Reduced Lunch Requirements*

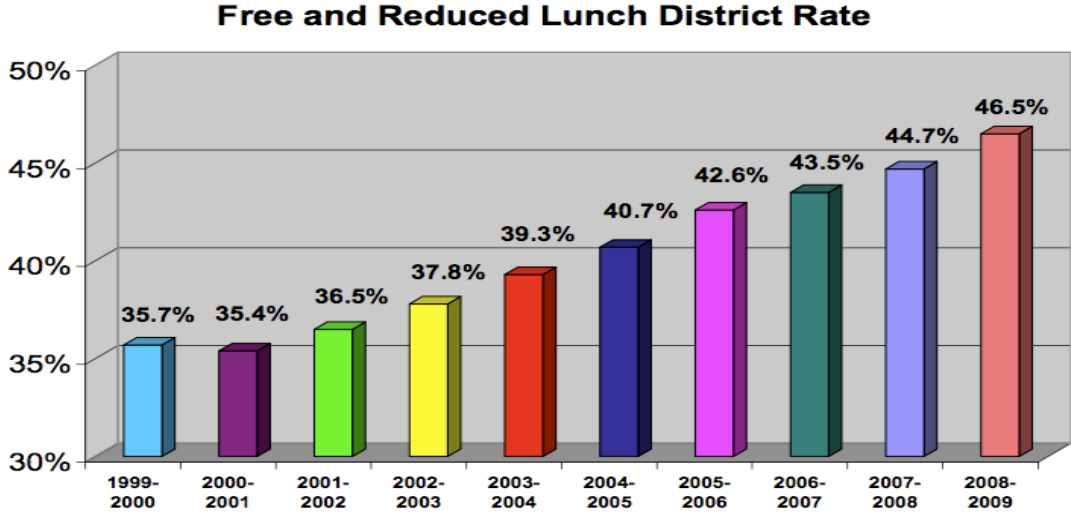
The percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunches has steadily climbed over the last ten years, as evidenced in the Table 7. To meet the requirements for reduced lunch, a household must fall under the following guidelines:

- A household (of one person) yearly income of \$19,240.
- A household (of 4 people) yearly income of \$39,220.
- A household (of 6 people) yearly income of \$52,580.

Households falling under these income guidelines qualify for free school lunch.

Currently, the average free and reduced lunch rate for elementary buildings in the selected school district is 54.1%. This percent represents 5,960 elementary students. In middle school, 2,421, or 49.3%, of the student population who qualify for the program. The percentage drops in high school where 2,540 students, or 35.9%, qualify for free or reduced lunches. The total number of students who qualify for free or reduced lunches in the selected school district is 10,925, or 46.5%.

Table 7



The increase in the free and reduced lunch populations in the selected school district over the past ten (10) years is graphically illustrated in Table 7. In the opinion of the researchers, this upward trend in poverty will continue to climb even higher in the next ten (10) years.

*Federal Title I Program*

Title I began in 1965 under the direction of President Lyndon B. Johnson as part of his "War on Poverty." It is currently the largest aid program for schools. Specifically designed to target the areas of reading and math, Title I money is typically used to provide extra staff, materials, or professional development for schools that have a free or reduced lunch rate higher than 45%. Currently, the free and reduced lunch rate at the elementary school considering the BSC school choice program is around ninety percent (90%).

*Cost Benefits of BSC*

Although not an area that the researchers are examining as part of the study for implementation of a BSC, the researchers feel it is important to note some of the research in this area. When looking at a BSC there are two frameworks with six categories (three per-framework) to examine when considering cost analysis. The first, identifies ways of thinking about cost analysis (Brekke, 1983):

1. Identify the cost.
2. Estimate costs for new school facilities and operations when enrollment exceeds operational space.
3. Compute the cost incurred by BSC program when school is not in session.

The second framework compares cost analysis (Baker, 1990):

1. Compare the budget for BSC to previous years.
2. Compare the budget for BSC to a matched school on a traditional track.
3. Compare the budget for the BSC to a simulated budget for the same school on a traditional calendar.

The last section of the second framework (listed above) is the most commonly cited in literature (Hough, Zykowski, & Dick, 1990). In all studies, the cost analysis of a BSC eventually proves to be a cost savings to the district

either in facilities use or avoided fees (Denton & Walenta, 1993). Some such expenses include fees associated with student retention, additional educational services, and the cost of plant management associated with closing and re-opening a school every summer (Denton & Walenta, 1993).

*Calendar Configurations:*

Kneese (1996) explains year-round education as a redistribution of a 180-day school calendar year divided into instructional periods with each instructional period followed by an intersession, or vacation. This allows for a continuous flow of learning. Furthermore, year-round education can be defined as a terminology that promotes a paradigm involving any reconfiguration of a 180-day school calendar providing students more continuous learning opportunities throughout the year (Serifs, 1990). The primary objective for year-round education is to minimize learning loss and to eliminate the amount of time needed to review previously learned material (Ballinger, 1988).

According to Opheim and Mahajer (1995), year-round education schedules take on a multitude of forms including single-track, multi-track, and extended year. Each one of these designs was created to fill a specific need for the individual school district. For the purpose of this study, only a BSC will be examined. In the following tables

(Table 4 & Table 5), a graphic explanation of the differences between a traditional school calendar and a BSC will be presented.

Table 4

**Traditional Calendar**

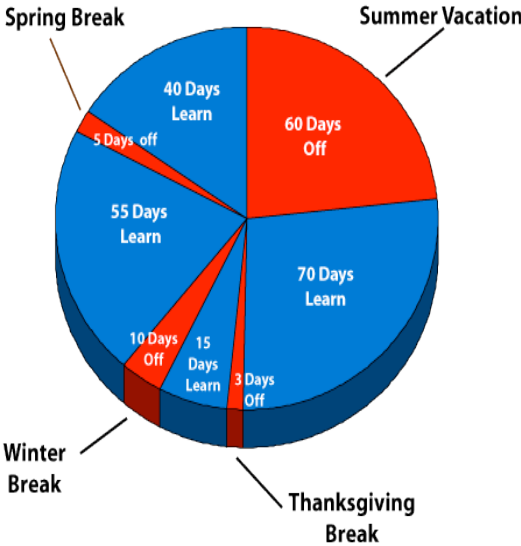
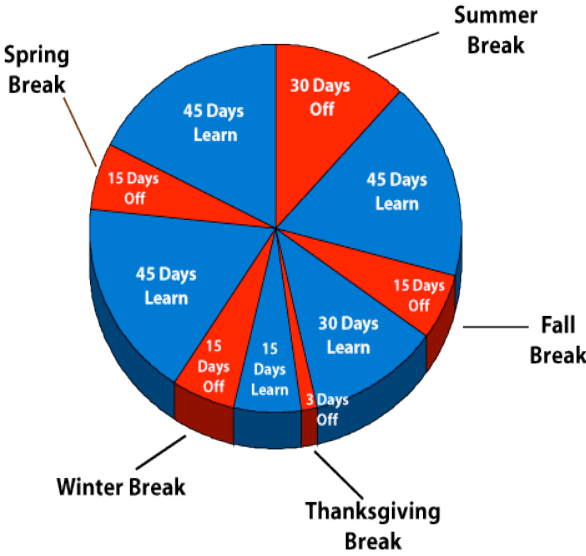


Table 5

**Balanced Calendar**



Tables four and five illustrate the differences in the way instructional days are distributed in a traditional calendar as compared to a BSC. As evidenced above, the number of instructional days remains the constant in both calendars. However, the BSC divides the instructional periods into four equal sections each with a three week breaks separating the section. The BSC does allow for a longer summer break in the summer which more closely resembles a traditional calendar, but that break is only about half as long as that of a traditional schedule.



Defined, BSC is a philosophy of modifying the traditional school calendar, dividing the school days more evenly across all twelve months. There are many factors that play into the decision to create a BSC schedule. Some of those include overcrowding, teacher burnout, increased opportunities for remediation, and assistance with students suffering from limited English skills and students in extreme poverty (Breadford, 1996). Primarily, however, the major force behind a BSC schedule is higher student achievement as evidenced by less student regression.

#### *Facilities Use*

When considering facilities usage, the general observer would say the greatest benefit would come from a multi-track school. However, according to research, this is not the case. Multi-track schools help alleviate overcrowding issues by creating an efficient environment which school facilities are used year-round (Hazleton, Blakely, & Denton, 1992). Conversely, research found that the BSC model with a 45/15 calendar configuration provides the greatest balance between facility usage and facility relief (Goren & Carriedo, 1986). Additionally, BSC provides much needed space during intersession for additional activities including music programs, art showings, or indoor sport activities (Stiff, 1986).

*School Personnel*

When researching the "human" side to a BSC, it was found that teachers support a BSC, especially those with experience in both a BSC (or year-round school) and a traditional calendar school (Shields & Oberg, 1995). Teachers in a BSC have better attendance and when students rotate in and out of classes (as in multi-track schools), it was found that 95% of teachers choose to stay in the BSC configuration (Gandara, 1992).

Many concerns expressed by teachers before entering a BSC school included professional development opportunities, graduate course work, and vacation time with family. After being in the BSC configuration, it was found that many teachers reported more opportunities for graduate work (Herman, 1988) and a higher preference for the rotating vacation period during off peak travel times (Shield & Oberg, 1995).

When researching the administrator side of a BSC, very little information was found. However, in the research on hand it was found that among administrators who have experience with both traditional calendar and a BSC, the BSC is preferred despite the additional administrative duties (Hazelton et al., 1992).

*Parents & Community*

When considering the implementation of a BSC, communication is the key. Before the implementation of a BSC, parents have legitimate concerns because, to many, this is a new concept. Once a BSC has been established however, research shows that parents respond very positively towards its implementation (Hazelton, et al., 1992). It was found that parents of elementary age students were very positive about a BSC, especially in the areas of educational arrangement, curriculum, and educational commitment from teachers (Shield & Oberg, 1995). Parents still have concerns, like vacation and off school activities such as sports or enrichment activities. Having strong parent involvement before implementation can alleviate many of these concerns.

When exploring the community connection, the community shares many of the same concerns as parents. After implementation, it was found that there was a decrease in vandalism and juvenile crimes (Brekke, 1983; Hazelton, et al., 1992). Although some community groups reported a change in activities to accommodate a BSC, many reported no change after the implementation. Additionally summer leagues and summer camps typically report no major changes due to a BSC (Zykowski et al., 1992). Personnel

working in BSC schools reported having better and more consistent communication with law enforcement and community groups than in a traditional school calendar (Hazelton et al., 1992).

#### *Practitioner Interviews*

After researching the relevant literature, the researchers wanted to get an "expert's" opinion about a BSC from professionals currently working or who have worked in a BSC school. On December 3, 2007, the researchers interviewed Dr. Jeannie Steeg and Dr. Charles Ballinger about BSC. Dr. Steeg is a former principal for the San Diego Consolidated School District. Dr. Steeg was pivotal in starting BSC in San Diego and has served as the president of the National Organization of Year Round Education. Dr. Ballinger is currently the vice president of National Organization of Year Round Education and worked for the San Diego School District when the district adopted a calendar for BSC. Dr. Ballinger is also the author of the book *School Calendar Reform: Learning in All Seasons* (2006). Dr. Steeg and Dr. Ballinger were interviewed together, and the answers below reflect their collective responses.

**1. Why did you choose to implement a BSC?**

*The original reason we (San Diego CSD) started BSC was to alleviate the space problem we were having. Student populations were growing at a much faster rate than the school district could keep up with. With the space problem added to the local economic problems of the late 1970's and early 1980's, asking for a tax increase was out of the question. Multi-track BSC was the best plan of action. By implementing a multi-track schedule we were able to increase the amount of students being served anywhere from 33%-50% without building any new facilities.*

**2.If space were not a consideration, would you still be implementing BSC or would you use a traditional schedule?**

*Overwhelming yes! BSC made education a continual loop, and we never saw a loss of learning due to an extended summer break. Prior to the implementation of a BSC, our teachers were spending an exorbitant amount of time re-teaching what was taught the prior school year. After the implementation of a BSC our teachers could almost "hit the ground running" and start where the previous teacher left off.*

**3. What strengths does a BSC calendar have over a traditional calendar?**

*One of the strengths, as already mentioned, was no learning loss over the summer. But, another strength is that there are built-in seasons of remediation where skills can be re-taught before they become confusions the child will have to overcome later in school. One positive I saw with the BSC was the decrease in teacher burnout. When teachers are forced to teach full steam for nine months, they get tired and instruction suffers. With short breaks throughout the year, teachers are always fresh and at the top of their game. This is especially true here in San Diego where the weather is nice, and teachers can get out and do things year round.*

**4. What are the weaknesses that you see with the BSC?**

*Here in San Diego, we have so many schools on so many different schedules that it does cause problems. However we are working on streamlining all the calendars into one. On a whole, however, we do not have the same problems here in San Diego that other parts of the country have because we have been running YRE in one form or another for twenty plus years, so implementation issues are far behind us. However, the*

*logistical problems (mobility, divorce, family/custody issues, migrant workers) are what we suffer from the most.*

**5. You talked about implementation issues, what are those issues?**

*First, you must have your parents on board with the schedule change. This takes many months of planning and many, many parent meetings because change is hard. During the meetings, you must be prepared to answer hard questions. There are many parents who are against the BSC movement, and parents may come to the meetings with data against BSC that may or may not be accurate. Make sure you have done your research and have a well-designed plan in place before you go to the public. Before implementation of a BSC, you will need at least 70% of your parents on board to make the new calendar a success.*

*The situation twenty-five years ago was much different than it is today. Years ago parents felt forced into BSC because it was BSC or pay more taxes, you know, a "rock and a hard spot" situation. Now we are implementing BSCs because it is good for students, families, and teachers. Our city has now embraced BSC*

*to the point that all schools are converting to a BSC calendar.*

**6.How does BSC impact your Title-I Schools?**

*One hidden advantage of BSC is that it has been a great supplemental support system for Title-I students (especially our ESOL students). BSC gives these students more consistency in their daily schedules and offers them more opportunities for remediation. For our ESOL students, we are able to immerse them more fully in the English language to enhance their English skills.*

**7.Please talk a little more about mobility, especially when a student moves from a traditional calendar to a BSC and vice versa.**

*Well, let me be honest, this is a tough one. Overall we have not seen a big problem when a student moves out of a BSC school to a traditional school. When a traditional calendar student moves in it is harder because curriculums are different and pacing is different. We are usually able to catch up traditional calendar students due to the remediation opportunities that intersessions provide.*



**8. Since you both have been principals, what do you look for when hiring teachers for a BSC school?**

*When interviewing staff we look for teachers that have a strong commitment to student learning and value the time-piece that comes with a BSC. Also, we look for staff that is not afraid to try something new. Most teachers are used to a traditional calendar so a BSC will make some people step out of their comfort zone. Finally, they need to be professional self-learners. Teachers need to think globally and use the gift of time that the BSC offers to their advantage and to the benefit of their students.*

**9. Did you notice any advantages or disadvantages with your gifted and talented students?**

*What I saw with gifted and talented students was more time for higher-level thinking, investigation, and experimentation. These students process things on a different level than regular students and need the intersession time to apply what they have learned and report back to the teacher before they lose the learning over the summer. Some of my more creative teachers got gifted and talented students to the next*

*level of Bloom's Taxonomy where they were applying their knowledge through real-world application.*

**10. When you implemented the BSC initially, did you have any teachers opt out or try to transfer to traditional calendar schools?**

*Yes, they did, but we were in a situation where teachers could transfer to traditional calendar schools. This let us handpick dynamic teachers ready for the challenge of a BSC. BSC was a hard transition at first simply because it was something new. Once the initial shock wore off almost everyone fell in love with BSC. Now, schools using BSC experience less teacher turnover than traditional calendar schools.*

**11. Did you feel a higher level of administrator burnout working in a BSC school?**

*There were various levels of stress working in both traditional and BSC schools. It was hard at first because we were working in multi-track schools where schools were never closed. Even though other administrators relieved us during vacation time, I always felt I was "on call." Once we moved to the single-track schedule where all the students, teachers, and administrators went to school at the*

*same time and were off at the same time, my stress level was lower because I had more breaks than I did before.*

**12. How do BSC facilities get their deep clean done without an extended break?**

*Cleaning becomes an on-going process throughout the year. Instead of waiting for summer to clean the entire building, we do one section of the building at a time during intersession. Also, more attention is given to "clean as you go." Custodial staff understands that they have shorter cleaning periods and adjust schedules to maximize cleaning time.*

After the interview, the researchers saw many parallels between the San Diego School District and the selected school district. The problems of summer learning loss, access to student services, and over crowding were alleviated in San Diego with the implementation of BSC. Dr. Steeg and Dr. Ballinger agreed with the researchers that BSC would be a viable school choice program for the selected school district.

*Effects on Special Populations*

This section will examine how a BSC affects different student populations. BSC has been implemented in many schools and is serving gifted students, special needs students, and students living in poverty as well as all other SES. All these populations benefit from a BSC in different and distinctive ways and only when certain conditions are met (VanTassel-Baska, et al., 1988). To understand how a BSC affects student populations, each group will be examined individually.

First, as mentioned in the interview section, gifted students benefit from a BSC. However, according to the research, this group is the most vulnerable to certain circumstances being met (VanTassel-Baska et al., 1988). According to Braddock et al., (1997), there are three main criteria for a BSC to be effective for gifted students. They are as follows:

1. Schedules must be flexible enough to accommodate the needs of gifted students, choices of courses, and instructional challenges.
2. Clear and concise expectations must be given to gifted students regarding goals and objectives.

3. Community resources must be made available to gifted students, and processing time must exist for students to be creatively challenged.

When working with gifted students, a BSC must be perceived as a pathway to continual learning. For gifted students, learning is more consistent with the BSC calendar (Ritter, 1992).

For special needs students, a BSC has the most benefit when it is used to limit learning loss, especially over the summer (Ballinger, 1995). Special needs students forget more during non-school periods than their peers (Morse, 1992). Within the September to June school calendar, special needs students can forget as much as three months of learning over the summer (Morse, 1992). However, this is not the case in a BSC calendar. Another point came to light during the interview with Jill Anderson. When given a choice, special needs students and gifted students would choose the BSC configuration because it was a better fit for their needs (Anderson, 2008).

When a BSC is implemented, offering frequent breaks of three to four weeks helps to reduce skill regression for students with disabilities (Davies & Kerry 1999). Special needs students and regular students suffer loss over the long summer break. However, special needs students are the

most vulnerable. Using a BSC calendar can stop this learning regression and limit or stop the need for summer support services (Davies & Kerry, 1999).

In the area of remediation, students struggling in school need extra support. A BSC schedule affords educators an opportunity to assess and re-teach skills before too much time has lapsed and a student has fallen further behind his peers.

Educators and administrators at all levels of the educational spectrum have expressed concern about the long period of time during summer vacations. The fear is that children are not instructionally engaged and experience a loss of basic skills (Ballinger & Kneese 2006). For some time, the traditional long summer break has been under attack because of the observation by researchers concerning academic and skill loss over the extended break from school (Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsay, & Greathouse, 1996).

A 1978 study conducted by the New York Board of Regents reported a distinct disparity in student socio-economic level and retention problems. Forgetting previously learned material was shown to be different for each type of student, with disadvantaged students forgetting as much as three months of learning during the summer vacation. Disadvantaged students are rarely

introduced to motivating environments and subsequently often acquire no additional learning during this time. Jonathan Kozol, author of *The Shame of a Nation*, is quoted as saying, "Why should students receive less than similar students elsewhere? The inequity is clear" (Kozol, 2005).

On average, students in poverty not only experienced more difficulty in attaining knowledge but also tended to forget the material more quickly. Cooper et al., (1996) reports the results of a comprehensive review of the research on summer learning loss showing the loss of about one month with these effects being more detrimental for math (especially math computation) than for reading and spelling. In addition, lower income students' reading skills tended to decline over the long summer break while middle-class students' increased or stayed the same. Finally, learning loss was found to increase in the upper grade levels (Cooper et al., 1996).

Data obtained from the Department of Education in both Kentucky and North Carolina validates how a BSC is producing results in low-income schools. E.E. Miller Elementary and Ed V. Baldwin Elementary (both in North Carolina) are on a BSC calendar and exceeded targets set by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. Each of these schools employ a BSC calendar and both schools saw an

increase in reading scores. Both schools in grades three through five were above 80% on North Carolina's nationally normed test, exceeding federal requirements set by NCLB. Likewise, Jefferson County, in Kentucky, had three BSC schools, and they all exceeded Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in reading by 10% and over 25% in mathematics. These are just a few examples of how BSC programs help improve student achievement in low-income settings.

In Hampton, Virginia, a three-year study looking at high poverty student populations in grades five through eight saw gains from students enrolled in a BSC versus a traditional calendar. The study looked at student performance in the areas of reading, writing, math, history, and science. Findings demonstrated higher achievement from students and showed significant gains, especially in mathematics (Sexton, 2003).

There are other studies that show how the achievement gap over summer vacation is seen predominately in low-income areas. One recent study that tracked students in the Baltimore Beginning School supported significant differences between students of low SES and high SES. The study tracked student progress on the California Achievement Test (CAT) from the first through the ninth grades. Over the nine-year study, children from high SES



families had gains of 75.63 points over low SES peers on CAT scores. Additionally, scores tracking summer gain (four summers) verified low SES student populations regressed an average of -1.85. (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2007) On the other hand, data tracking winter scores (5 winters) established there were no significant differences between low and high SES students. With these enormous differences, it is evident that the summer learning gap is a hurdle for low SES student populations.

#### *Overcrowding*

In situations of overcrowding, there are several multi-track options to consider. A multi-track option could be considered when the school district has experienced growth, and a levy or bond issue to build a new building is not an option. Incorporating a multi-track schedule can increase the amount of students served by 33% without the expense of adding additional classrooms.

#### *Summary*

In this chapter, the researchers have given an in-depth background into the progression of year-round education and its development to the balanced calendar configurations that school districts are using today. The researchers have also used personal interviews as a source of recent reference data due to the fact that other current

research is scarce. Additionally, statistics from outside agencies who also serve those in the greatest financial need were included to provide the reader with a more detailed perception of the depth and breadth of the issue of study.

In the following chapter, the researchers will provide an outline of the study, define the parameters and instruments used and describe the research. Subsequent chapters will provide statistical data and follow-up analysis.

## CHAPTER THREE

## METHODOLOGY

"Everything that can be counted doesn't necessarily count; everything that counts can't necessarily be counted." Albert Einstein (n.d.) Albert Einstein probably was not talking about children and teaching when he made this statement, yet it fits very appropriately with the purpose of this study.

Chapter three discusses the methodology used in this study. The setting and the context, sample, variables, research design, instrumentation, procedures, description of analysis employed, and the research are discussed. This chapter holds a two-pronged direction in its focus as the researchers diverged in their study to further investigate the multi-layered aspects of this topic. First, researcher 'A' acquired perceptions of teachers currently working in schools using traditional calendars. Teachers were asked to give their insight about what a BSC is and their willingness to work in a school implementing a BSC. Secondly, researcher 'B' surveyed administrators to ascertain their perceptions about a BSC and if they feel a BSC would be beneficial for their buildings. Yet, with all the technical and mechanical aspects in place, they still

concentrated on the primary purpose of the study, which was children and families in poverty.

The selected school district is the second largest school district in a large Midwestern state. The city of the selected school district has a poverty population (living at or under the poverty line) of 25%. Since the focus of this study is how students living in poverty would benefit from a BSC, this poverty percentage is significant to this study. The researchers performed a mixed design study gathering data and analyzing the data for trends. For this study, the dependent variable is the teachers and their survey responses. The independent variable is teacher perceptions.

The specific research questions were as follows:

1. Frequency and response to each research question by Likert Scale
2. Is there a difference in the level of support teachers would give to a BSC when compared to the level of support teachers would give a traditional calendar school
3. Is there a difference when comparing administrators' perceptions of a BSC to administrators' perceptions of a traditional calendar school?

Since all students in the selected school district follow the same attendance calendar and all teachers are contracted for the same number of days, the researchers asked if a difference existed in teacher perceptions when comparing a traditional school calendar and a BSC. Using a survey, teachers in high poverty schools were assessed in the areas of discipline, learning loss, and access to support/health services. To examine perceptions in these areas, teachers were asked to rank the following statements on a Likert scale:

1. I think students would learn more in a BSC School.
2. I think there will be less academic regression having multiple three week breaks throughout the year as opposed to one long three-month break.
3. I think discipline/classroom disruptions would be fewer in a BSC school.
4. I think students in a BSC school would have greater access to support services, such as, health services, counseling services, physical activity, and family support services (DFS/DYS).
5. If offered a contract to teach in a BSC school and a traditional calendar school for the same compensation amount, I would choose to teach in the BSC School.

6. I think that there would be more opportunities in a BSC to build strong relationships with students to aid in their educational and social development.

To examine administrator perceptions, the researchers asked administrators to rank the following statements on a Likert scale (an official copy of the survey can be found in the appendix, see appendix B):

1. I believe professional learning opportunities would be enhanced in a BSC school.
2. I believe there would be less teacher stress in a BSC school.
3. I believe students would have less regression in a BSC school.
4. I believe student attendance would increase in a BSC school.
5. I believe students who attend a BSC school would be less likely to become high school drop-outs.
6. I believe students would adhere to discipline structures more consistently in a BSC school.

#### *Research Instrument*

Instructors teaching in Title-I schools were given a survey to assess perceptions in both traditional school calendars and a BSC. The main methodological design of this study was thematic trends. The researchers examined

the surveys for common trends and used that data to support or dismiss the research questions.

### *Research Setting and Participants*

The survey for researchers consisted of six questions with teachers being asked to rank responses from one (1) (strongly oppose/disagree) to five (5) (strongly agree). Approximately 250 surveys were administered to instructors teaching in Title-I schools in the selected school district. To better target poverty populations, the researchers focused their surveys to Title-I schools because these schools already have a free and reduced lunch rate of 45% or higher.

A survey for administrators also consisted of six (6) questions. These questions were designed to gain administrators' perspectives on how a BSC calendar would affect various components of school operations from a procedural point of view. The questions were designed so that administrators were asked to rank their answers from one (1) (strongly oppose/disagree) to five (5) (strongly agree). Thirty-one (31) surveys were completed and returned by administrators. Those completing the surveys represented a variety of experience levels and also represented districts of various size and socio-economic levels.

The surveys were collected and analyzed, and the responses were tabulated using ASP software. After running the data, the researchers were able to build tables showing trends, variances, and Chi-Square. The difference and P-value was used to test the validity of each question showing the generalizability of the survey and the likelihood of similar responses if the study were to be replicated.

The researchers were guided through their study by the research questions and the research purpose to discover the perceptions of teachers and administrators to a BSC. Specifically, the researchers focused their attention on the affect that a BSC might have on the academic progress and social well-being of students living in extreme poverty.

A Likert scale was the predominant instrument of the study. Participants were given the Likert to determine the perceptions to six questions asked on the survey. No demographical information was collected through this Likert because all surveys were given to teachers working in Title-I schools or principals from elementary buildings of various socio-economic make-up. Open ended questions were given and face-to-face interviews were conducted with



participants to help triangulate the results, as well as to add a "human" aspect to the data.

Chapters four and five of this dissertation are organized to provide the reader with the results of the data and draw conclusions from the findings. The following two chapters offer other practitioners a springboard for further investigation and will also provide data to other school districts considering the implementation of a BSC calendar.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This study's purpose was to examine teacher and administrator perceptions of a BSC calendar. Included in this chapter are the findings and a synopsis of the statistical analyses administered to understand the data as it relates to the two essential research questions. Although this was a joint study which examined both teacher and administrator perceptions of a BSC model, this researcher focused only on the perceptions of teachers. The results and findings of my co-researcher, which focused on administrator perceptions, can be found in the appendix section of this paper (Appendix E).

1. Frequency and response to each research question by Likert Scale.
2. Is there a difference in the level of support teachers would give to a BSC when compared to the level of support teachers would give to a traditional calendar school?

In order to identify teacher and administrator perceptions to a BSC a Likert scale was used. To gain a more in-depth understanding and to authenticate the study, personal comments were included.

The following pages include the information tables and narratives used to explain the data received. After collecting the surveys, the researcher tallied the information, and ASP software was used to interpret the responses and obtain the Chi-Square, difference, and P-Value.

*Teacher Question #1:*

I think students would learn more in a Balanced School Calendar (BSC) school.

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Table 8  
*Summary of Chi-Square Analysis Results by Column for Students Learning More in a BSC*

Source	Teachers	Chi Sq	Df	p-value
V1	5.3% (7)			
V2	10.7% (14)			
V3	20.6% (27)			
V4	43.5% (57)			
V5	19.8% (26)	55.985	4	0
A=>0.25	100% (131)			

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On face value, the initial response to this question is, "Yes, students would be in school more; therefore they would learn more." As shown in Table 8, when the researcher started introducing the concept of BSC to teachers, their first thought was that they would be going to school for the entire year and that would translate into more time in the classroom. Therefore, students would learn more. However, after a discussion about what a BSC is and that

the actual number of days in school would remain the same, some misconceptions seemed to melt away.

Teachers were asked to rank their perceptions on a scale of one (strongly oppose) to five (strongly agree). When asked the question, 83 teachers, or 63.3%, responded with "agree or strongly agree," indicating that they felt students would learn more in a BSC school. On the other end of the spectrum, 21 teachers, or 16%, responded, "oppose or strongly oppose."

Why would teachers feel that students would learn more even after they knew that there were no additional days of instruction? There was nothing said about a change of instructional methods. There was no professional development, seminars, or workshops. The only variable offered the teachers in this research question was a change of calendar configuration. Yet they still answered the question overwhelmingly that they believe students would learn more if this type of schedule were employed. It is likely that several factors played into the results obtained from this question. Primarily, teachers who work with at-risk students are deeply aware of the impact that summer learning loss plays on those in their charge. Many of the teachers this researcher spoke to have never considered any other possibility than the traditional

schedule they had always used. When they began to understand the basic concept of a BSC, their whole paradigm began to change.

Another factor that plays into the response from teachers is the 'stability factor' that teachers perceive in the school environment. It is no secret that poverty hurts families, communities, and nations (Kozol, 1991). Not only does poverty hurt families, but it also causes instability and conflict (Kozol, 1991). For many students living in poverty, the school is one of the few places where students have consistency. When students live in a high poverty environment where conflict is a constant, students often bring the baggage of home situations into the classroom. The researcher believes that teachers viewed the consistency of a BSC as a key component in student success. If the students were in a more consistent environment on a more constant basis, then exposure to potentially explosive situations would be diminished. One of the obvious results will be a higher level of achievement.

Another factor that may have played into the responses was the time of year the survey was administered. The survey was distributed in the days immediately following a two-week holiday break. We believe the teachers were

recently refreshed and could see the benefits that frequent breaks could have on their students.

*Teacher question #2:*

I think there will be less academic regression having multiple three-week breaks throughout the year as opposed to one long three-month break in the summer.

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Table 9  
*Summary of Chi-Square Analysis Results by Column for Less Academic Regression In a BSC*

Source	Teachers	Chi Sq	Df	p-value
V1	3.8% (5)			
V2	9.2% (12)			
V3	7.6% (10)			
V4	49.6% (65)			
V5	29.8% (39)	98.58	4	0
A=>0.25	100% (131)			

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As shown in Table 9, teachers were asked to rank their perceptions on a scale of one (strongly oppose) to five (strongly agree). When asked this question, 104 teachers, or 79.4%, responded with agree or strongly agree that there would be less academic regression in a BSC school. On the other end of the spectrum, 17 teachers, or 13%, responded oppose or strongly oppose. The middle group, teachers responding with a three (3), contained only 10 teachers, or 7.6%. Although the percentage of responses in the middle group was small, the researcher felt that this number needs to be considered because it is so close to the number of responses in the lowest group.

Academic regression is a battle that is fought every year by teachers of students who live in high poverty situations. When students spend their summer months engaged in activities that are not academically stimulating, the result is devastating to their developing minds. This is especially prevalent in the primary grades when new learning is so fragile (Cooper et al., 1996).

Research indicates that summer regression tended to be less significant for students in higher socio-economic conditions; unfortunately, the impoverished students were not able to participate in enriching activities such as travel, college-sponsored children's classes, or computer learning games due to the expense of the activity. Even being able to visit a public library is often hindered by the cost of travel to the facility or the inability to obtain a library card.

Bryan Livingston has taught in a school that serves a high poverty neighborhood in the selected school district in the Midwestern state (B. Livingston, personal communication, November, 2008). For nearly a decade, Mr. Livingston has searched for a way to limit the regression that occurs in the summer months. In an interview, he revealed that summer programs were helpful as long as they were highly engaging but were expensive for the district to

run. Another helpful strategy he has found is to loop with a class for two years. When that technique is employed, the summer regression still remains, but the learning curve for the teacher is reduced because he/she already knows the class. He did add that looping in a highly at-risk building was often difficult because the high mobility rate often resulted in a very different class list in the fall from the one that was created at the beginning of summer. He was also quick to add that these programs were only beneficial for a small portion of the student population.

*Teacher question #3:*

I think discipline/classroom disruptions would be fewer in a BSC school.

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Table 10  
*Summary of Chi-Square Analysis Results by Column for Discipline*

Source	Teachers	Chi Sq	Df	p-value
V1	9.9% (13)			
V2	11.5% (15)			
V3	37.4% (49)			
V4	32.8% (43)			
V5	8.4% (11)	50.87	4	0

---

As shown in Table 10, 55 teachers, or 41.2%, responded with agree or strongly agree that discipline/classroom disruptions would be fewer in a BSC school. On the other end of the spectrum 28 teachers, or 21.4%, responded with oppose or strongly oppose that discipline issues would not be fewer in a BSC school.



The gap was obviously closer on this question. There were less than 4 percentage points separating the middle section from the first two. Approximately, five (5) percentage points separated the third section from the fourth. With this small range of scores huddled in the middle to lower section, the researcher felt that, although the overall result showed that teachers did agree that discipline issues would be fewer, there was still plenty of room for discussion on this point. The teachers may have felt some discipline problems are just a part of working with children with varied backgrounds and temperaments. Consequently, whether the school year is one month or twelve months long, there will be some discipline problems to be dealt with on a daily basis.

Another concept that teachers may be considering is that expectations will need to be relearned every time students return to school from a quarter break. Routines and procedures will need to be reestablished every time class resumes.

The researcher noted that many of the responses were clustered toward the middle of the response continuum. This indicates that there is no firm commitment from respondents. One possible reason for this response is the "ownership" that the teacher often feels when it comes to

student discipline. Whether it is right or wrong, teachers often feel that student discipline is their responsibility, and they are the ones ultimately in control. Not wanting to give up control could result in an unconscious response toward the center of the Likert scale.

*Teacher question #4:*

I think students in a BSC school would have greater access to support services such as health services, counseling services, physical activity, and family support services (DFS/DYS).

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Table 11  
*Summary of Chi-Square Analysis Results by Column for Greater Access to Support Services*

Source	Teachers	Chi Sq	Df	p-value
V1	1.5%(2)			
V2	14.5%(19)			
V3	26.7%(35)			
V4	27.5%(36)			
V5	29.8%(39)	37.206	4	0
A=>0.25	100%(131)			

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As shown in Table 11, when surveyed, 75 teachers, or 57.3%, responded that students would have greater access to support services. On the other end of the spectrum 21 teachers, or 16%, responded that students would not have more access to support services. In this question 35 teachers, or 26.7%, responded with a three (3).

The consistency factor that the school environment plays in the lives of children in poverty is vitally

important. In addition to a more consistent educational program, a BSC approach to scheduling would afford the school community an opportunity to offer a continuous stream of social services to students and families in need. Examples of this would be access to medical services through the school nurse and other medical professionals coordinated through the school. In addition to the greatly needed medical services would be the nutritional services that the school breakfast and lunch program provides. Additionally, the added bonus of regular exercise through a structured physical education and recess regimen would keep kids moving and keep healthy habits in the forefront. Months of physical inactivity while watching television and loss of routine due to late night hours and sleeping until late morning all affect the ability of a student to be prepared and alert to begin classes in the fall.

The shorter three-week BSC break would not allow enough time to completely break the schedule of activity and good sleep patterns. The desire to fall asleep in class due to a changed sleep pattern or not to participate fully in physical education classes due to poor physical fitness would not be as prevalent after a three-week break as opposed to a three-month break.

The researcher was surprised that the responses to this question were not higher. In discussion, the researcher questioned the interpretation of the question and how the respondents may have perceived it. It was determined that the teachers may not have understood the depth and breadth of programs to which the question was referring; in particular, the amount of help available to students through the Family Support Division, since this help is generally handled through administrative channels and then passed on to teachers on an "as needed" basis due to privacy laws and regulations.

*Teacher Question #5:*

If offered a contract to teach in a BSC school and a traditional calendar school for the same compensation amount, I would choose to teach in the BSC school.

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Table 12  
*Summary of Chi-Square Analysis Results by Column for Teaching in a BSC*

Source	Teachers	Chi Sq	Df	p-value
V1	17.6% (23)			
V2	14.5% (19)			
V3	30.5% (40)			
V4	22.9% (30)			
V5	14.5% (19)	12.168	4	0.16
A=>0.25	100% (131)			

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As shown in Table 12, when surveyed, 49 teachers, or 37.4%, responded with agree or strongly agree that they would teach in the BSC school. On the other end of the

spectrum, 52 teachers, or 32.1%, responded with oppose or strongly oppose that they would not prefer to teach in a BSC school. In this question, 40, teachers, or 30.5%, responded with a three (3).

The traditional calendar, like many practices in education today, is rarely questioned. The researcher found that many teachers had heard of year-round school but really had no clear idea what it would look like in practice. Very few had any idea of a concept of a BSC. Once the basic premise was explained, the teachers' perceptions changed, in many instances from "definitely not" to "Oh, I would like that."

Educators are creatures of habit. Like students, teachers like routines and procedures. It is interesting to note that, although the teachers thought that students would learn more, have less academic regression, have fewer discipline issues, and would have greater access to support services, they were still disinclined to commit to teaching in a school that employed a BSC schedule.

The mental attitude of a long leisurely summer off is well engrained in educators' minds, so even though they have assessed the BSC program as better for student learning and have the same number of days off, the mental attitude is difficult to change.

The reasons for the resistance to change are numerous. One reason is the issue of childcare for teachers who have school-age children. For educators who have children who are of school age, but perhaps would attend a school that is on a traditional schedule, accepting a contract in a BSC school would be counter-productive for their family. This would be very evident in a household where the teacher was the primary or only caregiver for children and having a similar school schedule is a requirement.

Another consideration for teachers is that of continuing education. For many teachers, summer classes are a way of life. This is especially true for teachers who are early in their teaching career and are pursuing advanced degrees for continued certification. Adding night classes during the teaching cycle is difficult for any teacher, but it can be especially exhausting for teachers in highly impoverished schools where the everyday task of teaching and meeting the social needs of students in crisis is so draining. Shortened summer sessions would make summer learning for teachers much more difficult. Creative coordination with universities, as well as on-line learning opportunities, are options to consider as possibilities to overcoming this obstacle.

Although BSC has been around in some form for many years, the concept is still basically new in the Midwest. So, another reason teachers may have answered negatively to this question is a basic misunderstanding of the concept.

More realistically, an explanation for the response rate being unfavorable to this question is that the teachers who were surveyed are committed to their school and the children they serve. If they had answered "agree" or "strongly agree," it would have seemed as though they were betraying their students, colleagues, and community. There is something almost unexplainably uniting among the staff of an at-risk school. Because of the enormous daily strain placed on the adults in the system, they learn to rely on each other and depend on each other for support. These bonds are not easily broken. Therefore, when teachers were asked if they would consider accepting a contract in a BSC school, I think many of them did not want to abandon their home team.

*Teacher question #6:*

I think that there would be more opportunities in a BSC school to build strong relationships with students to aid in their educational and social development.

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Table 13  
*Summary of Chi-Square Analysis Results by Column for Building Strong Relationships*

Source	Teachers	Chi Sq	Df	p-value
V1	5.3% (7)			
V2	11.5% (15)			
V3	26% (34)			
V4	37.4% (49)			
V5	19.8% (26)	41.023	4	0
A=>0.25	100% (131)			

---

As shown in Table 13, when surveyed, 75 teachers, or 57.2%, responded with agree or strongly agree that there would be more opportunities to build strong relationships in a BSC school. On the other end of the spectrum, 22 teachers, or 16.8%, responded with oppose or strongly oppose, stating that there would not be more opportunities to build strong relationships. For this question, there were 34 teachers, or 26%, who responded with a three (3). It is the opinion of the researcher that the large spread of responses with this question was due to the feeling that a good teacher will build strong relationships with students regardless of the school calendar. Once again a limited understanding of the BSC plan may have skewed the results of this response. If the teachers would have had



the added dynamic of the consistent homeroom and the relationship building structures utilized in the Cambridge-Isanti School District plan, the responses may have been different.

In his book *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, author Carl Jung grasped the importance of relationship building for educators when he wrote about individual memories of past teachers; "They look back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers, but with gratitude to those who touched our human feelings. The curriculum is so much necessary raw material, but warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child" (Jung, 1989)

### *Conclusion*

Because the teacher surveys were given in person, it allowed for a great amount of informal feedback following the survey sessions. During these discussion times, teachers asked many questions that showed the depth of their thinking on the issue of a BSC. Many teachers have also sent emails to the researcher asking further questions about the project and wanting more information. Knowing that this study has "struck a chord" with teachers lets the researcher know that there is real interest in this topic within the district.

In Chapter Five of this paper, the researcher will provide a summary of findings, a section of limitations, and recommendations for further study. This limitation section is included to assist future researchers in their studies and to help teachers and administrators in their endeavors as they plan a course of action for their school districts.

Following Chapter Five is an all-inclusive reference section and an appendix section. The appendix section includes pertinent data from the project as well as Chapters Four and Five from the co-researcher that examined this same topic from an administrator's perspective.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## CONCLUSIONS

“Very few organizations are willing to take risks. There is strength between tradition and logic keeping them apart. We have a common tendency to oppose change and innovation forcing us to cling to the status-quo” (Perry, 1991)

The concept of a BSC is not new. Some form of a year-round school has been in existence for decades. It has, however, emerged over the last ten years, nationally, in order to address achievement, attendance, and discipline (Chaika, 2006). The design of this study allowed the researcher to garner data that was specific to his region of the nation. This research measured teacher perceptions prior to the possible implementation of BSC in an elementary school. The study was particularly focused on how a BSC would impact students and teachers in high-poverty schools.

## Summary and Findings

The educators who participated in this study were 131 teachers in Title-I schools. These schools were specifically selected because of their high percentages of free and reduced lunch students and high mobility. There

were 250 surveys sent out and 131 were returned (a return rate of 52.4%).

#### Discussion

The results from this study were very interesting to the researcher. Having the opportunity to conduct research, which will possibly have real application for our students, provided the motivation and inspiration for the researcher to dig as deeply into the subject as possible. With the prospect of possible future implementation of a BSC within the district, this was more than just an "exercise in banality", it was truly a passionate desire to investigate a program which might provide real students with an alternative schedule to possibly enhance their learning and retention of what they learned.

In the researcher's conversations with teachers, many were hesitant about the concept at first. However, after completing their surveys and a very intense question and answer forum, the depth of concern for their students' progress and the passion for which they were seeking alternatives to the 'status quo' really proved to the researcher that he was on the right track.

### Implications

There are several implications that can be drawn from this study. First, the researcher came to the realization that the concept of a BSC, though having been around for decades, was still widely misunderstood by most teachers especially in the region in which the study was conducted. Those taking surveys often had many follow-up questions about a BSC because the concept was really new to them.

As the implications of NCLB become more stringent and school districts struggle to meet the requirements of NCLB, teachers, administrators, and school boards are seeking methods to assist their students in meeting ever-increasing expectations. Although the goal of education should always be to improve student achievement, not simply meet federal and state imposed goals, the pressure to achieve has never been more greatly felt in the school systems across America. The BSC schedule is a realistic way of meeting the academic goals for students in poverty who often struggle to make the same academic gains that their peers from more affluent families.

Finally, this study may be a useful tool for superintendents, cabinets, and school boards as they evaluate alternative programs and schedules for their schools - particularly those that serve students in

high-poverty areas. The schedule of a school has a major impact on the lives of students, parents, and communities. It is not something to be trifled with and considered lightly. There are many intricacies that must be considered as the web of a neighborhood is often tied to the school schedule. However, if it is planned well and in the best interest of students and families, it will be of great benefit to that community.

#### Limitations of the Study

##### *Geographical*

This study was conducted for one selected school district in a large Midwestern state in the United States of America. Therefore the findings are skewed for this district. Although this study would provide good background for other districts, replication would be difficult due to the specificity to the selected School District. Finally, it needs to be noted that the poverty demographic in the selected school district may not have the same characteristics as the poverty demographic from different regions of the United States.

##### *Demographical*

Only educators in the selected school district were asked to complete the teacher survey. The researcher felt

that this was a limiting factor for the study. Had the scope been broadened to teachers across the state, responses could have been considerably different. Also, the researcher was limited to the assumption that all teachers read each question and answered honestly. Furthermore, the researcher was limited by the amount of knowledge teachers had about year-round education (especially BSC). This concept is very new to most educators in Southwest Missouri. When this reality is coupled with a general tendency for people to avoid new situations, clear and concise answers were difficult to ascertain.

#### *Data Collection*

When surveying, data collection focused on teachers only. The researcher felt this is another limitation. If duplicating the study, the research would include a parent component. An additional area of limitation with the study is that it did not include a student component. The researcher believes that it would add validity to include either a quantitative or qualitative section focusing on parent and student responses. Finally, the researcher believes a section dedicated to thoughts and assumptions of educational support staff (such as paraprofessionals, custodians, secretaries, food service employees, business

community, nurses, etc.) would add considerable insight to the study.

#### *Survey Return Rate*

There were 250 surveys sent out and 131 returned (a return rate of 52.4%). Although this would be a good return rate if the survey had been sent out statewide, the researcher felt that this was a low rate of return for just one selected school district.

#### *Scholarly Research*

One final area of limitations was the lack of research in the subject of year-round education or BSC. The researcher found himself in the role of a trailblazer because so little information, either current or dated, was available. When reviewing sources, it was found most studies cited the same fifteen (15) authors repeatedly.

#### Recommendations for Further Study

In the P.L Travers book *Mary Poppins*, it was said "Once begun is half done," (Travers, 1934) I believe the same is true for research. However, educational research, can never even be half finished because student needs are continually changing as our country changes.

If the selected school district implements a BSC school at one or more of its elementary buildings, the



opportunity will be excellent for further follow-up research that would link perfectly with what has been started. A myriad of data could be collected, such as test scores, discipline rates, teacher turnover rates, attendance records, etc., which would be less subjective than the opinions used in this study.

A second interesting study would be student perceptions of a BSC. It seems as though researchers sometimes overlook the most obvious and pertinent source of data available. Nowhere in our research did the researcher ever find a quote by a student or a reference to students' reactions. In visits to some BSC schools, the researcher visited with students; however, their responses are not included in this report because permission from parents was not given to include them. The researcher did, however, speak to parents who told him that their children loved the BSC schedule. However, no first-hand data from the students themselves is included in this study.

Another area of future study could link more directly to test scores or achievement of students who live in extreme poverty. There is limited availability to any data of that type now as it relates to students in BSC schools. Currently, there is no true measure of performance on a national level. As No Child Left Behind standards become

more rigid and students are compared nationally, it will be increasingly important for teachers and administrators to have every available tool at their disposal to improve student performance.

#### Summary

The researcher had already completed some preliminary studies in the field of poverty and its effects on students prior to embarking on this study. In his current assignment, the researcher sees the effects of poverty on students and teachers every day. It was because of this background and because of the daily struggles faced by teachers in his school district that he chose the topic of "teacher and administrator perceptions of a balanced school calendar and its effects on students in poverty."

As a classroom teacher, the researcher was particularly interested in teacher perceptions of a BSC. He wanted to know if his predispositions and experiences were similar to those of others in the field. To that end, the researcher designed the questions and administered the teacher surveys so that he could personally visit with the educators and get a real understanding from those who were participating in the research.

What was reconfirmed to this researcher through this project is that he works with an esteemed group of

individuals. The professionals who choose to teach in Title schools do so for reasons other than just their love of teaching. If their love of teaching were the only motivation, they could transfer to schools where there is little or no poverty. Instead, those who have dedicated their lives and careers to working with at-risk students give of themselves day after day to what often seems like an endless array of needs.

The BSC approach to scheduling is one option that can offer hope to these teachers in the struggle they are facing. The struggle to reduce the amount of summer learning loss and to provide for a more consistent stream of physical, mental, and social services has caused many teachers in high poverty schools within our district to take a closer look at the balanced school calendar approach to scheduling.

The co-researcher on this project focusing on administrators also wrote an all-inclusive summary section. This section is included in the appendix (appendix F).

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## Appendix

## Appendix A

Table 1	Poverty	Middle Class	Wealth
Possessions	People	Things.	One-of-a-kind objects, legacies, pedigrees.
Money	To be used, spent.	To be managed.	To be conserved.
Personality	Is for entertainment. Sense of humor is highly valued.	Is for acquisition and stability. Achievement is highly valued.	Is for connections. Financial, political, social connections are highly valued
Social Emphasis	Social inclusion of people they like.	Emphasis is on self-governance and self-sufficiency.	Emphasis is on social exclusion.
Food	Key question: Did you have enough? Quantity is important.	Key question: Did you like it? Quality is important.	Key question: Was it well presented? Presentation is important.
Clothing	Clothing is valued for individual style and expression of personality.	Clothing is valued for its quality and acceptance into norm of middle class. Label important.	Clothing is valued for its artistic sense and expression. Designer important.
Time	Present most important. Decisions made for the moment based on feelings or survival.	Future most important. Decisions made against future ramifications.	Traditions and history most important. Decisions made partially on basis of tradition and decorum.
Education	Valued and revered as abstract but not as reality.	Crucial for climbing success ladder and making money.	Necessary tradition for making and maintaining connections.
Destiny	Believes in fate. Cannot do much to mitigate chance.	Believes in choice. Can change future with good choices now.	Noblesse oblige.
Language	Casual register. Language is about survival.	Formal register. Language is about negotiation.	Formal register. Language is about networking.
Family structure	Tends to be matriarchal.	Tends to be patriarchal.	Depends on who has the money.
World View	Sees world in terms of local setting.	Sees world in terms of national setting.	Sees world in terms of international view.
Love	Love and acceptance conditional, based upon whether individual is liked.	Love and acceptance conditional and based largely upon achievement.	Love and acceptance conditional and related to social standing and connections.
Driving Force.	Survival, relationships, entertainment.	Work, achievement.	Financial, political, social connections.

Appendix B

Balanced School Calendar Teacher Survey:

Teachers, thank you for taking the time to do this survey. Please read each question and rate your answer on a scale of one (1) to (5) with 1 being very little or disagree and five being a lot or strongly agree.

Balanced School Calendar (BSC) school- A school calendar that runs year-round with multiple three week breaks throughout the year instead of a traditional three-month break over the summer.

1. I think students would learn more in a Balanced School Calendar (BSC) School.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
strongly oppose/ I do not oppose I strongly  
disagree or disagree agree

2. I think there will be less academic regression having multiple three week breaks throughout the year as opposed to one long three month break in the summer.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
strongly oppose/ I do not oppose I strongly  
disagree or disagree agree

3. I think discipline/classroom disruptions would be fewer in a BSC school.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
strongly oppose/ I do not oppose I strongly  
disagree or disagree agree

4. I think students in a BSC school would have greater access to support services, such as, health services, counseling services, physical activity, and family support services (DFS/DYS).

1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
strongly oppose/ I do not oppose I strongly  
disagree or disagree agree

5. If offered a contract to teach in a BSC school and a traditional calendar school for the same compensation amount, I would choose to teach in the BSC school.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
strongly oppose/ I do not oppose I strongly  
disagree or disagree agree

6. I think that there would be more opportunities in a BSC school to build strong relationships with students to aid in their educational and social development.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
strongly oppose/ I do not oppose I strongly  
disagree or disagree agree

Balanced School Calendar Administrator Survey:

Administrators, thank you for taking the time to do this survey. Please read each question and rate your answer on a scale of one (1) to (5) with 1 being very little or disagree and five being a lot or strongly agree.

Balanced School Calendar (BSC) school- A school calendar that runs year-round with multiple three week breaks throughout the year instead of a traditional three-month break over the summer.

1. I believe that professional learning opportunities would be enhanced in a BSC school.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
strongly oppose/ I do not oppose I strongly  
disagree or disagree agree

2. I believe there would be less teacher stress in a BSC school.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
strongly oppose/ I do not oppose I strongly  
disagree or disagree agree

3. I believe students would have less regression in a BSC school.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
strongly oppose/ I do not oppose I strongly  
disagree or disagree agree

4. I believe student attendance would increase in a BSC school.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
strongly oppose/ I do not oppose I strongly  
disagree or disagree agree

5. I believe students who attend a BSC school would be less likely to become high school dropouts.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
strongly oppose/ I do not oppose I strongly  
disagree or disagree agree

6. I believe students would adhere to discipline structures more consistently in a BSC school.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
strongly oppose/ I do not oppose I strongly  
disagree or disagree agree



Appendix C

Interview questions with Dr. Cindy Crigler, elementary principal, Francis Howell School District and Denise Cummings first grade teacher at St. Monica's Catholic School Kansas City, Missouri.

1. Have you seen any change in behavior since implementing the BSC schedule?
2. Have you seen a change in attendance patterns?
3. Have you seen a change in achievement?
4. How do you handle intersessions (enrichment, etc...)?
5. How do teachers react to a BSC schedule as opposed to the traditional schedule?
6. What changes can a principal expect when comparing a BSC to a traditional calendar?
7. What other information about a BSC is relevant that we have not discussed?

## Appendix D

Interview questions with Dr. Jeannie Steeg and Dr. Charles Ballinger San Diego Public School District (original administrative team implementing year-round education in San Diego).

1. Why did you choose to implement a BSC?
2. If space were not a consideration, would you still be implementing BSC or would you be using a traditional schedule?
3. What strengths does a BSC calendar have over a traditional calendar?
4. What are the weaknesses that you see with a BSC?
5. You talked about implementation issues, what are those issues?
6. How does BSC effect your Title-I Schools?
7. Please talk a little more about student mobility, especially when a student moves from a traditional calendar to a BSC and vise-versa.
8. Since you have both been principals, what do you look for when hiring teachers for a BSC school?
9. Did you notice any advantages or disadvantages with you gifted and talented students?
10. When you implemented the BSC initially, did you have any teachers opt out or try to transfer to traditional calendar schools?
11. Did you feel a higher level of administrator burnout working in a BSC school?
12. How do BSC facilities get there deep clean done without an extended break?

## Appendix E

CHAPTER FOUR  
RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This study's purpose was to examine teacher and administrator perceptions of a BSC calendar. Included in this chapter are the findings and a synopsis of the statistical analyses administered to understand the data as it relates to the two essential research questions. Although this was a joint study which examined both teacher and administrator perceptions of a BSC model, this researcher focused only on the perceptions of administrators. The results and findings of my co-researcher, which focused on teacher perceptions, can be found in the appendix section of this paper (Appendix E).

1. Frequency and response to each research question by Likert Scale.
2. Is there a difference when comparing administrators' perceptions of a BSC to administrators' perceptions of a traditional calendar school?

In order to identify administrator perceptions to a BSC a Likert scale was used. To gain a more in-depth

understanding and to authenticate the study, personal interviews were conducted.

The following pages include the information tables and narratives used to explain the data received. After collecting the surveys, the researcher tallied the information and ran the data using ASP software to obtain the Chi-Square, difference, and P-Value.

After sending out 250 surveys, the researcher received only 31 surveys back, or a return rate of 12.4%. The researcher felt the low return rate was due to the amount of work that goes into the job of a building level administrator. To corroborate the administrators' surveys and to triangulate the data, the researcher was able to collect a vast body of qualitative data through personal interviews and phone contacts. This information will also be included in this section. These personal visits, phone calls, and face-to-face meetings also help to give a more "human" aspect to the data. It is through the conversations that the passion for student success can be felt and heard.

As previously mentioned, the principals surveyed, unlike the teachers, do not represent only Title-I buildings. Therefore, the answers to their questions came from a wider array of socio-economic levels.

*Administrator question #1*

I believe that professional learning opportunities would be enhanced in a BSC school.

---

Table 14

*Summary of Chi-Square Analysis Results by Column for BSC  
Enhancing Professional Learning*

Source	Principals	Chi Sq	Df	p-value
V1	0% (0)			
V2	0% (0)			
V3	22.6% (7)			
V4	58.1% (18)			
V5	19.4% (6)	8.581	2	0.14
A=>0.25	100% (31)			

---

As shown in Table 14, 24 administrators, or 77.5%, responded with agree or strongly agree, indicating that they felt that professional learning would be enhanced in a BSC School. On the other end of the spectrum, zero principals responded with oppose or strongly oppose. The researcher feels that this showed that principals felt like professional learning would increase in a BSC School.

Pam Hankins, Director of Staff Development for Springfield, Missouri, Public Schools (P. Hankins, personal communication, January, 2009), suggested that this response rate was possibly so high due to the "Go! Go! Go! schedule that teachers and principals are always under while operating on a traditional schedule." She added further, "Principals saw a BSC schedule, with its frequent breaks, as an opportunity to step back and evaluate where they are

as a system . . . as a program . . . and would be able to make adjustments in a more timely manner.”

She likened this process to the Continuous Quality Improvement process that is used in the business world. Businesses generally use quarterly sessions to take a pulse of their progress and reevaluate their direction. “Many schools are using a similar model of ‘Plan, Do, Study, Act’ which would fit beautifully into a BSC schedule.” She went on to say that “smaller cycles would allow for more frequent and meaningful reviews. The traditional schedule is a constant flow until summer when there is a sudden stop.”

Mrs. Hankins added that one additional benefit might be the greater availability of professional development opportunities in the off-season. She stated that the current traditional schedule puts such a strain on time for professional development because everyone has the same window of opportunity in which to fill”.

The research is clear that job-embedded staff development is the key to a successful organization - whether it is education or business. Donald Trump spoke to the importance of reflection and planning when he said, “When I started out in business, I spent a great deal of time researching every detail that might be pertinent to

the deal I was interested in making. I still do the same today. People often comment on how quickly I operate, but the reason I can move quickly is that I've done the background work first, which no one usually sees. I prepare myself thoroughly, and then when it is time to move ahead, I am ready to "sprint."

In a BSC school, the natural breaks are available to evaluate and reorganize instruction, so teachers are ready for that next "sprint."

*Administrator Question #2*

I believe there would be less teacher stress in a BSC school.

---

Table 15  
*Summary of Chi-Square Analysis Results by Column for Teachers having Less Stress*

Source	Principals	Chi Sq	Df	p-value
V1	3.2% (1)			
V2	9.7% (3)			
V3	25.8% (8)			
V4	35.5% (11)			
V5	25.8% (8)	10.774	4	0.029
A=>0.25	100% (31)			

---

As shown in Table 15, 19 administrators, or 61.3%, responded with agree or strongly agree, showing that administrators feel as though the stress level would be less in a BSC school. On the other end of the spectrum, 4 administrators, or 12.9%, responded with oppose or strongly

oppose, indicating that they did not feel the stress level would be less in a in BSC school.

Stress is not going to go away in a highly at-risk school. Mr. Juan Romo, principal of the Golden Hill Elementary School in San Diego, California, (J. Romo personal communication December, 2008) said that the BSC approach they use in their district clearly had a direct effect on the stress level of his teachers. He commented that there was always "a light at the end of the tunnel - for kids and teachers." Even for teachers who chose to teach in the intersessions the schedule is different, the mix of students is different, and the BSC breaks up the monotony that a traditional calendar can bring.

Mrs. Robin McColloch, a colleague of Mr. Romo at nearby Horton Elementary in San Diego (R. McColloch personal communication December, 2008), responded similarly. Horton Elementary is also a BSC school; but, unlike Golden Hill Elementary (which is a magnet school), Horton Elementary serves a much higher population of poverty students. Nearly 100% of the population at Horton Elementary is Hispanic. Mrs. McColloch has been a teacher and an administrator in a building which used a traditional schedule. She said that the BSC "made all the difference in the world to her staff." She continued by saying, "When



you work with students who come from such desperate situations day in and day out, there has to be some reprieve. I don't think we could survive this job on a traditional schedule".

What, then, are the implications of this? Mrs. Jaylee Snowden, child and parent therapist with the Burrell Behavioral Health Center in Springfield, Missouri, responded to the topic of teacher stress in the following way (J. Snowden personal communication January, 2009):

"Teachers are under an inordinate amount of stress today. Just getting through the amount of curriculum would be a daunting task, but when that is coupled with all of the other demands placed on them, I think they are often in a very fragile place. When this is compounded by the added pressure that comes from working with children and families that are often in high crisis, it can be a recipe for emotional and psychological disaster. Someone needs to take a real close look at the expectations we are placing on our adults who work with our most at-risk students.

*Administrator Question #3*

I believe students would have less regression in a BSC school.

---

Table 16  
*Summary of Chi-Square Analysis Results by Column for Students Suffering Less Regression*

Source	Principals	Chi Sq	Df	p-value
V1	3.2% (1)			
V2	0% (0)			
V3	12.9% (4)			
V4	25.8% (8)			
V5	58.1% (18)	21.258	3	0
A=>0.25	100% (31)			

---

As shown in Table 16, 26 administrators, or 83.9%, responded with agree or strongly agree stating they felt regression would be less. On the other side of the spectrum, 1 administrator, 3.2%, responded with a strongly oppose and zero administrators responded with oppose, feeling regression would be the same in both a BSC School and a traditional calendar school.

Dr. Sam Gerla is a former superintendent from Prescott, Washington (Dr. S. Gerla personal communication January, 2009), and is the current principal of the school at Lakeland Regional Hospital in Springfield, Missouri. The researchers asked him to comment on his perceptions on student regression and how he felt a BSC would affect

regression over the traditional plan. The researchers felt Dr. Gerla's experience as a teacher, principal, and superintendent of a traditional school and now as a principal of a hospital/school, which serves students who are hospitalized due to emotional or mental instabilities, would make him an excellent resource for this question. His experiences in a variety of training methods and child responses to the varied training enable him to assess all aspects of the program.

Dr. Gerla said that his experiences would incline him to take a serious look at a BSC for public education. In his current position, he only has some students for a short period of time, during their intense treatment. However, he said that many of these psychologically fragile students would be much better served if their routines were more consistent - both at home and at school. "A BSC could be a major step in transitioning these kids into a place where they are mentally prepared to deal with the curve balls that life throws at them." The other students in his program are there on a more long-term basis. These students are currently in a year-round type of schedule.

*Administrator Question #4*

I believe that student attendance would increase in a BSC school.

---

Table 17  
*Summary of Chi-Square Analysis Results by Column for Attendance Increasing*

Source	Principals	Chi Sq	Df	p-value
V1	0% (0)			
V2	6.5% (2)			
V3	61.3% (19)			
V4	16.1% (5)			
V5	16.1% (5)	22.548	3	0
A=>0.25	100% (31)			

---

As shown in Table 17, ten (10) administrators, or 32.2%, responded with agree or strongly agree stating that attendance would increase in a BSC school. On the other end of the spectrum, 2 administrators, or 6.5%, responded with oppose or strongly oppose stating that attendance would not increase in a BSC school. For this question, the three (3) choice is relevant because 19 administrators, or 61.3%, chose this option.

Student attendance is a perplexing issue. Perhaps that is why a majority of the answers were congregated in the middle. After seeing the results of this question, the researchers returned to one of our experts for follow-up. Her answer was surprisingly simple.

In a phone interview, this researcher asked Dr. Jeannie Steeg (J. Steeg, personal communication, December 2008) if she felt that attendance would increase in a BSC school. Her answer was:

Of course not - not at first. A BSC is designed to help students be more successful. The logical progression is that as students are more successful, they will attend school more. Admittedly, that's a long haul and it's difficult to tie student attendance to a BSC. (Steeg, 2008).

When speaking to other practitioners in the field, it appears that BSC did not make much of an impact on student attendance. Dr. Cindy Crigler (Dr. C. Crigler, personal communication January, 2009), from the Francis Howell School District, reported that their attendance was traditionally high in her moderately high socio-economic level elementary school. Conversely, Mrs. Robin McColloch, principal of Horton Elementary in San Diego, reports that attendance was a constant struggle in her economically depressed neighborhood elementary. When asked what the biggest struggle was she said, "During big breaks, many of my families will go to Mexico. Sometimes they come back a few months later; sometimes they never come back." She continued with, "I still fight the everyday struggles that

everyone in high poverty schools face, such as families just not valuing education and not getting their kids to school.”

Considering the comments made by all the respondents, it seems evident that absenteeism is a greater product of social economic conditions and attitudes than the school districts’ attempts to make attending school a positive choice for parents and students. As Ruby Payne stated, “Poverty is a culture that controls attitudes” (Payne, 2006).

*Administrator question #5*

I believe students who attend a BSC school would be less likely to become high school dropouts.

---

Table 18  
*Summary of Chi-Square Analysis Results by Column for Attendance Increasing*

Source	Principals	Chi Sq	Df	p-value
V1	0% (0)			
V2	6.5% (2)			
V3	61.3% (19)			
V4	16.1% (5)			
V5	16.1% (5)	22.548	3	0
A=>0.25	100% (31)			

---

As shown in Table 18, 18 administrators, or 46.9%, responded with agree or strongly agree stating they feel that dropout rates would be less in a BSC school. On the other end of the spectrum, 4 administrators, or 13%, responded with oppose or strongly oppose stating that they

feet that dropout rates would be the same in both a BSC school and traditional calendar school.

According to Dr. Matt Goodman, data analyst for the Springfield R-XII School District (Dr. M. Goodman, personal communication January, 2009), there are four factors that can be monitored in elementary school that weigh heavily into a student's potential to become a high school dropout. They include attendance, discipline incidents, success in math, and success in communication arts. If a BSC can create a more successful student academically, behaviorally, and improve his attendance, then the logical conclusion would be that the likelihood for becoming a dropout would decrease.

*Administrator question #6*

I believe students would adhere to discipline structures more consistently in a BSC school.

---

Table 19

*Summary of Chi-Square Analysis Results by Column for Students Being Adept to Discipline Structures*

Source	Principals	Chi Sq	Df	p-value
V1	0% (0)			
V2	6.5% (2)			
V3	19.4% (6)			
V4	41.9% (13)			
V5	32.3% (10)	8.871	3	0.031
A=>0.25	100% (31)			

---

As shown in Table 19, 23 administrators, or 74.2%, responded with agree or strongly agree, stating that they

feet that students would be more adept to discipline structures in a BSC school. On the other end of the spectrum, 2 administrators, or 6.5%, responded with an oppose, while there were zero responses in the strongly oppose category, stating they feel that students would not be adept to discipline structures in a BSC school

The researcher spoke to Mrs. Dana Dreier, Elementary Principal of the Everton, R-III School District, for her insight (D. Dreier, personal communication January, 2009). Everton is a rural school district that is primarily a farming community. In the paper submitted by the co-researcher which focused on teacher responses to a BSC, teachers and administrators answered this question quite differently (see appendix). When asked to comment on this discrepancy, Dreier responded by saying that principals sometimes have the luxury of seeing a bigger picture than teachers. "Teachers are 'in the mud' all day and can sometimes barely see the progress they are making," said Dreier. "It is understandable that they might not see a BSC calendar giving much of an advantage from a discipline standpoint. In their mind, the same students will still be coming back in a few weeks, having spent time at home with no rules!" She went on to say that administrators often



don't see a lot of the discipline issues that happen in the classroom because:

good teachers know that they have to take care of things themselves, especially with older kids. If a student doesn't see the teacher as the one in control, they will never respect them. So, although a principal might be in the classroom and hallways a lot, he/she still doesn't see all the things that go on behind the scenes.

### *Conclusion*

The concept of a BSC piqued the interest and curiosity of the respondents. Many of those who took the survey wrote additional comments on the survey forms asking questions concerning implementation, rationale, community support, effect on special populations (such as special education, gifted, and transient,) The researcher also received questions from K-12 districts and K-8 districts asking how this type of schedule might apply to their situation.

Clearly, administrators are searching for alternatives to the traditional academic calendar. The results and findings from the administrator questions in this study, when combined with the teacher questions of the co-researcher (found in the appendix section) will give administrators and school boards some direction to begin

their quest for the right direction for their particular school district.

In chapter five, this researcher has included a brief synopsis of the purpose of the study, a summary of the findings, and a discussion section that includes some educational implications. As chapter five continues, several limitations of the study are included. Which will help future researchers realize the pitfalls faced by this researcher and to assist in future research projects. These pitfalls are included as a means of providing clarity and integrity for this project and for assisting future researchers in their endeavors.

## Appendix F

*CHAPTER FIVE*

## CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study is to provide a review of the current literature and to survey teachers and administrators in order to obtain their perceptions of a balanced school calendar. The extended purpose of this study was to obtain information that will be presented to the School Board and Administration of the selected school district. Armed with the information contained in this study, the administration can make an informed decision as to the implementation of a balanced school calendar choice within the district.

With that being said, however, the "true" purpose of the study is somehow shrouded. The true purpose can only be felt as one daily walks the halls of a school that serves a large poverty population. The true purpose of the study can be felt when working with teachers to combat the daily struggles that come from students who come to class without having enough sleep, proper medical care, or good nutrition. The true purpose of the study can be felt when one goes into the neighborhood and meets with parents in their homes. The true purpose of this study was to find a solution to the ever-widening achievement gap seen between

students in poverty and those in higher socio-economic levels. The ultimate purpose of this study was to find a new way to address these and other issues that plague the progress of students who live in poverty.

Very few organizations are willing to take risks. There is strength between tradition and logic keeping them apart. We have a common tendency to oppose change and innovation forcing us to cling to the status-quo (Perry, 1991)

The concept of a BSC is not new. As outlined in previous chapters, some form of a year-round school has been in existence for decades. It has, however, emerged nationally over the last ten years to address achievement, attendance, and discipline (Ballinger, 1995). The design of this study allowed the researchers to garner data that was specific to his region of the nation. This research measured teacher and principal perceptions prior to the possible implementation of BSC in an elementary school. The study was particularly focused on how a BSC would impact students and teachers in high-poverty schools.

#### Summary of Findings

The administrators who participated in this study received surveys by mail. The respondents varied in age and gender and the size and socio-economic make-up of

schools that they represented also varied. There were 250 administrator surveys mailed and 31 were returned (12.4%). To supplement the administrator surveys, the researchers included a vast amount of qualitative data from administrators currently working in BSC schools and experts with experience working with families living in poverty.

#### Discussion

The community of the elementary school in the selected school district is poised for a change. In a preliminary survey (not included in this research project), over 75% of the parents who responded indicated that they would "agree" or "strongly agree" with the implementation of a BSC for their neighborhood school. This survey was conducted at the direction of the associate superintendents as a precursor to further discussions about the direction of the school.

The community researched many innovative options before deciding to pursue a BSC. It was this decision, coupled with the researchers' personal interest in the subject, that prompted this study.

The quantitative data gleaned from the surveys gave the researcher a general overview of the thoughts and beliefs of the respondents. However, it was the qualitative data that revealed the passion and fire that these educators held for their students. Principal Robin

McColloch summed this up in one comment, "Numbers and grades are just marks on a page, but children are wonderful creations that we help nurture and grow". Through the group meetings and the face-to-face interviews, phone conversations, and meetings over coffee with administrators the passion and fire for students was revealed. The researcher truly felt that these informal meetings were the "meat and potatoes" of the research.

#### Implications

As the implications of NCLB become more stringent and school districts struggle to meet the requirements of NCLB, teachers, administrators, and school boards are seeking methods to assist their students in meeting ever-increasing expectations. Although the goal of education should always be to improve student achievement, not simply meet federal and state imposed goals, the pressure to achieve has never been more greatly felt in the school systems across America. The BSC schedule is a realistic way of meeting the academic goals for students in poverty who often struggle to make the same academic gains that their peers from more affluent families.

## Limitations of the Study

### *Geographical*

This study was conducted for one selected school district in the Midwestern region of the United States. Therefore the findings are skewed for this district. Although this study would provide good background for other districts, replication would be difficult due to the specificity to the selected school district. Finally, it needs to be noted that the poverty demographic in this area, may not have the same characteristics as the poverty demographic from different regions of the United States.

### *Demographical*

Only administrators in the state of Missouri were contacted for this study. This demographical limitation was a factor in how the results received. Additionally, the limited exposure and knowledge base about BSC and YRE that most administrators in Missouri have a limiting factor in the results of this study. The BSC concept is common in other parts of the nation and the results could have been much different if surveys had been sent to administrators in other states.

### *Data Collection*

When surveying, data collection focused on administrators only. The researcher feels this is another

area of limitation. If duplicating the study, the researcher would include a parent component. Although parents were informally surveyed to access what type of calendar configurations they would support, this was only a small single school population and the information was not formally included in the research. An additional area of limitation with the study is that it did not include a student component. The researcher believes that it would add validity to include either a quantitative or qualitative section focusing on parent and student responses. Finally, the researchers believe a section dedicated to thoughts and assumptions of educational support staff (such as paraprofessionals, custodians, secretaries, food service employees, nurses, etc.) would add considerable insight to the study.

#### *Survey Return Rate*

The survey return rate was below expectations. Of the 250 surveys sent, only 31 were returned (12.4%). The researcher was disappointed in the low rate of return and believes that was practically due to the large amount of multi-tasking required of 21<sup>st</sup> century administrators. The researcher compensated for this low return rate by including a large amount of qualitative data but still believes this is a notable limitation. If duplicating this



study, the researcher would try a second mailing of surveys to increase administrator return rates.

### *Scholarly Research*

One final area of limitations was the lack of research in the subject of year-round education or BSC. The researcher found himself in the role of trailblazers because so little information, either current or dated, was available. When reviewing sources, it was found most studies cited the same fifteen (15) authors repeatedly. This caused the researcher to be a little unorthodox in the methodology of the research section and use personal interviews. To keep the fidelity of this process as pure as possible, identical questions were asked of each practitioner.

### Recommendations for Further Study

In the P.L Travers book *Mary Poppins*, it was said "Once begun is half done," (Travers, 1934). I believe the same is true for research. However educational research can never even be half finished because student needs are continually changing as our country changes.

If the selected school district implements a BSC school at one or more of its elementary buildings, the opportunity will be excellent for further follow-up research that would link perfectly with what has been

started. A myriad of data could be collected, such as test scores, discipline rates, teacher turnover rates, attendance records, etc., which would be less subjective than the opinions used in this study.

A second interesting study would be student perceptions of a BSC. It seems as though researchers sometimes overlook the most obvious and pertinent source of data available. Nowhere in the research did the researcher find a quote by a student or a reference to students' reactions. In visits to some BSC schools, the researchers visited with students; however, their responses are not included in this report because permission was not requested from parents. The researcher did, however, speak to parents who told him their children loved the BSC schedule. However, no first-hand data from the students themselves is included in this study.

Another area of future study could link more directly to test scores or achievement of students who live in extreme poverty. There is limited availability to any data of that type now as it relates to students in BSC schools. Currently, there is no true measure of performance on a national level. As No Child Left Behind standards become more rigid and students are compared nationally, it will be increasingly important for teachers and administrators to

have every available tool at their disposal to improve student performance.

#### Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine teacher and administrator perceptions of a balanced school calendar and its effects of students in poverty. While doing this, the researcher's initial inclination was confirmed. A BSC approach to scheduling, though not without its challenges, has many advantages for students who live in extreme poverty. One of the greatest advantages is that the BSC addresses the issue of summer learning loss. A secondary advantage, and one that is often overlooked by those who are not accustomed to working with students and families in poverty, is the constant and consistent stream of services that can be offered through a BSC approach. For those who have not worked with students in oppressive poverty, it may seem unthinkable that the school would concern itself with providing medical treatment or consistent meals, yet those who work with this reality every day know the myriad of needs that come to school with students in poverty.

In this study, the researcher devoted a large amount of time examining the perceptions of administrators who worked with highly impoverished students. What the researcher found was a group of individuals who were

vehemently dedicated to their positions and willing to do whatever was best for their students. This dedication is the difference in education and many other occupations. Although it is true that dedicated people can be found in other occupations, those in the field of education generally have an attitude of "service" that often is unseen in other fields. When working with highly impoverished populations, educators almost always have a missionary mentality that drives their dedication to even deeper levels.

The co-researcher on this project focusing on teachers also wrote an all-inclusive summary section. This section is also included in the appendix (appendix F).

## VITA

Christopher S. Smith was born on January 19, 1976, in Trenton, Missouri. He is the son on J.S and Catheryn Smith also of Trenton. After graduating from Trenton High School in 1994, Mr. Smith attended junior college at North Central Missouri College (NCMC) and obtained his Associates of Arts Degree in 1996. After taking some time off from school, Mr. Smith then transferred to Northwest Missouri State University (NWMSU) earning his Masters in 2001 and his Specialist in 2006. Mr. Smith received his Doctorate degree in Educational Administration from Lindenwood University in 2009.

Mr. Smith started his working career working ten years in the hospitality industry. During that time, Mr. Smith worked in various market and sales areas in many different roles including restaurant manager and traveling supervisor.

After leaving the hospitality industry, Mr. Smith began teaching, the field in which he is currently employed. Over the past ten years Mr. Smith has taught in both private and public schools in a wide range of teaching positions. Mr. Smith currently teaching kindergarten at Robberson Elementary School a school serving families living in extreme poverty.