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Characteristics of and Strategies used by Principals who Promote Academic Success in Title I Classified Schools

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by

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Abstract

This research is an attempt to explore the various strategies employed by the principals of Title I schools in order to foster an environment of student progress and achievement. Since the inception of the NCLB Act, pressures have been increasing on the schools, especially on Title I Schools, and on their principals to increase academic performance. The researcher selected four Title I Schools and used questionnaires for teachers and interviews for principals to explore the answer to the research questions. The research philosophy acknowledges both the mainstream approaches of positivism and interpretivism and follows a mixed methods approach. The sample questionnaires were selected with a simple random sampling method. The literature review puts forward a great deal of studies, which show that there is a strong correlation between strategies and techniques employed by the school leaders and the performance of students. Collaboration with teachers, motivation, emotional intelligence, respecting diversity, integration of technology, strategic focus, constant coaching and mentoring of teachers, and others are highlighted as a few of the techniques employed by principals. The data helped in concluding that the prime reasons behind the success of these schools are discipline, collaboration of school leaders with teachers, involvement of principals in every aspect of student development, understanding the needs of different students, tailoring educational styles for different students, and strategic vision. Furthermore, the study arrived at the conclusion that these schools are in dire need of transformational leadership as opposed to transactional leadership from their school leaders considering the increasing pressures on Title I schools.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background of the Study

Existing reforms affecting the United States educational system have added often overwhelming responsibilities to individual school systems which have been required to comply with policies imposed through federal legislation. Because of these reforms, students have been confronted with exhaustive school assignments and standardized testing because educational systems are under a great deal of pressure to meet higher standards for success (Crum & Sherman, 2008).

Crum and Sherman (2008) stated that school leaders must assume greater accountability for increasing student learning, especially in the areas of reading and mathematics. Federal legislation prescribes the proficiency of students in these subjects and each school's yearly progress towards the attainment of such goal. Usually, this is carried out through a deliberate bombardment of examinations and other prerequisites. Continued low performance of students may lead to the shutdown or the state's takeover of these schools (Crum & Sherman, 2008).

When the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation (2001) went into effect, school leaders, including principals, assistant principals, program consultants, school academic coordinators, counselors, and academic advisers were required to act to improve the education provided to students in order to conform to the mandates of the legislation. The legislation placed accountability on school leaders to be involved proactively with the instructional performance of teachers and the academic performance of students rather than merely performing administrative or managerial

functions. Instructional leadership of administrators became the emphasis in schools and school districts (Reeves, 2006).

The role assumed by school leaders also implies enormous change characterized by a need for continuous improvement in education (Mulford, 2003). These researchers found that compounding issues affect the efforts of school leaders toward the attainment of the goals from NCLB legislation. One of these significant issues is the impact generated by the socioeconomic status of many students who may come from less than affluent areas. Smith (2005) stressed that one of the urgent issues challenging those who are members of the educational community is the growth of a culturally and linguistically diversified population. Therefore, educational leaders are required to create and apply strategies to address the needs of this population which may experience under-achievement due its diversity, both culturally and economically.

Principals carry a huge responsibility for leadership in their K-12 schools. Research studies show that the leadership in K-12 schools is hierarchical in nature and in need of a clearly defined and commonly accepted identity (DuFour, 2002; Marzano, 2004). Because of this, the researcher determined to find and describe the actions that principals of at-risk schools take in order to promote student achievement.

Ediger (2009) found through his research that the basic administrative functions of school principals neither portray nor prescribe school teachers as proactive in the campaign for education reform as promoted by NCLB legislation. However, with persistent efforts to sustain and nurture the development of students' skills and

capabilities that answer the need for a higher-order skills system of education, principals need to perform beyond the traditional tasks of administration and management.

This study focused on the efforts of public school leaders who help raise students' academic achievement despite the influence of challenging socioeconomic factors (Kopp, 2008). The researcher believes that this study will assist in creating knowledge of best practices in school leadership which will enhance a goal of increasing student achievement in Title I designated elementary school buildings (Elmore, 2000).

Statement of the Problem

Elmore (2000) maintained the existence of an achievement gap within the American education system. He believed that low-income students and culturally diverse students have been short-changed by the system, while students from middle class to affluent communities are provided with a higher quality education. Poverty is believed to be a major factor contributing to poor academic performance of students, and because a significant amount of students in public schools are designated as living in poverty those who are classified as poor performers are probably from low-income families (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, & Aber, 1997).

A lack of effective classroom teachers, an absence of a quality curriculum that is challenging to learners, and schools that are not well-equipped with technology resources in areas characterized by a high-level of poverty have resulted in low achievement from students in these schools. The NCLB legislation was intended to close a perceived gap in achievement between students based on their socioeconomic differences and as a program to upgrade the American education system by providing uniformity through

standard implementation of a high quality education for all students (NCLB, 2001).

Schools were to be held accountable for student progress with an allocated period of time

and as measured by standardized testing. The year 2014 was established as the deadline

for every student in American public schools to test as proficient in both reading and

mathematics. Schools were, therefore, forced to focus curriculum on reading and

mathematics. School leaders were held accountable for successful implementation of

strategic initiatives related to NCLB legislative mandates (NCLB, 2001).

Schools in the public sector were required to focus all initiatives on improving

student achievement in mathematics and reading by recruiting, training, and retaining

highly qualified teachers in addition to developing a challenging curriculum to guarantee

student success. Principals, and other school administrators, played an especially

important role in working with the problem of underachievement associated with students

classified as being in a lower socioeconomic position. Because of this expectation for

principals and other administrators, the researcher deemed it important to study

successful strategies used by school leaders from high performing schools (NCLB, 2001).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine strategies used by effective school

principals that may contribute to the successful academic performance of lower

socioeconomic schools as measured by the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP). This

research was based on studying the impact of building leadership to ensure the

facilitation of student learning and skills acquisition, regardless of the socioeconomic

status of students in the school. A benchmark of best practices in school instructional

leadership will be established as exemplified by the schools' principals in this study. The rationale for this study rests in the need to gain a greater understanding of instructional strategies employed by effective building principals and their teachers in order to promote success in lower socioeconomic schools.

Research Questions

The study answered the following questions:

1) How does the socioeconomic status of a school's student population affect its overall academic performance as measured by the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP)?

2) How can the use of particular instructional strategies facilitate acquisition of skills by students in lower socioeconomic elementary schools?

3) How do effective principals promote and facilitate student success in lower socio-economic schools?

4) What instructional strategies are successfully employed by effective building principals to raise student achievement?

Importance of the Study

The results of this study are judged by the researcher to be of great importance for all school leaders as pressures created by the expectations for student performance within the NCLB legislation continue to affect teachers, school administrators, and students within schools. Through intensive assessment of outcomes which are the result of effective school leadership, this study may benefit students from lower socioeconomic areas who are receiving Title I educational services, thus providing them the opportunity for success. By means of this study, compounding issues may be raised with regard to

the roles and functions of principals in elementary schools. It will also provide assistance

to educators in the quest for permanent solutions to problems associated with poor

academic achievement and ineffective school leadership.

Definitions

Achievement Gap refers to the statistical differences in scores of students from

diverse backgrounds which were judged to be placing most schools at Risk of failing and

which became the basis for formulation of NCLB legislation (2001). This policy is

designed to focus on what was termed as adequate yearly progress (AYP) required of

students in particular curriculum areas as judged by state standardized testing; it provides

support for students with special educational or language enhancement needs. The

legislation recognized that many of the students who are not making AYP are children of

color and definitely children in lower socioeconomic circumstances who are deprived of

a high standards educational system that may be enjoyed by other students, especially

those who reside in more affluent areas. Thus, the educational system of those with low

socioeconomic status is characterized by the least qualified instructors and the least

challenging curriculum as well as poorly equipped schools (NCLB, 2001).

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) represents a formula published by each state

to monitor the progress of schools based on how standardized test scores compare with

those of other schools every year. It acts as an indication as to whether the schools are

able to meet a targeted goal of proficiency in Reading and Math by 2014. This targeted

goal is contained in the NCLB legislation and requires that every school meet it each

testing year in order to meet AYP and by 2014 that all students attain proficiency in Reading and Mathematics (NCLB, 2001).

Constructivist Paradigm A theory that deals with the way people create meaning of the world through a series of individual constructs. Constructs are the different types of filters we choose to place over our realities to change our reality from chaos to order. Constructivists believe that learning is more active and self-directed than either behaviorism or cognitive theory would postulate. Constructivism divides learning into two types: accommodation and assimilation. The focus is on the individual's desire and ability to learn, and the teacher or therapist is merely there to help guide self-directed learning (Fritscher, 2008).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) This act was signed into law by President Bush on January 9, 2002, and was a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the primary federal law in pre-collegiate education. This act focuses on measures "designed to drive broad gains in student achievement and to hold states and schools more accountable for student progress" (NCLB, 2011).

Positivist Paradigm The positivist paradigm represents distinct concepts that produce constructive results. It involves principles, belief and knowledge that can be directly experienced and verified between independent observers. The positivist paradigm is also known as positivism. Positivism is a way of thinking and is based on the assumption that it is possible to observe social life and establish reliable, valid knowledge about how it works. This knowledge can then be used to affect the course of social change and improve the human condition (Crossman, n.d.).

Title I School (also Sec. 10) as it relates to improving the academic achievement of the disadvantaged (*Elementary and Secondary Education Act* of 1965) pertains to the oldest and largest federally funded program established by the Department of Education. This sought to provide school systems with adequate funding to ensure that at-risk children are given a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to receive high quality education (Department of Education, 2004). This program enables schools with large concentration of low-income students to derive supplemental funds that will help in meeting a student's educational goals. Therefore, Title I schools are depicted as schools receiving Title I funds from the government for the primary purpose of assisting at-risk students, who are defined as those with high numbers of absences, belonging to single-parent homes, low academic performance, and low-income families.

Delimitations

This study is limited on the aspect of content as it only focuses on Title I elementary buildings. The main objective of the current study is to appropriately determine effective leadership practices that result in academic progress. Using the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP), this study is delimited by the criteria measuring the progress of school achievement. The criteria in the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) are in the areas of: (a) Communications Arts; (b) Mathematics; (c) Science; (d) Social Studies; and (e) MAP-Alternate areas of student achievement. There are four levels of achievement including the advanced, proficient, basic, and below basic levels of achievement.

Assumptions

This researcher assumed that better leadership, focused on student outcomes, may be developed among elementary schools in lower socioeconomic communities. The findings of this study will provide feedback with regards to the impact of the implementation of NCLB to address the achievement gap in the United States' education system. It is of critical importance that the best practices of effective school leadership be formulated so as to help administrators or principals of at-risk schools gain insight on how to effect positive change on student achievement and enhance academic yearly progress of the school as a whole.

Summary of Chapter 1

Chapter 1 served as an introduction to the study. Background was provided in order to provide a purpose and rationale which explain the goals and reasons for the study. Objectives of the study are contained in the research questions which deal with the cultural and socioeconomic status of students, particular teaching strategies and their effectiveness in working with these students, how effective principals promote and facilitate student success, and the most effective teaching strategies.

This chapter contains the researcher's position that the study will bear significance because of its determination of strategies that successful school principals utilize to improve the academic performance of students in lower socioeconomic and culturally diverse schools. Chapter 1 contains definitions of terms that will be operationalized during the study.

Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

Literature on school leadership has routinely reinforced the role of principals as administrators. However, with the call for education reforms, the role and function of principals in traditional settings has been drastically expanded as duties and accountabilities become more complex. School leadership has increased importance in closing achievement gaps as evidenced through research focusing on education reforms. Therefore, it is necessary to employ research to establish the best practices in school leadership. The results of this research should be helpful in influencing the decisions and strategic plans of principals in all socioeconomic environments. Topics examined in this literature review include No Child Left Behind, the Missouri Assessment Program, The changing role of the principal, drivers of effective school leadership, emerging trends and implications, at risk schools, and finally evidence of successful leadership in at risk schools.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

The implementation of NCLB forced schools and institutions to evaluate programs to ensure the success and accountability of students at the elementary and high school level. Proponents of NCLB believe that the emphasis on test results will improve the academic success of all learners. Students are now tested in grades three through 12 to determine their progress from year to year. This is designed to help school leaders and teachers to measure the amount of student learning and use the findings to improve classroom instruction.

With the introduction of NCLB legislation, many school personnel felt pressured to fulfill specific demands to increase student performance on standardized tests made upon them by their states (Elmore, 2000). Standardized assessments, which are actually evaluative tests, are the core procedures and performances embedded within the reform efforts under NCLB. In my past experiences it had been a ritual for teachers to wait to hear from the school principal as to how the poor testing performance of students and the school's inability to meet standards can be resolved. Elmore (2000) and Feeney (2009) explained an apparent need for schools to positively change leadership practices. Schools were charged with mandates to implement broad-scale measures designed to improve school performance. Elmore proposed that top management of schools needed to transform its leadership practices if dramatic change was to occur that would result in reforms to the education system.

NCLB is believed by many to be of great importance in enhancing their educational system through closing of the existing achievement gap (NCLB, 2001). States adhere to NCLB legislation by holding school systems responsible for ensuring that students are brought to a high academic standard regardless of their cultural or socioeconomic status.

The NCLB legislation aimed to provide uniformity in educational opportunities for students by setting high standards of academic performance for all students in the United States. The legislation sought to ensure that there was no disparity in all schools existing with teachers' qualifications, classroom implemented curriculum, school equipment and supplies, and standards for teaching. This was made possible through the

policy's intentions to ensure that both high and lower socioeconomic status schools benefitted from the education reform efforts. However, specific inputs to guarantee this were broad and vague (NCLB, 2001).

The top management of schools needs to transform leadership practice; otherwise, no dramatic change is possible that will result in reforms in the education system (Elmore, 2000). In accordance with this policy, the states hold the responsibility of ensuring that students are held to high academic standards regardless of their stature and racial affiliation.

NCLB guidelines. The No Child Left Behind policy was enacted into law as part of a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) which was originally signed into law in 1965 (NCLB, 2001). The legislation prescribed the following guidelines for education:

Standards. Each state is obliged to adopt and define challenging standards with regards to the students' learning needs and capacities. These standards are to be organized to enable them to be of greater use for classrooms. Marzano and Haysetad (2008) referred to two problems which emerged with the standardization process: first, too much content in standardized documents makes it difficult for teachers to apply and assess them for understanding when teaching ; if they tried, it would be necessary to fast track everything in order to cover all material requirements. Second, state and national standards are described as more broad than deep, thus there is little time allocated to ensuring learning of these standards. Also, a standardized curriculum is often composed

of multiple dimensions, which results in difficulty for assessment since teachers may be overwhelmed with both an abundance of skills and content.

Testing/assessments. Students are exposed to numerous assessments to evaluate proficiency in reading and math and to assess the yearly progress of schools toward the attainment of goals. Students are now tested every year to determine their progress from year to year.

Public reporting/data. Through NCLB, parents and advocates can now obtain reported data about schools, districts, and states' education progress that had been difficult to obtain prior to NCLB's implementation. In these reports, schools are expected to provide reports on both test participation and performance for all students tested as well as to provide a separate report for the following groups of students (Cortiella & Quenemoen, 2008): (a) students who are economically disadvantaged, (b) those with major ethnic or racial affiliation, (c) those with limited English proficiency, and (d) students with disabilities (IEPs).

Adequate yearly progress (AYP) accountability. This is the central measure of the NCLB Act for success or failure of schools (Balfanz et al., 2007). This is to ensure that states, districts, and schools perform their duties and responsibilities in line with the provision of high standards of education for all students. This suggests that there should be no discrepancy with the expectations between low-performing and high-performing schools. What is deemed important is that the academic institution is able to meet the standards warranted by the act, and the school makes progress by meeting a goal through testing.

School improvement. NCLB also mandated schools to adhere strictly to reforms and to show progress to avoid sanctions for continued low performance. Sanctions include offering school choice to students, offering before and after school tutoring by an outside agency at the cost of the school, removal of teachers and administration and finally closure of the school. Opposition to the mandates within NCLB was based on a perception that it gave undue power to the federal government instead of assessing the viability and status of public schools and systems (Cailler, 2007). A particular large issue surfaced with labeling thousands of schools as failing if AYP was not met due to testing, and the threat of eventual closure.

Teacher quality. The law is important in the sense that it brought improvement in terms of quality of teachers/instructors for each school. Instructors must be certified in the state of Missouri to teach the specific grade level or subject. In doing so, each state is required to create a system for the provision of fair or equal sharing of highly qualified and experienced teachers across the United States (Elmore, 2000).

Parent involvement. The implementation of NCLB gave parents the opportunity, along with the right, to access information which could influence the education of their children. These rights include the following: choice of school and school district for attendance, graduation rates, student achievement data and qualifications of teachers in their children's school.

NCLB requirements. One major requirement of NCLB pertains to content and performance standards. According to Duran (2005), content and performance standards are considered major components of the national effort for reforms and accountability.

Content standards reference the knowledge and performance standards, the skills that all students are expected to learn in order to demonstrate high benchmark scores or grades. Duran found that teachers' competence in their respective teaching field which used to be judged by their knowledge in a subject area is now represented by teachers using performance standards competently to ensure student performance on standardized tests (Duran, 2005).

Another requirement of NCLB is that consensus be reached on what constitutes content and performance standards. Due to increasing awareness of differences in opportunities for learning among students, the suggestion was advanced that an alternative could be high standards, but not necessarily uniform standards for all. This recognizes that not all students learn at the same rate and speed (Duran, 2005). The state of Missouri is addressing this through adoption of a growth model which recognizes individualized progress by students in meeting both content and performance standards based on a defined starting point of understanding.

Duran (2005) stated the third NCLB requirement is standards-based assessment. Today, the nation is involved with education reform. Standards-based assessment is the operational arm of this effort. Although the main reason for the implementation of standardized assessments is to gauge useful information that can be the basis for the improvement of teaching skills and capacities, some people are also questioning the validity and reliability of these assessments especially in the case of those incapable of processing mental information at the same rate and capacity as an average student (Duran, 2005).

Despite the beliefs of those in support of NCLB in making schools accountable for the high achievement of students and the closure of the achievement gap, some people are still concerned that such accountability does not really work at all (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2008). Many parents are also concerned about the impact of this overwhelming responsibility on their children's physical and emotional well-being (Duran, 2005). Therefore, principals may be motivated to make adjustments as they learn how to effectively deal with diverse reactions to the reforms occurring within schools.

Even before the development of NCLB legislation, standardized assessments were already being applied throughout the nation and were becoming more coordinated and concentrated during the 1980s and 1990s. The influence of NCLB contributed to the increased complexity in the role of school principals with teaching and learning as well as the challenge to increase student achievement within a limited time frame (Crum & Sherman, 2008). School leadership behaviors varied as different strategies were employed to comply with the current ground rules established by NCLB. However, only practices which resulted in an increase in student achievement were regarded as professional development in school leadership.

Enabling principles of NCLB. These include accountability, caring, and learning principles. These principles are based on the work of Leithwood and Riehl's three core leadership practices. They used these three principles to determine whether leaders were demonstrating the necessary practices for success (as cited in Jacobson, Johnson, Ylimaki, & Giles, 2005).

Accountability. The establishment of policies under NCLB was based on the principle of accountability. Growing awareness of an achievement gap between economic and cultural groups in the American education system resulted in the presumption that schools, being in the forefront of educating children, needed to focus on the capacities of teachers to ensure that, regardless of external pressure, student achievement was attained (Jacobson et al., 2005).

Principals are expected to be accountable for student progress by providing high standards for educating a diversified student population. Therefore, poor students, those with disabilities, and those belonging in minority groups or different ethnic affiliations should also be given the same treatment and same opportunities in education as their white and Asian counterparts (Jacobson et al., 2005).

Caring. NCLB also focuses on the principle of caring. It is expected that schools foster a caring environment not only for students but also for parents, teachers, and the community. In this manner, trust is built as well as respect for each other due to the positive relationships manifested throughout the school setting (Jacobson et al., 2005).

Principals can show caring and commitment to student welfare by greeting students and parents at the beginning and end of a school day (Jacobson et al., 2005). Providing a quick response to a student's needs is another example of the caring attitude of principals. Principals can assume a proactive role in their mission to raise student achievement by seeking ways and revising strategies to improve the learning environment, increase student progress, and promote a positive feeling from all members of the school community to attain a goal of raising student achievement.

Learning. Learning principles suggest the need to consider learning not only for students but also for all people involved such as teachers, parents, and the organization as a whole. According to Jacobson et al. (2005) emphasizing the significance of learning implies the following three-core leadership practices: deprivatizing practice, collaborative relationships, and collaborative structures.

Deprivatizing practice allows teachers to de-privatize instructional practice as they see fit for the effective learning of children. Teachers are assisted to find ways to improve teaching through this strategy which is grounded in this learning principle. Examples include sharing of new research findings during school meetings, conducting peer-to-peer coaching, and encouraging teachers to share their teaching in public, which will also upgrade the knowledge, skills, and confidence of the teachers. A second leadership practice is the expectation that principals are expected to participate in workshops with their teachers performing the same activities. With a collaborative relationship, teachers and principals may work side by side in enhancing the learning strategies and curriculum to benefit the students. This enables teachers to look at principals as good models to emulate since they are showing commitment to improving the progress of students and assisting the entire school staff to achieve the shared vision and goals. A third practice, collaborative structures, is the manner in which principals create interconnected communities to make decisions aimed at enhancing students' progress which results from exercising a collaborative structure. Through this practice, principals may opt to develop groups or even committees that are represented by both teachers and parents to ensure a more collaborative structure. In this manner, help may

be derived from all sides and not only from one source. As indicated by DuFour (2002),

collaboration is essential to the running of a school as it serves as a primary engine for

school improvement efforts. In DuFour's (2002) words, "a school cannot make the

transition to the collaborative, results-oriented culture of a professional learning

community without a principal who focuses on learning" (p. 4). Therefore, it is

warranted that the role of principal be transformed from that of an instructional leader to

a leader of a professional community with a focus on learning.

Assessment of NCLB and principal leadership. NCLB was developed with a

base of impressive but somewhat vague and unattainable objectives centering around 100

percent of students scoring proficient or advanced by 2014. At no point did it take into

account the knowledge and skills with which students entered school. For some people,

the implementation of NCLB entails a number of issues with regards to its

appropriateness and implications for students, teachers, school leaders and many more

people in a school community.

A goal of NCLB is that school leaders and teachers be held accountable for the

academic achievement of students regardless of their socioeconomic status. NCLB also

emphasizes the necessity for a greater impact from three properties of an educational

organization: The academic emphasis of the school, collective efficacy of the faculty,

and faculty trust in students and parents (Hallinger & Heck, 1996).

The findings from studies conducted by Flessa (2007) suggested that "Leadership

is only second to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to

students' learning at school" (p. 31). This suggested a focus on the reality of what is

transpiring in society due to the implementation of NCLB; with pressure on accountability for performance, school leaders are most affected.

Stark, Munoz, Winter, and Petrosko (2006) found in their research that the increased pressure of accountability for performance placed on principals adversely affected recruitment and retention of leaders resulting in a growing problem with the achievement gap. Therefore, it may be increasingly important to redefine the position of principal to make the job more attractive thus recruiting more qualified applicants who will become advantageous additions to their schools.

Watkins (2005) advanced his findings that principals need to know how to attract, retain, and develop new teachers. This is important as NCLB made the educational system even more complex for both students and teachers as well. Increased obligations and tasks add to the normal education associated pressures in the school setting, particularly in schools where more students may be classified at risk. Leaders and teachers in these at risk settings are given more responsibilities, which create more stress and cause them to opt for transfer to schools in more affluent environments (Watkins, 2005).

Some react negatively to mandated standardized testing. They question the appropriateness of these tests, especially for students with special needs and/or disabilities (Parette, Peterson-Karlan, Wojcik, & Bardi, 2007; Vannest, Mahadevan, Mason, & Temple-Harvey, 2009). There are many implications of NCLB in the special education arena, which account for the huge impact on the IEP that is supposed to be used for these types of children. Consequently, Reis and Fogarty (2006) suggested that

what is more important is to consider the student's interest and choices so that engagement in learning may be enhanced.

Francois (2009) related through his research that the implications of NCLB on increasing student achievement through emphasis on curriculum and the economic, social, and cultural contexts of schools would be the prime focus. Valenzuela, Prieto, and Hamilton (2007) maintained that the emphasis NCLB places on accountability provides intense pressure for teachers and school leaders to improve the quality of their curriculum and instruction.

Reauthorization and reform of NCLB. Reid (2009) stated that the election of President Barack Obama was marked by continued attention to the education issues surrounding an achievement gap. According to the President, NCLB was expected to continue to operate but with restructuring containing significant changes to the assessment of schools and the technical processes to support those judged to be failing (2009). Reid (2009) presented some of the ideas that could contribute to the promotion of positive behaviors and the prevention of disciplinary problems incorporated within the framework. The following were stressed: early childhood education, reducing dropouts, recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers and administrators, empowering parents, and investing in what works.

Early childhood education is considered a significant investment and accounts for the growing concern from social work practices. The increased awareness of the importance of early education in a child's overall learning development implies the need

to address the socio-emotional and environmental needs of families with young children (Jacobson et al., 2005).

The surging rate of dropouts in middle school has created urgency in addressing this issue and work to provide viable solutions. The use of social workers can promote awareness in students of the importance of schooling and may help in implementing research-based practices to help students deal with external pressures as they attempt to complete their schooling. Social workers must be recognized as occupying a significant role in the educational system (Reid, 2009)

Reid (2009) discovered through research that one of the pressing problems confronting schools is the increasing number of teachers who transfer or migrate to another place to teach or leave the profession permanently thus possibly exacerbating an achievement gap in the education system. For schools in lower socioeconomic communities, a greater demand for highly competent teachers has surfaced. However, the problem is that a significant number of teachers opt to teach in average to affluent schools rather than in schools which serve minority students. Therefore, it is also considered vital that programs be implemented that will help retain high quality teachers and strong administrators especially in at-risk schools (Reid, 2009).

Reid (2009) stated that empowering parents is part of current NCLB initiatives. This is based on the premise that teachers and parents are the two primary forces influencing the students' learning progress. Thus, engaging parents, especially in at-risk schools, can be considered vital so as to achieve the desired goal for closing the achievement gap.

Investing in what works involves using research findings to ameliorate educational programs. Research and development is important for further enhancing the education reforms by delving into potential practices, developing new strategies, and enhancing implementation activities (Reid, 2009).

Wiggins and McTighe (2007) maintained that the teaching profession calls on teachers to also be designers comparable to architects, engineers, and graphic designers. This implies that in the field of education, the primary role of teachers is to design the best curriculum as well as the assessment and instructional methods for children. In the same way that standards and codes inform and shape the work of design professions, teachers are also forced to adhere to national policies and standards pertaining to what should be taught and provided to children. Such standards help in providing a framework as to how teaching and learning priorities must be identified and in guiding the design of the curriculum and assessments.

DuFour (2004) provided insight into successful teaching through his work with accountability measures as evidenced in the creation of Professional Learning Communities as important to schools' functioning successfully to raise student achievement. DuFour's research promoted the basic aim of a school as ensuring all students, regardless of their economic and cultural differences, are learning and not being allowed to fall behind in classes due to difficulty in learning concepts. Instead of continuing with the coursework, the teacher and the rest of the professional team in the school provide the students who are failing in classes with more time and attention until they catch up with the lesson instead of resorting to giving failing marks or subjecting

them to remedial classes. When students experience difficulty with any part of their learning the professional team meets to provide corrective instruction designed to assist the student rather than giving students failing marks or subjecting them to remedial classes. The Professional Learning Community represents the building of a collaborative culture which is committed to enhancing student learning. Collaboration through a professional learning community refers to a systematic process in which teachers work together to assess and improve classroom practices to ensure that all students are learning. Teachers, working in teams, engage each other in a continuous cycle of improving curriculum and classroom instruction (DuFour, 2004).

One way that professional learning communities can gauge their effectiveness is through continuous assessment of their actions and results using data. Common to many schools is what is termed as a situation where data is rich but information from the data is poor, also known as the DRIP syndrome. Therefore, it was suggested that in order to make more of a difference, the professional community needs not only to welcome data but should also learn how to turn the data into meaningful and useful information for the staff to use (DuFour, 2004). In the state of Missouri, one of the pieces of data of concern to administrators is the MAP.

Missouri Assessment Program (MAP)

In 1983, *A Nation at Risk* was published and perceived as an indictment of the apparent failures of the American system of education. This was soon followed with a nationwide effort led by President George H. W. Bush to create national standards for learning. While the National Governors' Conference, convened by the President, did not

result in the adoption of national standards, each of the 50 states began a process of creating its own statewide standards during the early 1990's. Missouri followed its creation of what was termed "Show-Me Standards" with implementation of a performance-based assessment system for all school districts. This assessment program became known as the Missouri Assessment Program or MAP. It was designed to assess the progress of students in meeting the Show-Me-Standards (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [MODESE], 2011).

There are 73 Show-Me standards that were developed by Missouri educators and adopted by the State of Board of Education in 1996. As explained in MODESE (2011), a strong foundation of knowledge and skills in basic subject areas like math, communication arts, science, social studies, health/physical education, and fine arts must be developed as well as practical application of this knowledge in real-world settings.

Goertz and Duffy (2003) explained that the MAP test is characterized as a test which spans grade levels. It is currently paid for by the state and administered at Grades 4, 8, and 10 in the subject areas of reading and mathematics. However, based on NCLB policies, a yearly assessment of student achievement is required, and thus, MAP was restructured to meet the said requirement. The MAP and EOC assessments gauge results through the academic achievement of both individual students and groups of students.

It includes a national percentile rank that helps teachers, districts, and parents understand better how well the students are performing at a national level. It also depicts student achievement based on Show-Me standards that help the teachers assess strengths and weaknesses of each student (MODESE, 2011).

High-stakes testing and accountability policies are here to stay, at least in the near future. The challenge for administrators is to realize the need for change within their role as a building leader.

The Changing Role of the Principal

Amid the promotion of sterling academic standards among students in the K-12 level, the role and function of principals has evolved from an emphasis on administration and management to increased focus on instructional leadership (Crum & Sherman, 2008). Such transformation happened because of the enormous responsibility placed upon the shoulders of school leaders to eliminate the achievement gap and pressures imposed by policies related to attaining high standards in education.

This study was based on researching effective practices, which lead to student achievement especially in schools, which are determined to be at risk. The purpose of this study was to locate and describe effective strategies, which can assist teachers and school leaders in their efforts to improve student progress.

Crum and Sherman (2008) found that both public and individual schools are pressed to meet the formidable challenges posed by legislative acts requiring universal student achievement and excellent school instruction. Great accountability is required of school leaders in conforming to these prerequisites to maintain federal accreditation. The implementation of NCLB across the United States has yielded different strategic initiatives from schools. In these, the role of school leaders has become markedly vital and complex in nature (Crum & Sherman, 2008). Moreover, with recent reform efforts, principals as primary leaders of schools are deemed responsible not only for the

administrative oversight of vital functions of the school, but more importantly, for the increase of student achievement and enhancement of teacher skills and curriculum.

Although it is still recognized that teachers have a direct influence on students' academic learning, principals are also essential since they have the authority to affect change in policies and other academic aspects of the institution and to facilitate the attainment of such goals. Thus, it is of utmost importance that their initiatives and planning for hiring effective teachers, providing comprehensive training to instructors, and instituting effective reforms in the curriculum be sound and effective to make a real and substantial contribution (Crum & Sherman, 2008).

A study by Dinham (2008) spurred awareness of effective practices of principals for increasing student achievement. "Research conducted in 38 public schools resulted in discovery of the following characteristics of effective principal leadership:

1) External awareness and engagement;

2) A bias towards innovation and action;

3) Personal qualities and relationships;

4) Vision, expectations, and a culture of success;

5) Teacher learning, responsibility, and trust; and

6) Student support, common purpose, and collaboration" (Dinham, 2008, p. 58).

These characteristics show a common objective of successful principals to be making certain that students and learning are the focus of attention in their schools. Reid (2009) advanced another characteristic of successful principal leadership. His writing focused on the research about how the culture of the school can affect positive change in

the academic performance of students as well as promote effective teaching. Other

attributes of the principal arising from the assessment of characteristics common among

effective principals include interpersonal relationships, operational style, and personal

qualities or attributes (Crum & Sherman, 2008).

Effective school principals act as forefront instructional leaders, skilled building

managers, excellent HR directors, and capable negotiators (Whitaker, 2003). Principal

leadership caters to a wide array of duties and responsibilities since the time the NCLB

took effect. Findings of a study by Crum and Sherman (2008) suggested that shared

values and qualities of effective leaders especially in times of marked accountability are

needed to develop personnel or staff and facilitate leadership, responsible delegation and

team empowerment, recognition of accountability, valuing communication and

establishing rapport, facilitation of instruction, and effecting change within the

institution.

These themes serve as guidelines for principals as they strive for excellence in

promoting student achievement or progress. This study stressed the importance of these

characteristics serving as powerful frameworks which could help aspiring school leaders

to promote effective learning environments (Crum & Sherman, 2008).

Feeney (2009) implied that one key characteristic, which could determine the

efficacy of principal leadership, is proactive collaboration with followers. Harris and

Lambert (2003) presented five critical features of schools with high leadership capacity:

(a) broad-based skillful involvement encompassing over-all leadership, (b) inquiry-based

decision and practice, (c) roles and responsibilities aligned with broad involvement and

collaboration, (d) reflective practice and innovation, and (5) steady progress in student academic performance. All of these are included in the assessment of leadership capacity supporting school improvement initiatives (Feeney, 2009).

Principals are expected to not only function as instructional leaders but also become proactive in supporting those people who have direct influence on student achievement. Heck and Hallinger (2009) termed this as distributed leadership since it is both instructional and supportive. The effects of distributed leadership are judged to be positive over time as they contribute to improving leadership within the education setting, thus enhancing the role of each staff member and principal's leadership towards fulfilling the mission of promoting higher student achievement. The effects of distributed leadership are judged positive over time as they cater to better improved leadership within the education setting; thereby, enhancing each staff's and colleague's leadership roles with respect to fulfilling the mission for promoting high student achievement and success.

Distributed leadership is a means to alleviate the stressful load given to principals because of the requisites mandated by NCLB. Therefore, in this particular kind of leadership, principals are encouraged to disperse leadership roles and functions within the organization, making everyone accountable and obligated to follow them (Eckman & Kelber, 2009). Distributed leadership differs from traditional leadership, which describes the principal as the sole person responsible for all school activities.

Drivers of Effective School Leadership

Effective leadership is vital to the success of a school. Research and practice confirm that there is slim chance of creating and sustaining high-quality learning environments without a skilled and committed leader to help shape teaching and learning. That's especially true in the most challenging schools.

Emotional intelligence. Challenges for principals have increased because of NCLB requirements resulting in transformation of schools from autonomous to systems-thinking institutions which encourage professional openness to change and strategic initiatives (Moore, 2009). Federal reform efforts related to educational standards and assessment highlighted a need for school leaders and teachers to receive professional development in the areas of feedback and coaching as essential for dealing with school restructuring and to meet the educational needs of a diverse student population. This was deemed essential for school restructuring and for preparing school leaders emotionally and mentally for increased accountability (Moore, 2009).

School leaders must be emotionally and mentally prepared to deal with conflicts and issues that may interfere with change initiatives. This is rooted in the huge demands for schools to attain proficiency through testing based on standards set forth in the state assessment documents (Moore, 2009). Honing emotional intelligence supports effective leadership practices in schools and thus, results in positive outcomes on student achievement. School administrators with high emotional intelligence not only foster stronger interpersonal relationships with colleagues, teachers, parents and students, but

can also attain higher effectiveness in leading and initiating change and reforms in schools (Moore, 2009).

Brundrett (2000) stressed the significance of the relationship between school leaders and teachers in bringing forth the best performances of the latter. Midthassel, Bru, and Idsoe (2000) depicted organizational culture as an important aspect of educational achievement. School leaders are also expected to manage and change organizational culture, which provides an environment conducive for learning and collaboration (Midthassel et al., 2000). Effective principals more often manifest an open and friendly atmosphere while also maintaining autonomy and discretion. Therefore, their influence on teachers is enormous as the latter look to them as mentors in the field of teaching and learning who know and employ effective solutions to challenges existing within the classroom (Midthassel et al., 2000). School administrators with high emotional intelligence are more skillful in influencing, inspiring, and intellectually stimulating their staff for professional development (Moore, 2009).

Applications of reforms in schools is a source of significant changes, which can elicit different emotions from a wide variety of people. School leaders face real challenges in developing their abilities to successfully work with the emotions of people affected by change (George, 2000). Principals are expected to be emotionally prepared to deal with conflicts that may arise in the aftermath of huge reforms in the American school system as depicted through "moving teachers from isolation to collaboration, changing focus from teachers to student learning, implementing structures and processes

that systematically monitor student learning and increase accountability, and distributed leadership" (Moore, 2009, p. 22).

One strategy for building emotional intelligence in the members of a school's staff is through cultivating commitment to the organization's mission (Moore, 2009). Moore (2009) proposed that the use of coaching and feedback is important in promoting skills and knowledge that can assist with the development of emotional intelligence. Moore maintained that the development of emotional intelligence differentiates successful from mediocre principals. The differences are found by analyzing principals' competencies in factors associated with emotional and social intelligence such as the following: self-confidence, self-control, consciousness, achievement orientation, initiative, organizational awareness, developing others, influence, analytical thinking, leadership, teamwork/collaboration influence, change catalyst, and conflict management.

A study by Stone, Parker, and Wood (2005) found that it became apparent among groups containing above-average leadership, higher emotional intelligence was present in them more so than those in the below average leadership groups. Therefore, emotional intelligence is indeed essential for school principals to effectively deal with stress, frustrations, role strain, and conflicts associated with school reform and being a catalyst of change (Moore, 2009).

Ediger (2009) argued for the importance of a good rapport between teachers and school leaders, stating that collaboration is highly needed to effect changes in schools. Negative attitudes toward others should be avoided to promote positive attributes that will lead to effective performance and better relationships. Ediger (2009) maintained

that the resulting climate based on effective leadership towards goal attainment will be evidenced through an enhanced curriculum, which is designed to ensure student learning.

Instructional leadership. Trammel, Cartner, and Love (2009) reviewed the implications of NCLB for the role of the principal and suggested that instructional leadership be a major focus for all school principals. Salder found four separate roles for a principal as an instructional leader: (a) as a resource provider who practically offers service to organize personnel and resources; (b) as an instructional resource who sets expectations for continuous improvement of learning program and participates proactively in the teaching process and staff development; (c) as a communicator who avidly commits to attainment of targeted goals by means of articulating vision and systemic plans of achieving this vision; and (d) as a visible presence where the principal must be clear at all times in various school aspects including communication with staff and students.

Quinn (2002) suggested that no particular style of leadership benefits all situations. Therefore, concentration by the principal on the role of management only is insufficient in promoting change or reforms in schools. Instead, educational institutions to be successful should have instructional leaders who can assume all four roles. This suggests that effective performance of the management function is inadequate in promoting change or reforms in schools. Educational institutions need to have an instructional leader to drive an active learning process with experiences for both teachers and students.

School leaders, especially principals who are in the forefront of implementing change and reforms within schools, are required to adhere to ISLLC standards which are detailed later in this chapter. The ISSLLC Standards require adherence by school leaders, especially principals who are in the forefront of implementing change and reforms within schools. Johnson and Uline (2005) maintained that principals need to build a vision of learning where it is expected that high levels of achievement will be attained by every student. However, they continued that vision is not enough since it requires action by the leader within the school as he or she nurtures others to create and maintain a positive learning environment; courage and skills used to perform the four roles of a principal are essential attributes of effective leadership (Johnson & Uline, 2005).

Building a culture of teaching and learning is another important standard, which places responsibility on principals for developing, advocating, and nurturing a culture that is conducive to student learning and staff professional growth. In this culture, students receive equal attention and opportunities for learning as well as existing within an environment which promotes values and respect for everyone regardless of race, gender, income, and physical ability. Effective schools are described through research as providing assurance to students' physical and emotional wellness.

Within an organization, school leaders and particularly building principals are encouraged to focus on the academic success of each student by giving teachers the autonomy to choose strategies and programs which they believe will yield more positive results based on data and research (Johnson & Uline, 2005). Teachers are also provided

with encouragement to grow by developing their skills to provide students with the most effective learning instruction.

Midthassel et al. (2000) advanced their findings that strong leadership is expected from a school principal. Heck and Hallinger (2009) pointed to the importance of school leaders, teachers, and other members of the school community sharing a common understanding of their roles and functions in school improvement.

Technology integration. Kohm and Nance (2007) stressed the increasing importance of technology as a teaching tool to assist in ensuring effective learning. Continued growth in the diversity of students by income, ethnicity, or minority grouping has focused attention on providing necessary technology resources to improve instruction. Diversification of student population requires attention to providing access for all to technology resources and information systems to ensure equity of opportunities.

Funding for schools is considered to be one reason for an existing disparity of technology resources and information systems in some districts (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004). Another reason for a disparity in technological resources and information systems is a perceived lack of commitment to adapt classrooms to meet the physical needs of technology, which can further widen the achievement gap (Solomon & Widerhorn, 2000).

Song and Owens (2009) advanced their findings that many believed that with educational reform, most of the gap in academic achievement would be answered by school administrators through the use of technology. The study's findings showed the effectiveness of adapting technology to both English and Language Arts classrooms to

enhance the achievement of student learning outcomes. The specific use of technology as a visual learning tool was determined important to developing a higher level of thinking in the classroom.

Another significant impact of technology in learning is the utilization of the internet and Web-based instructional tools by teachers in their classroom presentations. However, this has become less important than student use of computers. Previously reported research revealed that factors included with diversification such as socioeconomics, ethnic heritage, and minority groupings play an important role in the ability of teachers to adopt and integrate technology in the classroom (Song & Owen, 2009). There is a discrepancy between schools with high and low socioeconomic status in the areas of student resources, which is made even more apparent by the amount of technology available.

Song and Owens (2009) found a major concern of urban school instructors with integrating technology in the classroom to facilitate learning outcomes among students. They stressed that the effective use of educational technology implies advantages on the part of students and the school as well, especially if the applications have adequately targeted the curriculum objectives, opportunities for student collaboration, and inquiry-based learning.

Technology is deemed essential to learning today, it is important that it be made accessible to all learners, including children with disabilities. Therefore the concept of Assistive Technology (AT) was introduced. Assistive technology (AT) is available to help individuals with many types of disabilities — from cognitive problems to physical

impairment. Citing the 2004 *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement* Act

(IDEA), Parette et al. (2007) described this concept as pertaining to "any item, piece of

equipment, or product system whether acquired commercially, modified or customized,

which is used to increase, maintain or improve functional capabilities of individuals with

disabilities" (p. 22).

Due to the strict mandates of NCLB for the academic progress of all children,

regardless of stature or condition, principals as instructional leaders are compelled to

initiate and develop strategies which address the needs of all children, regardless of their

grouping. This necessitates that teachers and principals seek help from other resources to

address the needs of these students. Song and Owens (2009) emphasized a supportive

role for leadership if educational technology was to be successfully applied.

Motivation. Hoy, Tarter, and Hoy (2006) defined motivation as a psychological

element designed to help an individual to focus on his or her goals and to persevere

towards attainment of these goals. They pointed to motivation as readily observed in the

efficiency and effectiveness of principals in a school setting. The implication is that

principals lacking adequate motivation may not perform well in a school setting. The

implication here is that principals lacking adequate motivation may not be able to work or

perform well in accordance to varied tasks and assignments entrusted to them.

Motivation is a focus for ongoing professional development of current and

aspiring administrators and school principals (McCollum & Kajs, 2009). Current school

administrators who face the present realities of accountability for student achievement

may assess their own motivation based on their actions thus acquiring the needed input to

strengthen their leadership abilities. The researcher stressed the importance of having highly motivated building principals as the key to ensuring successful learners (Ormrod, 2006).

Renchler (2002) wrote from his research that effective schools are composed of both highly motivated school leaders and highly motivated students. Effective principals contribute to development of an organizational culture in which there is a strong presence of motivation to perform effectively to increase student achievement. Motivation arises when school leaders and teachers work together to provide students with the opportunity to participate in meaningful academic performances.

Marzano (2004) ascertained that students need to be provided with academically enriching experiences, especially those who are considered living in environments that do not provide this naturally. Teachers and school leaders can ensure that experiential learning approaches are provided to enhance the academic background knowledge of all children no matter their background. Motivation can enhance the performance of a leader and maximize his or her potential thus ensuring that all behaviors and thoughts are directed towards the attainment of the goal and fulfillment of the mission.

Moore's (2009) research resulted in encouragement of an initiative implementing change in the behavior of staff in a school so they align with the professional development initiative provided; this initiative being promotion of motivation through coaching and ongoing feedback. The primary goal of school leaders is not only to be highly motivated themselves, but to also influence the beliefs and actions of the entire school towards a common goal or direction. High levels of motivation among teachers

and students can be achieved through mentoring and feedback. Unfortunately, according to Moore (2009), these two strategies are often limited and sometimes scarce within school settings. Watkins (2005) found that mentoring novice teachers offered a common and effective method to initiate positive results for both students and teachers in schools found to be effective at promoting student achievement. Moore (2009) concluded that a commitment to change requires restructuring and redesign of schools based on dealing with all possible scenarios. Any new process can be expected to endure negativity, resistance, and even turmoil during its implementation. Emotions are powerful tools during the process of change and leaders must be prepared to deal with these when taking responsibility for leading reform.

Strategic leadership. Whitaker (2003) highlighted a necessity for principals to be strategic as they make plans to initiate and implement reforms in the school to focus directly on student progress and achievement. He stressed that principals must have a deep understanding of the problems and issues influencing the poor performance of students and therefore provide strategies that will help in the resolution of the problem (Whitaker 2003).

Ediger (2009) suggested that principals implementing reforms in school choose a strategic framework to assist children who are having difficulty in attaining curriculum objectives. He proposed a series of sequentially organized learning activities or tasks which provide feedback to the student upon completion and which enable the student to attain complex objectives through incremental successes. Another strategy is to direct principals to assist teachers in creating benchmark tasks which could help students

understand the framework surrounding the original complex goal. The role of principals is to provide guidance to teachers in designing learning experiences which contain feedback to both teachers and students as learning experiences are aligned to the primary focus or goal of each lesson (Ediger, 2009).

The basic premise of strategic leadership lies in the development of better ideas or concepts that are likely to assist in effective reforms within schools which are successful in increasing academic achievement of students. Among these ideas or concepts are methods or tools for instruction including the use of technology and acquisition of skills and methodologies (Whitaker, 2003). Some of these include methods or tools for instruction like technology adoption and acquisition of appropriate skills and methodologies (Ediger, 2009).

Assisting teachers as they guide students in a process of learning is a primary goal for leaders in the school. According to Jacobson et al. (2005), one of the manifestations of effective school leadership includes the aspect of "developing people." There is need to provide continuous professional development to the staff as a part of the strategic effort to upgrade knowledge and skills in teaching.

Continuing professional development allows principals to influence the teachers' behavior toward achieving the same desired goal since it creates an atmosphere in which intellectual stimulation and collective support for teachers are provided. In-service education programs are a good manifestation of this strategy where teachers are given the opportunity to acquire important concepts and enhance skills through workshops that can also be practically applied to classroom settings (Ediger, 2009).

Principals are also expected to "set directions" - a phrase that refers to the ability to set shared goals that will encourage everyone to have a sense of common purpose. This aspect of leadership allows principals to set clear goals or direction in a way that they articulate a common vision and expect high performance from the teachers as a reflection of the initiative to attain the set goals (Jacobson et al., 2005).

Professional knowledge. Leadership traits determined by Hopkins (2008) include not only professional subject matter knowledge, but problem-solving skills as essential attributes that leaders should possess due to the complexity of the roles played by those who are principals in schools. Hopkins (2008) suggested that leaders need to become visible, have a vision and clearly communicated plan, as well as trustworthiness, as well as the ability to include others in the decision making process. Murphy and Shipman (1999) wrote that knowledge and disposition are measures in the core objective of development ISSLC standards on individual attributes of school principals. Leadership traits under the ISSLC standards are inclusive of the areas of knowledge, dispositions, and performances and include six specific standards as follows: The standards articulate that school principals are responsible for the following:

1. "Facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community;

2. Advocating, nurturing, and sustaining school culture and instructional programs conducive to student learning and staff professional growth;

3. Ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment;

4.   Collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse

community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources;

5.   Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner; and

6.   Understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social,

economic, legal, and cultural context" (MODESE, 2012 p. 308).

Administrative programs are developed around the ISLLC standards ensuring

all potential administrators have been developed in the six core areas necessary to be

successful.

Authentic leadership. Begley (2006) argued that the leadership of principals

needs to emulate the actions and behaviors of recognized leaders in the profession. It is

also important for the principals to make leadership practices authentic. Authentic

leadership is that which has been used by those in leadership roles and which has been

demonstrated as effective practices in leadership. According to Begley (2006),

"authentic leadership is a metaphor for professionally effective, ethically sound and

consciously reflective practices in educational administration"(p. 163). The work of

Michael Hyatt titled *The Five Marks of Authentic Learning* stated that the primary

characteristics of authentic leaders are evidenced through their possession of insight or a

vision in addition to wisdom. Possession of these attributes will enable leaders to look at

complex situations, gain clarity and determine a course of action. Authentic leaders are

additionally reported to demonstrate initiative; they go first. They don't sit on the

sidelines. They do not ask others to do what they are unwilling to do themselves.

Authentic leaders are those who exert influence and are those who are contagious.

People 'catch' what they have. People are drawn to their vision and their values. Authentic leaders additionally have impact; the world is changed because of their leadership. Finally, authentic leaders exercise integrity (Hyatt, 2010).

These attributes will enable leaders to transform from mere idealistic advice into something that is more relevant that can be utilized to make learning more effective. In this manner, principals will be more sensitive to the values orientations of other people encompassing students, teachers, parents, and community members with whom they interact (Hyatt, 2010).

Begley (2006) proposed that principals should define their values and adapt them to the needs of the educators they serve thus practicing effective leadership grounded in established values. An example of this would be the authentic leader striving to fulfill the roles of and function as a true leader who understands the values of his or her followers.

Emerging Trends and Implications

School leaders should be aware of emerging trends in education, which can affect their efforts to narrow the achievement gap. These trends are explained in succeeding sections of this chapter and they pertain to increased diversity among learners, poverty, rapid technological changes, and increased governmental accountability.

Increased student diversity. Leone, Warnimont, and Zimmerman (2009) suggested that principals focus on creating school cultures that are noted for having a safe and caring environment which is conducive to learning and which encourage staff to try different instructional methodologies to ensure that children are provided with the best possible quality of learning. They took the position that principals should also be trained

to recognize the individual talents of students within a diversified population and to promote an inclusive and multicultural education centered on a global perspective. Their belief is that principals have a responsibility to develop teachers professionally, particularly in their knowledge of the needs of students in a diversified population.

Broadening of 'haves' and 'have-nots' (poverty). Leone et al (2009) suggested that principals apply remedies to address a widening gap between 'haves' and have not's'. School principals are responsible for making financial decisions that are wise and that make proper provision of resources to students to enhance learning outcomes. (Gendron & Faherty, n.d.) The authors suggested that a six-step process be followed to ensure that all students' and employees' interests are met by the budget. Principals also need to encourage teachers to provide students with equal opportunities for every resource and at the same time, ensure all are given adequate support regardless of their socioeconomic background.

Leone et al. (2009) continued that it is also vital for principals to serve as intermediaries between teachers and boards of education. Principals can serve to encourage top management and boards of education to provide incentives as part of an attractive remuneration package designed to retain the best of a teaching staff. Principals are also encouraged to work with teachers to promote learning and professional development that will address the need to provide support to students in low-income families

Rapid changes in technology. Leone et al. (2009) researched advancements in the use of instructional technology and suggested that one of the main tasks of a principal

should be encouraging and supporting technology for learning. Students in this age of

readily available information are very willing to engage in technology-driven learning

activities. Therefore, it is incumbent on principals to learn how to address issues such as

complexity and inadequacy of skills to employ technology, which adds to teachers'

hesitation to adopt technology in the classroom. Principals can provide programs, which

support the importance of technology as an effective instructional tool for teachers

(Leone et al., 2009).

Persistent governmental accountability. Leone et al. (2009) maintained that

one of the main functions of principals in relation to the increased demand for

accountability is the empowerment of the staff. Consequently, principals are required to

update results from the school's efforts with students so that proper resources and support

may be provided, particularly since the entire school should be working together to

ensure student success. Also, it is important that principals continually develop strategies

to implement proven programs that will assist in keeping the school in compliance with

accountability mandates (Leone et al., 2009).

At-risk Schools

The main goal of NCLB is to improve student achievement through closing a

perceived gap within the educational system as evidenced through both a wide

discrepancy among students in academic achievement and learning advantages. Zhang

and Cowen (2009) found that schools containing students from lower socio-economic

groups and with predominantly minority populations suffer consequences associated with

a lack of adequate school equipment, incompetent teachers, and a curriculum that is not showing evidence of being responsive to the needs of students.

According to Elmore (2000), poverty is a huge issue that impacts all sectors of society. Among developed nations, the United States has the highest rate of child poverty, one in four children, among developed nations. Hoy et al. (2006) wrote that the most evident consequence of this was the close relationship between socioeconomic status and achievement scores on standardized tests. NCLB legislation resulted from this situation.

A major concern for many parents, teachers, leaders, and other community members lies in narrowing or even closing the achievement gap in education to ensure that all students are provided the best instruction regardless of their ethnicity or socio-economic status. NCLB was the first piece of legislation among all previous educational reforms, which sought to provide parents with the ability to arrive at an informed choice of public education for their children. NCLB requires that public schools identified through standardized testing as failing to meet established standards are obligated to identify for parents alternative schools for student attendance or supplemental services (Zhang & Cowen, 2009).

Acevedo-Garcia, Lochner, Osypuk, and Subramanian (2003) sought to answer questions about what was behind the marked failure of schools. Their studies confirmed that the underprivileged socio-economic background of the student population in a community was a major reason for academic failure. Kopp (2008) stressed that lower income communities are beset with overwhelming challenges associated with poverty

such as children who suffer from inadequate health care and housing and lack of access to high quality pre-school programs, which put them at even greater risk when placed on the same field with students from more affluent communities. These conditions result in more problems as it becomes difficult to recruit and retain quality teachers, funding is inadequate to attract needed resources, the curriculum becomes less challenging since changes are not available for financing, and the school becomes geographically isolated due to movement of its population (Roscigno et al., 2001). In addition to socioeconomic status, teachers' lower expectations for student achievement which are often based on misconceptions and false assumptions also contribute to the underachievement of students (Smith, 2005). Smith (2005) maintained that these factors can combine to hinder the possibility of extending the learning capacity of all children thus contributing to low self-esteem as manifested in poor academic performance.

The term achievement gap, as defined by Smith (2005) and Fanning (2007), describes the differences in student performance on examinations and graduation rates between middle class white students and students of color. Smith (2005) reported that according to results generated through the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), a large percentage of African-American and Hispanic students scored significantly lower than White and Asian-Pacific students in language arts and mathematics. These rates include proficiency scores in language arts and mathematics.

Midthassel et al. (2000) presented research demonstrating that schools and the society in which they exist are continually undergoing change. Some of these changes call for improvements to the school curriculum. Stoll, Reynolds, Creemers, and Hopkins

(1996) clarified that these changes are usually termed as reforms based on a premise that schools can, with proper interventions, make positive change (Stoll et al., 1996).

Johnson and Johnson (2012) concluded that while the intent of the policies contained in the NCLB legislation is good, there has been much concern expressed about the appropriateness of its provisions in the area of student achievement regarding mandated standardized testing. They concluded that "Group standardized tests inaccurately assess individual strengths and weaknesses and the results are unreliable" (p. 1).

Johansson (2004) stated that school leaders are expected to take greater responsibility for all school matters from key resources for building and maintaining teams of educational professionals which work toward achieving effective change and reform. Smith's (2005) research demonstrated that effective leaders incorporate cultural diversity training in their organization to assure a learning environment free from stereotyping and racial discrimination. Goddard and Clark (2007) pointed to what they termed the necessity for avoiding complacency and to continually seek initiatives designed to contribute to improvement of institutions. They believed there is need for school leaders and teachers to continually seek improvement rather than falling in to complacency.

Berry (2008) indicated that a high rate of teacher turnover is a major problem in schools that are termed as disadvantaged. He explained that offering high salaries to teachers to work in schools designated as having students with special needs did not alleviate the shortage of good teachers available for these assignments. A school

environment encompassing comfort, safety, and organization was a more important factor influencing the decision of a teacher to want to become a member of the faculty and to stay or leave the school. Berry (2008) pointed to the most important aspect of the environment as encompassing the teacher's relationship with principals, colleagues, students, and parents.

Evidence of Successful School Leadership in At-risk Schools

According to Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson (2005), effective leadership involves participation in creating school curriculum and student assessment designs. The key findings of the study regarding the essential elements of effective leadership were the following: supporting effective teachers and implementation of effective processes.

The Brownsville Independent School District (BISD), according to Dilster and Fels (2009), houses one of the most underprivileged student populations in the United States. The researchers found that underprivileged students are classified as those who come from families with a lack of educational experiences due to an unstable family background, who live in substandard housing, and live in families where the family's living expenses are largely covered by welfare payments. Most of these underprivileged students have limited English proficiency. BISD addresses these problems by committing its principals to assuming effective leadership grounded in shared responsibility for ensuring that all students learn. Successful leadership is based on involving school personnel and parents in understanding and committing to the vision and values of the school district and its individual schools and in engaging with the

decision-making process. Everyone in the school district assumes responsibility for serving the needs of the student population, thus holding themselves accountable for results.

The school district in this community adheres strictly to the processes contained within the NCLB legislation and works to ensure that principals are held accountable for implementation. Tupa and McFadden (2009) pointed to the necessity for principals to take responsibility for instructional leadership while maintaining a proactive relationship with their teachers.

A study by Jacobson et al. (2005) established that the impact of informal accountability in the form of peer pressure is a successful strategy for some schools like the Coleman, Fraser, and Hamilton schools. In these schools, teachers are pressured to perform to the best of their abilities as they see their colleagues performing under the same pressure (Moos, Johansson, & Day, 2011). Teachers become motivated because they feel all are working together towards attainment of the same goal. Due to teamwork resulting from peer pressure, teachers in these schools developed a positive intrinsic motivation to succeed.

Principals in these schools were seen as strong instructional leaders who engaged their faculty in collaborative learning based on program initiatives that stressed shared responsibilities for students' learning on the part of parents, faculty, and the entire community. In the Fraser Academy, the principal showed genuine care for students, teachers, and the entire organization. This care was manifested through a sense of control and orderliness and through the provision of safe working conditions for teachers.

Jacobson et al. (2005) maintained that the real mission of principals should be to promote a better place for students to learn and teachers to work. The principal of Hamilton School exhibited a consistently positive and caring attitude with students and staff. She was never too busy to listen to the concerns of anyone and worked to promote a better understanding and deep relationship with her colleagues and their students (Jacobson et al., 2005).

The principal at Kelly Middle School shared research with the teachers to assist them to increase their knowledge and strategies for teaching. Jacobson et al. (2005) stated that peer coaching was also taught, modeled, and conducted in order to boost the confidence of teachers and assist them to derive more insight and expertise in their respective teaching area(s). Peer coaching is also a strategy in the Fraser School. Teachers are encouraged to publicly share their teaching strategies and to learn from other teachers effective teaching practices through practicing these strategies and receiving feedback (Jacobson et al., 2005).

Teacher attendance and participation in workshops with their principals has also yielded positive results in the four schools based on Jacobson et al.'s (2005) research. Teachers were encouraged to read professional journals and other publications and to follow these readings with discussion, which provides encouragement and motivation to teachers to emulate the school leadership actions. Jacobson et al. advocated that school leaders should consciously strive to set an example for teachers to follow when working in schools.

Moos et al. (2011) stated Mentoring of teachers to learn how to assume leadership responsibilities is considered an effective tool to increase their confidence and capability as instructors. Mentoring provides teachers with awareness of the responsibilities inherent with advanced positions and enables them to gain motivation to perform at their very best (p. 26).

Jacobson et al. (2005) found an example of successful mentoring in the Coleman and Hamilton Schools where principals took specific steps to mentor female teachers in preparation for their assumption of leadership roles. These steps, termed as mentoring strategies, led the schools to achieve success and highlighted inclusiveness over discrimination when it came to providing support and guidance for teachers. Moos et al. (2011), found that mentoring made a difference in principals' abilities to attain success in challenging school contexts.

This study is similar to that completed by Jacobson et al. (2005); it focused on effective leadership. It differs based on the addition of a concentration of characteristics of effective principals in elementary schools. The researcher intends to address the issue of effective leadership by augmenting the findings of Jacobson et al. (2005) who focused on middle schools.

In another study, Ebersole and Mince (2007) examined the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC), a national leader for outcome assessment, to determine evidence of best practices in school leadership CCBC encouraged its faculty members to participate in all stages of the assessment. In doing this, CBCC sought to help transform the school into one that provides the best learning environment. This study noted that

what makes the institution successful with the assessment process is the value it places on

trust, improvement of pedagogy, and building of community within the school. The

present study used the major variables within Ebersole and Mince's (2007) college study

on the elementary school level.

Summary

The review of literature provided research on current reforms in the field of

education and the roles of school principals as leaders facing accountability for academic

achievement of students determined by results from testing administered through the

MAP as mandated through NCLB legislation. It also provided research on social issues

which school leaders must face and address in their increasingly complex role of

promoting academic success in Title I classified schools. Specific social issues

confronting school leaders include socioeconomic challenges faced by many students,

minority students, students living in poverty, and students experiencing difficulties due to

their ethnicity. School leaders must also develop strategies to work successfully with

students who have special needs and/or disabilities. Chapter 3 describes and explains the

characteristics of and strategies used by principals who promote success in Title I

Classified Schools based on the standards within the Missouri Assessment Program.

Chapter 3 contains the research design and research tools (both quantitative and

qualitative) employed by the researcher to answer the research questions and test the

hypotheses.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In Chapter 2 research was presented which focused on the role of school leaders in enhancing the performance of at-risk students in lower socioeconomic communities. It established that the school leader has a significant role to play, especially during a time in which educational reform is demanded by educational authorities to close achievement gaps deemed to be caused by poverty and other disparities in the country's educational systems. There is a complexity of responsibilities which have been assigned to leaders of public schools. Issues associated with race and special needs of children are a part of the challenges confronting the duties of school leaders.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine strategies used by effective school principals which may contribute to the successful academic performance of students in lower socio-economic schools as measured by the MAP. This research was based on studying the impact of building leadership to ensure the facilitation of student learning and skills acquisition, regardless of the socioeconomic status of students in the school. A benchmark of best practices in school instructional leadership were established as exemplified by the schools' principals in this study. The rationale for this study rests on the need to gain a greater understanding of instructional strategies employed by effective building principals and their teachers as a model for promoting success in lower socioeconomic schools.

Research Questions

This study addressed the following questions:

1) How does the socioeconomic status of a school's student population affect its overall academic performance as measured by the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP)?

2) How can the use of particular instructional strategies facilitate acquisition of skills by students in schools located in lower socioeconomic areas?

3) How do effective principals promote and facilitate student success in lower socio-economic schools?

4) What instructional strategies are successfully employed by effective building principals to raise student achievement?

This study intended to provide an in-depth analysis of the important practices that have helped other Title I schools in their efforts to successfully promote student learning despite circumstances within communities characterized as lower socioeconomic which might adversely affect children's readiness to learn. This study benchmarks the best practices used by effective school leaders to raise student achievement.

Chapter 3 describes a mixed methods study, both quantitative and qualitative, used to collect, measure and describe data. The chapter addresses the study's research design, data collection instruments, teacher's survey statements and questions, setting, the sample population serving as participants, and an analysis of the data.

Research Framework

Every research study has underlying principles that form the basis for collecting and analyzing data which form a base for the entire research process. Research methods are generally categorized into two broad groups: quantitative and qualitative (Whitaker, 2003).

In Crotty's (1998) definition of epistemology, the term is characterized by the theory of knowledge that is found within the theoretical frame of reference constituting methodology. Epistemologically, a constructivist's point of view, stresses that reality is socially constructed because of the experience gained by an individual from the environment. This principle suggests that subjective stances of human beings result to varying definition of truth and reality across diverse people (Gergen, 2001).

Empiricism, the other epistemological stance, is believed to be the foundation of positivism, which contends the universal and objective characteristics of reality. In contrast to the perspectives of the proponents of constructionism, in positivist epistemologies reality is deemed unanimous for everyone. Moreover, as the word 'objective' implies, the principle of positivism also manifests the importance of application of science in the search of truth (Darlston-Jones, 2007).

Kohm and Nance (2007) suggested that a researcher using positivist approaches believes that truth can be found by examining, simplifying, experimenting, and refining hypotheses. The key approaches of quantitative methods are observation, experimentation, and measurement, which involve the study of the frequency, distribution, and patterning of observable phenomena and the description and generalization of relationships between them.

This particular study was based on the epistemological stance of 'triangulation' or what Creswell (2008) referred to as a mixed methods approach. In terms of research methodology, triangulation in social science refers to efforts to corroborate or support the understanding of an experience, a meaning, or a process by using multiple sources or

types of data, multiple methods of data collection, and/or multiple analytic or interpretive approaches. This is the use of both constructivist and positivist approaches to the collection and analysis of research data. Thus, in this study, scientific and rational justification were implemented in coordination with subjective construction of insights entailed by constructivism.

The variables studied included school leadership and student academic performance. The study considered the importance of socioeconomic factors such as poverty, learning disabilities, ethnicity, and other risk factors which may contribute to an achievement gap. It specifically focused on the role of school principals and the strategies they develop and implement to compress an achievement gap in schools which evidence the presence of lower socioeconomic factors. By utilizing the components of the MAP, the academic performance of at-risk students was evaluated as well as the effort of schools to facilitate improvement in student learning. Research objectives evidenced through research questions were developed in order to set the focus of the study.

Research Design

This study utilized both constructivist and positivist paradigms with a point of ensuring both objectivity and in-depth analysis by the researcher during the study. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were applied and, through these designs, data were retrieved and analyzed using both the strength of qualitative and quantitative measurements which guaranteed validity and reliability and which was expected to yield more robust and meaningful conclusions (Bryman, 1988).

Before analysis can be conducted an examination of the reliability and validity of each data must be established. Reliability is defined by the National Center for Education Statistics (2004) as "the consistency in results of a test or measurement including the tendency for the test or measurement to produce the same results when applied twice to some entity or attribute believed not to have changed in the interval between measurements" (p. 213). Whereas, they define validity as "the capacity of an item or measuring instrument to measure what it was designed to measure; stated most often in terms of the correlation between scores in the instrument and measures of performance on some external criterion" (p. 218).

A descriptive survey design was adopted for this dissertation. The study examined the variables in question by focusing on the existing characteristics of these variables within their natural setting. The study took the format of a non-experimental and cross-sectional research because the researcher made no attempts to manipulate the variables. Moreover, the study depicted the answers or reactions of the participants at a single point in time or the actual timeframe when the participants are engaged with the survey and interview (Sousa, Driessnack, & Mendes, 2007).

Sample and Setting

The study began by locating schools on the MODESE website that were designated as Title I buildings. The schools selected had to be included in the Title 1 list of schools that were receiving government funding and making AYP. Five of 43 elementary schools in five suburban school districts formed a random sample of schools

participating in the study; each school principal was solicited to participate. One school

district later opted out of the study.

In addition, 10 members of the staff were surveyed from each of the selected

schools, making the sample a total of 40 participants. This was intended to obtain more

information to support and even augment the findings of the principals' survey. Staff

members were selected randomly so that each staff member in the participating schools

had equal opportunity for participation. Simple random sampling is the basic sampling

technique where a group of subjects (a sample) is selected for study from a larger group

(a population). Each individual is chosen entirely by chance and each member of the

population has an equal chance of being included in the sample. Every possible sample

of a given size has the same chance of selection. This technique allowed each member of

staff in the participating schools to stand an equal opportunity of being selected to

participate. The researcher secured permission from the principal of each building to

visit and observe staff members.

Ethics of Research

When conducting research, it is vital to ensure that everything connected with a

research study is in accordance with the guidelines set forth by the researcher's

institution, in this case the Lindenwood IRB. Research ethics imply the cautious

administration of research procedures especially when it comes to human subjects. Since

this study required the participation of human participants, ethical processes had to be

observed. Therefore, the researcher acted ethically in the following manner:

The researcher endeavored to find the right settings for the study and the

participants who would be involved. She then sought approval from the regulatory board

for the research proposal. Prospective participating schools were sampled from the list

provided in the DESE's website. Principals from the participating schools were

contacted by the researcher, provided with an explanation, and asked for their written

permission. Teacher participants were randomly selected by using

http://www.random.org. This website allowed the researcher to type in the total number

of employees volunteering for the study per building, and then allow it to randomly

choose 10 numbers. Those numbers were then matched with staff members on the

alphabetical volunteer list. All participants were provided with an Informed Consent for

Participation form which requested their signature to permit participation. This consent

for participation informed teachers of the following: participation will be

confidential. Volunteers will be placed in a pool where a random selection of subjects

will be made of the school staff. Each will be provided within a written questionnaire

based on specific strategies and processes they employ which are supported by their

principal in their efforts to improve student academic success. Ratings from each survey

(principals and teachers) will be compiled to determine the strategies and processes in

each school which are employed by both principals and teachers in order to arrive at

those which are judged by each to be most effective in promoting student success.

Data Collection

The success of the study also depends on the reliability of data that have been

obtained throughout the course of research. This study guaranteed the accuracy,

reliability, and validity of its data using effective implementation of primary and secondary data collection.

Several research studies were reviewed to gain necessary vital information for an in-depth assessment of the role of school leaders in enhancing academic performance of students who reside in lower socioeconomic areas in Missouri. Through a review of related literature, the author of this study provided better insight into what constitutes good practices which lead to attainment of high performance by students. The sources from where the secondary data were obtained include peer-reviewed journals from electronic databases.

Another important source of data was primary information derived from surveys and principal interviews. To obtain primary data, the researcher conducted a survey of participants within the study school. Participants in the survey were staff members. The survey was based on ascertaining opinions about the current performance of the schools and to identify whether the beliefs and assumptions of principals would be in agreement with those of staff members. Each survey statement was followed by an open-ended question designed to clarify the participant's understanding of the statement and to secure examples from participants of the concepts involved in the survey.

Principals of the four participating schools signed consent forms and were interviewed by the researcher to explore their perceptions as to why they consider their own schools to be successful in enhancing achievement performance of their at-risk students from lower socioeconomic areas (with students affected by poverty, racism, minority groupings, and learners with disabilities). This provided the researcher with

more information about programs that were operating to deal with at-risk students. These findings are recorded, analyzed, and summarized in Chapter 4.

Instruments

Survey. The researcher developed and administered a survey for teachers to determine their perceptions as to the characteristics of and strategies used by principals who promote academic success in Title I classified schools (See Appendix A). She included an open-ended question after each survey statement. Each question was designed to verify participants' understanding(s) of the survey statement and to elicit examples of the content of the statement experienced by the participant.

The survey contained questions that were supposed to delve deeper into the initiated program and how effective it was in increasing the students' academic performance. Other questions that were included sought to identify obstacles along the way and how these obstacles have been mitigated to ensure the smooth implementation of the program.

Interviews. The researcher interviewed each of the four principals of the schools participating in the study. It contained 11 questions which were designed as an exploration of principals' views and beliefs about the different aspects of their school leadership roles (See Appendix B). For instance, it included questions on how principals provide expectations for collaboration among their teachers, how they secure the necessary resources to facilitate instruction in their schools, how they involve teachers in the creation and dissemination of school vision, and the strategies they employ to motivate, inspire, and influence teachers in their schools.

Missouri Assessment Program. Apart from the survey, questionnaire, and interview schedule, the MAP was also employed to assess the performance and learning acquisition of students in each school. The MAP was used to measure skills of the students in reading and math as well as in other subjects that are deemed important. The results of the assessment were used to augment the principals' answers about effectiveness of the school in raising student achievement.

Data Analysis

After receiving all pertinent data from the surveys and interviews, this information was then analyzed by the researcher. As part of the initial procedure, software was employed to provide easier and faster analysis of data. Thus, descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data and the findings were presented using tables and charts. Interpretation of these tables is provided. In the analysis, care has been taken to ensure that the findings of this study are compared with the insights and information derived from the review of related literature. This is done in order to verify the validity of the results and gain deeper understanding of the variables explored by the study.

Summary of Methodology

Chapter 3 contained the research design, research sample, and instruments used in the study. The chapter also attempted to facilitate the reader's understanding of the analysis of results based on the charts and tables generated.

This study employed both descriptive quantitative and qualitative research methods in accordance with Creswell's (2008) suggestion that the interpretive and experimental research dimensions should augment rather than oppose each other. In

doing so, the researcher was able to complement the strengths and weaknesses of the two research designs. Whereas the quantitative design was deemed appropriate for its ability to yield reliable and objective results, the qualitative dimension was also considered useful insofar as it would facilitate an in-depth analysis of data.

Chapter 3 also contained a description of the study setting and the sampling procedures used in the study. The four schools that participated in the study were chosen from a list of Title I schools found on the MODESEwebsite. Through the use of random selection the researcher was able to ensure fairness to selection of members of the staff for participation.

The chapter also considered the presence of ethical considerations, including measures employed to assure confidentiality and the informed consent of participants. Also contained in this chapter were data collection instruments - survey statements, open-ended questions and interview questions, and the influence exerted by components of the Missouri Assessment Program. Chapter 3 outlined procedures to be followed in collecting data for this study and concluded with a description of the procedures to be employed for the analysis of the primary data obtained from the questionnaires and interview schedule. The analysis was done using descriptive statistics with the help of a software program. The following chapter is a presentation of the findings of this study.

Chapter 4: Presentation, Analysis, and Interpretation of Findings

In this chapter 4 data obtained from surveys, open-ended questions, and interviews of principals is presented. This study sought to determine the instructional strategies and best practices employed by principals who were effective in raising student academic achievement. The study made use of descriptive statistics, especially frequency counts and percentages. These are reported in the form of tables and charts. In the tables, F stands for frequency. The data obtained from the open-ended items of the teachers' questionnaire and from the principals' interviews are used to augment the findings obtained from the closed-ended items of the survey.

The following tables offer an overview of school demographic data and MAP subgroup trends. All four schools have between four and six subgroups indicating a diverse and needy population. They made adequate yearly progress per state stands in all of their subgroups indicating success.

School	Grades Served	Enrollment	# of Communication Art Subgroups	# of Communication Arts Subgroups met	# of Math Subgroups	# of Math Subgroups met
School A	K-5	435	5	5	5	5
School B	K-5	378	6	6	6	6
School C	K-5	377	4	4	4	4
School D	K-5	484	4	4	4	4

Table 2: Demographic Data Continued

School	Demographics	Attendance Rate	Teaching Experience	% with Advanced Degrees	Average Teacher Salary	Student/ Staff Ratio
School A	White:69.2 AA: 21.3% Asian: 7.6% Hispanic: 1.7% Indian: 0.2%	95.9	14 Years	89%	$70,399	22:1
School B	White: 67.0% AA: 18.7% Asian: 12.9% Hispanic: 1.3% Indian: 0.1%	95.4%	13.3 Years	86%	$68,587	19:1
School C	White: 65.6% AA: 20.3% Asian: 11.3% Hispanic: 2.7% Indian: 0.1%	95.7%	15.7 Years	88.6%	$68,838	18:1
School D	White: 82.1% AA: 10.5% Asian: 5.0% Hispanic: 2.2% Indian: 0.2%	96.7%	13.6 Years	71.1%	$67,938	19:1

Survey results and principal interviews indicate many common characteristics among the leaders of the four school buildings. They all work as curriculum leaders verses building managers. Their work is guided by the mission and vision with a focus on student growth data. Teachers in all buildings reported feeling comfortable with and supported by their administrator. Each building utilizes some form of professional learning communities; allowing all to work as a team to monitor and support student growth. The success of all four schools is evidenced by the fact that they have all demonstrated growth on the MAP and met AYP.
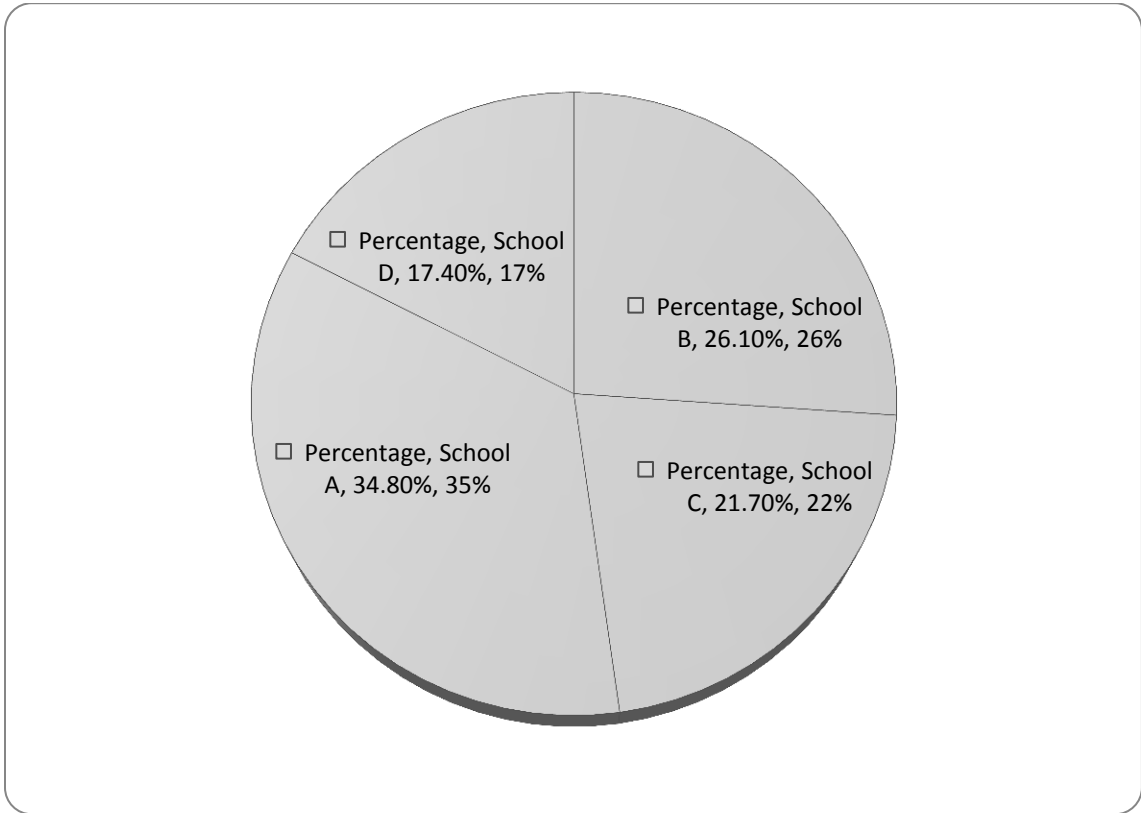
Figure 1. Respondents Categorized by School

Four Title 1 classified schools participated in the study. The data in Figure 1 indicate that of 23 staff members who participated, eight (34.8%) were from School A, six (26.1%) were from School B, five (21.7%) were from School C, and the lowest number of participants, four (17.4%) were from School D. Data were presented according to the order of the survey and questionnaire items. The information obtained from open-ended questions and from interviews conducted with the school principals was presented based on the researcher's determination of key themes. One principal from each of the four elementary schools was interviewed by the researcher.

Table 3: *Staff is encouraged and supported to work together to increase student achievement.*

School		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
School A	F	0	0	0	0	8	8
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	34.8%	34.8%
School B	F	0	0	0	0	6	6
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	26.1%	26.1%
School C	F	0	0	0	2	3	5
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	8.7%	13.0%	21.7%
School D	F	0	0	0	0	4	4
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	17.4%	17.4%
Total	F	0	0	0	2	21	23
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	8.7%	91.3%	100.0%

The data in Table 3 indicate that virtually all members of staff in the participating schools were in agreement with the statement that they are encouraged and supported to work together to increase student achievement in their respective schools. None of the participants responded with 'strongly disagree' or 'disagree.' Only two (8.7%) of the respondents (specifically from School C) responded agreeing that they are encouraged to work together to increase student achievement. The rest of the respondents (34.8% from School A, 26.1% from School B, 13% from School C, and 17.4% from School D) strongly agreed with this statement.

When asked to corroborate their positions through answers to the following open-ended question, "How does the school principal provide for staff at this school to work together?" the teachers indicated that principals used meetings to ensure that staff were working together. In School B, teachers indicated that they are encouraged to collaborate

in planning at least once a week. One teacher in School B said, "The principals have built time into the school wide schedules for teachers and staff to meet. We analyze data, graph student progress, and develop strategies for implementation to guide our instruction." This is also true of School C where grade level teams and committees meet regularly to observe classrooms or to score a sample of district assessments.

According to teachers at School A, teachers are made to feel like they own the change process since the principal encourages their ownership of the school's improvement plan. As with School C, the principal at School A has ensured that teachers are able to meet in different teams and grade levels to "go over student data such as MAP scores and brainstorm strategies and interventions to better improve student success." At School D, teachers are commonly brought together by a "PLC meeting monthly, which includes data collaboration and strategy implementation." As with the other institutions, the meetings at School D are also done in different groupings (e.g. grade level).

Principals indicated that meetings are the main tool that they use to ensure collaboration among their teachers. From the interview data, principals indicated that meetings provide them with the opportunity to communicate their expectations of teachers with regard to student success.

Table 4: *The Principal Ensures That we Have the Resources and Time We Need to Meet the Identified Priorities to Improve Student Success.*

School		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
School A	F	0	0	0	1	7	8
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	4.3%	30.4%	34.8%
School B	F	0	0	0	1	5	6
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	4.3%	21.7%	26.1%
School C	F	0	0	1	1	3	5
	%	.0%	.0%	4.3%	4.3%	13.0%	21.7%
School D	F	0	0	0	1	3	4
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	4.3%	13.0%	17.4%
Total	F	0	0	1	4	18	23
	%	.0%	.0%	4.3%	17.4%	78.3%	100.0%

The findings of the survey indicate that principals in the participating schools ensure that resources are in place and sufficient time is set aside to meet the identified priorities expected to improve student success. According to these findings, 78.3% of teachers strongly agreed with this statement, 17.4% agreed while only one member of staff, accounting for 4.3% from among all 23 respondents, was undecided.

In answering the open-ended question, "What resources and time are provided by the principal at this school to meet the identified priorities to be met to ensure student success?" one teacher from School B indicated that because the principal values instructional time, there are few interruptions to learning. This means that teachers have ample time to implement the curriculum. Additionally, teachers in this school are provided with professional resources such as books and articles and principals ensure that their attendance at conferences is facilitated, said another teacher from School B. At School C and School A, the teachers indicated that they receive sufficient support in the

form of materials and their own professional development. However, one teacher at School C was undecided and felt that greater emphasis is given to data collection, meeting with specialists, and school paperwork (e.g. filling in forms) which tend to frustrate teachers.

When the principals were asked to explain how they went about securing resources considered necessary to classroom instruction, they were quick to acknowledge the contribution of their school districts, which provide funding to enable the acquisition of resources. However, principals are responsible for drawing budgets for whatever funding is received from the school districts, and one of the principals reported that in their school, "a hefty portion of this budget goes to furthering the professional development of teachers" and to the employment of a "literacy coach, math specialist, science specialist, and instructional coordinator who all help teachers access cutting edge instructional strategies while supporting students' needs in each class setting." All four schools reported that they use part of the funding provided by the district to enhance professional development of teachers.

Table 5: *The Principal is Involved Throughout All Aspects of Our Efforts to Improve Student Achievement.*

School		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
School A	F	0	0	1	0	7	8
	%	.0%	.0%	4.3%	.0%	30.4%	34.8%
School B	F	0	0	0	3	3	6
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	13.0%	13.0%	26.1%
School C	F	0	0	0	2	3	5
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	8.7%	13.0%	21.7%
School D	F	0	0	0	0	4	4
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	17.4%	17.4%
Total	F	0	0	1	5	17	23
	%	.0%	.0%	4.3%	21.7%	73.9%	100.0%

Just as with the previous variable, there was agreement among the respondents. None of the teachers disagreed with the statement that their principals are involved throughout all aspects of efforts to improve student achievement.

When asked to specify the ways in which principals involve themselves in ensuring better student performance in their schools, teachers generally cited the meetings facilitated by the principals, which provide teachers with the opportunity to scrutinize data and forge collaborations. One School B teacher said, "Our principals participate, facilitate, and provide multiple opportunities for us to dialogue about where the students are and where we need to take them. They challenge us to step outside of our comfort zones and see students through different lenses, meeting and teaching students where they are." This view depicts a scenario similar to those at School A, School C, and School D where the principals were said to facilitate the setting of goals and staff participation in delineating the steps to be followed in reaching these goals.

Principals were asked to describe their proactive approaches to ensuring support for the teachers' beliefs. The principals believed that "keeping the data out in front," as one puts it, is one way of raising student achievement. Another strategy used by these principals is regular problem-solving meetings to come up with remedial interventions to support struggling students.

Table 6: *The Principal Provides a Clear Mission and Vision for Our School.*							
School		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
School A	F	0	0	1	2	5	8
	%	.0%	.0%	4.3%	8.7%	21.7%	34.8%
School B	F	0	0	1	3	2	6
	%	.0%	.0%	4.3%	13.0%	8.7%	26.1%
School C	F	0	0	3	0	2	5
	%	.0%	.0%	13.0%	.0%	8.7%	21.7%
School D	F	0	0	1	0	3	4
	%	.0%	.0%	4.3%	.0%	13.0%	17.4%
Total	F	0	0	6	5	12	23
	%	.0%	.0%	26.1%	21.7%	52.2%	100.0%

Compared with the other statements on the survey, the statement concerning principals' clarity in providing a vision and mission for their schools was marked by ambivalence on the part of respondents. From Table 6, the researcher determined that more than 25% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with that statement. That noncommittal response totaling 26.1% came from one elementary school, School C in which one-half of the staff marked 'neither agree nor disagree'. However, 21.7% of respondents on the survey agreed and 52.2% strongly agreed their principals provided a clear vision and mission.

There was general agreement (73.9%) among respondents that principals do provide a clear vision and mission for their schools, however the open-ended question asking teachers to write their school vision and mission elicited varied responses. Teachers in the same school were not able to provide the same understanding of the school's vision and mission, which seemed to challenge the principals' clarity in promoting these in their schools. Many teachers in School B and School C said they actually subscribe to the district vision and mission. One teacher said, "We do not have an identified vision and mission. Our work is based on data informed goals." Most teachers at School A gave the same rendition of the vision ("We envision children who will become responsible citizens within the community, country, and world") and mission ("Believe and you will see"). Teachers at School D were also able to render their vision and mission relatively uniformly. Their vision is "continuous improvement of students, staff and all stakeholders" and their mission is "to do whatever it takes to ensure all students reach their potential."

When asked to elaborate on how they involve teachers in creating and focusing on a vision for the school, the principals acknowledged the importance of having everyone on board when designing these two pillars of school administration. "Everyone needs to be involved in developing the vision and working towards the same goal," said the principal of School D. In one of the institutions, this is achieved "through the PLC process (DuFour's model) with the use of meeting protocols from the Harvard based 'data wise'. School goals are adopted and then steps are implemented. All faculty members are involved in these conversations."

Table 7: *The Principal Provides Focused Professional Development Based on Identified Needs Within Our School Then Makes Sure We Have Support to Implement What Is Learned.*

School		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
School A	F	0	0	0	0	8	8
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	34.8%	34.8%
School B	F	0	0	0	3	3	6
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	13.0%	13.0%	26.1%
School C	F	0	0	1	1	3	5
	%	.0%	.0%	4.3%	4.3%	13.0%	21.7%
School D	F	0	0	0	1	3	4
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	4.3%	13.0%	17.4%
Total	F	0	0	1	5	17	23
	%	.0%	.0%	4.3%	21.7%	73.9%	100.0%

When members of staff were asked to indicate whether their principals provide focused professional development based on identified needs within their schools and then added support for teachers to implement what is learned, all but one teacher responded in the affirmative. Five of them (21.7%) indicated that they agreed with the given statement while 17 (73.9%) indicated that they strongly agreed.

The open-ended item asking how the principal has assisted colleagues and self to learn and implement strategies and processes to improve student's achievement, allowed teachers to express themselves freely on this issue and their responses indicate general satisfaction with the way their principals provide for and support their professional development activities. School B teachers noted that professional development is currently district-driven and acknowledged their principal's effort to provide tailor-made professional development opportunities that enable them to understand and differentiate instruction to meet the needs of their diverse population of students, including deaf and

autistic students. At School C, teachers indicated that their principal allows and creates

opportunities to attend workshops in and out of the district. At School D, teachers are

involved in writing their professional development plan together and the principal helps

them to follow through.

Principals responded that they strive to motivate, inspire, and influence their

teachers by keeping them informed because they subscribe to a belief that information is

power; an informed staff achieves ownership and exerts its power based on confidence in

where it is going. One principal noted that it is possible to create a powerful atmosphere

with a staff if the leader actually does what she says and exhibits qualities of honesty,

openness, and caring thus inspiring teachers to accomplish everything upon which they

focus. This inspires teachers to be all they can be.

Table 8: *The Principal Works to Provide a Safe and Stimulating Environment in the School.*

School		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
School A	F	0	0	0	1	7	8
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	4.3%	30.4%	34.8%
School B	F	0	0	0	2	4	6
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	8.7%	17.4%	26.1%
School C	F	0	0	0	2	3	5
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	8.7%	13.0%	21.7%
School D	F	0	0	0	1	3	4
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	4.3%	13.0%	17.4%
Total	F	0	0	0	6	17	23
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	26.1%	73.9%	100.0%

The responses in Table 8 were provided to the question concerning the type of

working environment in the school. Participants were asked to indicate their level of

agreement with the statement, "The principal works to provide a safe and stimulating environment in the school" and the majority of them (73.9%) strongly agreed. The remaining 26.1% of the members of staff in the low socioeconomic schools agreed with the statement.

How do principals do this? When teachers were asked this question, they responded affirmatively that their principals ensured there were procedures in place to ensure acceptance and sharing among members of the school community. For instance there exist in the schools several programs, initiatives, or policies dealing with bullying, use of a common language, school wellness, knowing students by name, clear expectations for student behavior and discipline policies, notebooks containing safety and crisis procedures and policies, and management drills.

When principals were asked the same question during the interview process, they stressed the importance of safety in the school and their deliberate efforts to build and maintain a non-threatening environment free from both physical and verbal threats. Another principal stated that trusting relationships between teachers and students is a true method used to ensure that "learners feel safe and confident." Thus, trusting relationships between students and learners is one way of ensuring that "learners feel safe and adults feel confident."

Table 9: *Our Principal Works with Us to Establish Long- and Short-Term Goals and Assists Us in Meeting These Goals*

School		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
School A	F	0	0	0	2	6	8
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	8.7%	26.1%	34.8%
School B	F	0	0	0	4	2	6
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	17.4%	8.7%	26.1%
School C	F	0	0	1	1	3	5
	%	.0%	.0%	4.3%	4.3%	13.0%	21.7%
School D	F	0	0	0	0	4	4
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	17.4%	17.4%
Total	F	0	0	1	7	15	23
	%	.0%	.0%	4.3%	30.4%	65.2%	100.0%

When asked to indicate whether their principals work with them to establish long-term and short-term goals, there was general agreement that this was occurring. In Table 9, one teacher (4.3% of respondents) was undecided on this issue. Thirty point four percent agreed and 65.2% strongly agreed with the statement that their principals engage them in formulating school goals and ensuring that these goals are met.

The open-ended question asked teachers to mention some of the short-term and long-term goals existing in their schools and to describe how their principals work with them to reach them. The findings revealed that the short-term goals vary from one school to another while the long-term goals were associated with those of the district.

Table 10: *Necessary Time and Support Is Provided for Teachers to Design Curriculum and Instruction that Provides All Students with Time and Motivation to Achieve Understanding. Students are Not Left Behind.*

School		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
School A	F	0	0	1	3	4	8
	%	.0%	.0%	4.3%	13.0%	17.4%	34.8%
School B	F	0	0	2	3	1	6
	%	.0%	.0%	8.7%	13.0%	4.3%	26.1%
School C	F	0	0	1	1	3	5
	%	.0%	.0%	4.3%	4.3%	13.0%	21.7%
School D	F	0	0	0	2	2	4
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	8.7%	8.7%	17.4%
Total	F	0	0	4	9	10	23
	%	.0%	.0%	17.4%	39.1%	43.5%	100.0%

Table 10 presents findings to the statement seeking to determine if necessary time and support is provided for teachers to design curriculum and instruction that provides all students with time and motivation to achieve understanding. The data indicate that 17.4% of teachers were undecided. Remaining teachers agreed with the position that this was provided in their schools, with 39.1% indicating "agree" and 43.5% "strongly agree." However, the researcher noticed that the previous threshold of "strongly agree" to survey statements was about 70%, therefore, this statement received the least positive responses.

In responding to the open-ended question, "How does the principal ensure that students are provided with necessary time to learn?" teachers who agreed that their principals ensure there is necessary time and support for effective instruction indicated that principals in their buildings make every attempt to ensure that there is enough time for instruction when making choices about the building-wide schedule. However, other teachers indicated that choices about curriculum and instructional design are neither in

their hands nor in the principal's hands since the choices about instructional time are

made at the district level. Here is the response of one such teacher: "The district has

purchased kits that tell us what to teach and how to teach it." Some teachers believe that

the choice lies with the officials at the district level who determine schedules according to

grade so that all grades are teaching the same thing at the same time.

Table 11: *Communication with the Principal Is Open and Honest. I Feel*
Comfortable Discussing School Matters with the Principal.

School		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
School A	F	0	0	0	1	7	8
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	4.3%	30.4%	34.8%
School B	F	0	0	0	0	6	6
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	26.1%	26.1%
School C	F	0	0	1	1	3	5
	%	.0%	.0%	4.3%	4.3%	13.0%	21.7%
School D	F	0	0	0	0	4	4
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	17.4%	17.4%
Total	F	0	0	1	2	20	23
	%	.0%	.0%	4.3%	8.7%	87.0%	100.0%

The findings from Table 11 demonstrate that staff members in the schools

sampled favorably perceive their principals' communication strategies. When teachers

were asked about the openness and honesty of communication with the principal and if

they feel free to discuss school matters with the principal, 87% of respondents strongly

agreed, 8.7% agreed, and only 4.3% were undecided.

From the findings the researcher inferred that the principals' communication skills

are exemplary in the study schools which results in teachers feeling satisfaction with

being valued for their contributions to the school. In response to the open-ended

question, "The principal's communication with me makes me feel…" one teacher had

this to say, "I feel respected and supported since the principal has an open-door policy and is timely in responses to emails or other questions. She listens and asks guiding questions. She helps us solve problems collaboratively and based on addressing the best interests of students." Other teachers appreciated their principals' abilities to listen to them empathetically and to promote a positive climate that fosters open lines of communication. This has ensured that teachers are comfortable enough to share both concerns and successes within their institutions.

Table 12: *In this School, Staff Works to Ensure that All Students will Learn.*

School		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
School A	F	0	0	0	0	8	8
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	34.8%	34.8%
School B	F	0	0	0	2	4	6
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	8.7%	17.4%	26.1%
School C	F	0	0	0	1	4	5
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	4.3%	17.4%	21.7%
School D	F	0	0	0	1	3	4
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	4.3%	13.0%	17.4%
Total	F	0	0	0	4	19	23
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	17.4%	82.6%	100.0%

Table 12 shows that teachers in schools classified as being lower socioeconomic generally work together to attain school goals. Eighty two point six percent of respondents strongly agreed and 17.4% agreed that staff members work together to ensure student learning.

School A Teachers' responses to the open-ended question: our principal helps us accomplish this by; shared that this was made possible by the principal's communication

skills, creation and maintenance of a safe environment, facilitation of meetings to ensure collaboration among teachers, and finally, the commitment by principals to facilitate a strong work ethic and their desire to assist all students to achieve their goals.

Table 13: *Student Data is Used Regularly to Guide Instruction.*

School		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
School A	F	0	0	0	0	8	8
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	34.8%	34.8%
School B	F	0	0	0	0	6	6
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	26.1%	26.1%
School C	F	0	0	0	1	4	5
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	4.3%	17.4%	21.7%
School D	F	0	0	0	0	4	4
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	17.4%	17.4%
Total	F	0	0	0	1	22	23
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	4.3%	95.7%	100.0%

Table 13 demonstrates that principals of the study schools do endeavor to ensure that student data is used to guide instruction. Ninety five point seven percent of respondents strongly agreed; the remaining 4.3% agreed. This finding was supported by the open-ended responses to the question of, "Provide ways in which you use data to guide instruction." In the open-ended responses, one thing came out clear from the teachers: instruction would not be possible without data. One teacher put this better than the others by saying, "We use data, data and more data to guide our instruction...to plot achievement...to create strategy groups."

Principal Interviews

To follow is a summary of administrative comments from principal interviews conducted.

1. How do you provide expectations and the time for your teachers to work together collaboratively?

   School A: Master schedule of meetings published in August so they can plan around. I lead monthly curriculum and instructional grade level meetings. I attend and participate in data meetings and any other planned grade level time. Model!

   School B: We began by meeting once a week; administration and teachers. We then arranged the meeting to be professional development coordinators, literacy, library. Now, we have scheduled a 30 minute block for data conversion only – facilitated by literacy coach and assistant principal.

   School C: Expectations for collaborative work—centered on student success—are communicated every time I have the chance to meet as a faculty. With NCLB's increased accountability for student success teachers are under a lot of pressure. I believe collaborative work helps lighten an individual teacher's work load. Grade level teams share one hour of common plan time each day. Our schedule also allows for 13 late start days. This offers all teachers a chance to meet in a job-a-like professional learning communities to discuss student progress and plan curriculum together.

School D: Every team member has one hour each week of Professional Learning

Committee team time. One time per month, the grade level team, SSD teachers,

Reading Intervention teachers, and class room assistants meet to evaluate data and

intervention success for individual students.

2. How do you secure the necessary resources to support your school's classroom instructional strategies?

School A: I dedicate as much of my budget as possible to job embedded

professional development. Observing in classroom of peers, coaching,

observation of intervention.

School B: The school budget is planned around "need" not a standard allotment.

This way we can "focus" money toward grade level need. We have professional

development at staff meetings – bringing in available persons/experts to train.

We also use staff for training and staff education.

School C: I feel fortunate that the School District of School C dedicates a hefty

portion of its budget to furthering the professional development of teachers. Once

a teacher is in his/her second year each can access professional incentive monies

that can be applied toward conference attendance, additional resources, and

training. In the past three years we have also followed national trends and added

a literacy coach, math specialist, science specialist and instruction coordinator

who all help teachers access cutting edge instructional strategies while supporting

students' needs in each class setting.

School D: When building a budget for the year, professional development,

substitute pay for release time, and material needs are considered when making

budgeting decisions.

3. How do you best work to support and, if necessary, change teachers' beliefs so
that they proactively affect student achievement?

School A: Keep the data out in front!

School B: I assume that all teachers want to be effective so I go from there. I try

to constructively point out and offer support/resources to support change. In

various years we have arranged all day, grade level professional development as a

major intervention which has worked well.

School C: Key is to structure our work so the focus is on student growth. The

analysis of common assessment data at each grade level teams really helps. We

also hold monthly "problem solving" meetings to discuss and make suggestions

for interventions that could support struggling students. Then if it seems that

students are not progressing, I'll encourage the teacher to bring a student to our

"Study Team" or Care Team, for further analysis. I am fortunate that we have a

fairly stable population where we can follow the needs of students over time.

School C parents have high expectations for student success. This level of

involvement provides the impetus for teachers to take aggressive, proactive

approaches that help each student reach high levels of achievement. I see it as my

job to support the hard work of my teachers whenever I meet with parents. I

focus my monthly PTO conversation on the accomplishments of my teachers.

Monthly newsletters frequently highlight the professional actions teachers are

taking to acquire new learning and support student success. My evaluations

reflect a teacher's work, offer accolades and share critical feedback. The

evaluation process offers an avenue to support teacher's proactive work. Outside,

yet connected to the evaluation process, I also leave supportive notes after special

events and/or if an individual's leadership has positively contributed to our

learning community.

School D: Educate them and bring new ideas to the group. I like to give them an

opportunity to hear about an idea, learn more about it, experiment a little and then

let the excitement build among staff. If the teachers believe in the idea then they

will incorporate it without resistance.

4. How do you involve teachers in creating and focusing on a vision for the school?

School A: We are just beginning to craft our M&V but so far my "a-ha" has been

that it is different for my staff to see the current M&V as much as they have with

me.

School B: Focus and vision, discussion of why are we here? What are our

responsibilities? In this profession we are always here for kids (not for adults to

have a job). Staff sets expectations for action.

School C: Through the PLC process (DuFour's model) with the use of meeting

protocols from the Harvard based "Data Wise", school goals are adopted and then

yearly action steps are implemented. All faculty are involved in these

conversations. Time is dedicated second semester of each school year to; analyze

current work via common assessments/student learning outcomes, discuss next

steps, agree to a new course for the following school year.

School D: Everyone needs to be involved in developing the vision and working

towards the same goal. Leadership isn't a one-woman show, it is moving all

groups in the same direction towards a common vision.

5. How do you personally work to motivate, inspire, and influence teachers in your school?

School A: Build upon strengths and marginalize the negative.

School B: Keep a sense of humor. Always disclose as much information

regarding an influence/change that I have. Information is power. Without

information people make things up.

School C: I try to keep my staff informed, which means I need to be one step

ahead of all central office information. Weekly memos offer accolades, news of

upcoming events, inspirational quotes. I model hard work and yet also strive to

show my human side. I believe in direct and communicating concerns within a

quick (24 hour) turn around. When stuck, I turn to professional books – DuFour,

Marzano, Lambert, etc.

School D: By being honest, open, and caring I inspire teachers to be their best. If

the leader walks the walk then the staff can believe in that person. By being my

best and putting forth my best effort, my staff does the same.

6. What does physical and emotional safety in a school mean to you? How do you make your school a safe place in which to learn?

School A: The EQ for our Social Justice School Improvement Team is: "Do all

feel welcome? How do we know?" I believe it is my job to help every person

find their place.

School B: #1 Safety. Students and staff cannot move forward without it. Build

non-threatening environment. No "got ya" attitudes with staff and students.

Physical safety is being prepared and informing stakeholders.

School C: Students need to have trusting relationships with the teachers who care

for them. A physical and emotionally safe school is a place where teachers

understand how to gain trust, model respect and create a learning environment

that is free from any physical threats or worry from ridicule or bully remarks.

School D: Safety for everyone is critical. By building a caring school community

and not tolerating bullying by adults or children, the school feels, and is, safe.

Everyone is working to treat each person with kindness and respect. Another

important factor is having crisis plans in place that everyone follows and

understands. This is critical if there is ever a crisis in the building. If every adult

feels prepared, then the children feel safe and the adults feel confident. How do

you provide and facilitate professional development practices in your school? How does your school have a stimulating environment?

School A: My focus is on job embedded, high leverage professional development. In other words, I want my teacher to see and feel things in their own context and have the opportunity to transfer that information right away.

School B: We have a Professional Development Committee. We try to work in the direction the district is moving in. We "empower" staff. I say "yes" as often as I can. Beginning eight years ago when teachers wanted Smart Board, I said yes and go to the PTO!

School C: Nice that District of School C offers teachers "professional incentive money" -- $500-$600 per year for teachers to attend conferences and workshops. This money can grow to $1800. Such PD offers a chance for teachers to grow in areas of personal choice. Each year we work as a faculty to establish school goals with the PDC committee leadership at my school. We line up PD opportunities to support teacher growth within the goals.

School D: Half day, early release professional development is consistently scheduled monthly. In August, teachers begin looking at data and the needs of our school. Our monthly staff meetings, early release PD days, and workshops are planned around our School Improvement Plan for the year. This provides a focus for everyone throughout the year.

7. How do you ensure that professional development in your school is effective?

School A: It is based on need as evidenced in data not just "because". Learning from one another. Post surveys. Job embedded.

School B: "Inspect what you expect". Observation (all the time), team meetings, Professional Growth Plan conferences, communication, communication, communication!

School C: Teacher feedback and implementation of the development offered…Lately I've found that PD is most effective if teachers work in teams to launch the new learning and observe each other and share feedback about student work in relation to the PD/teacher growth.

School D: We ask for teacher input when organizing professional development activities and seek feedback after PD events.

8. How do you ensure that teachers are providing constant feedback to students as they work toward reaching long-term teaching and learning goals for students? How does your school organize to ensure that teachers meet their long-term goals?

School A: OK, this is a goal for me! As this is our first year together I am laying the ground work to move toward these conversations.

School B: Grade level teaming and planning is regular and expected. Discussion of the curriculum and assessing whether we are on track or not. During the

weekly math and literacy data meeting times the teachers look at common assessment results and determine direction.

School C: Our school calendar allows for 13 late start days for teachers to work in teams to analyze common assessment results, determine next step teaching points to reach curriculum expectations. For students able the curriculum is extended—especially in the areas of literacy and math.

School D: Teachers help students set academic goals and meet with them to ensure goals are being met. Monthly data team meetings with PLCs give team members feedback about individual student progress. As Principal, I attend weekly and monthly PLC meetings. I meet with students, teachers, and walk through class rooms weekly.

9. How do you provide mentoring and coaching for teachers as they strive to incorporate best teaching practices from professional development initiatives?

School A: I look to the other teachers in the building to provide modeling in strategies they are working to master. They do not need to be perfect. I find that they grow so much as well as they model and reflect for one another.

School B: Professional Development/observation of colleague in building or another building. Contact coordinator to support individual or grade level. We have now implemented "walk thrus" and utilize colleague observations.

School C: Mentoring is formally provided by me through the teacher evaluation process. Others serve as assigned "informal" mentors, and as mentioned peer observations as connected with school goals helps all incorporate best practices from PD initiatives.

School D: We are fortunate to have district curriculum staff that work with teachers to improve or incorporate best practices in their class rooms. Teachers can set up meetings during the school day during a plan time to meet for workshops or more intensive support. I have funds budgeted to provide for substitutes and registration fees.

10. How do you use data to gauge student need and guide instruction?

School A: Monthly probes. Benchmarking three times/year. Progress monitoring weekly for some, bi-monthly for others. Grade level data meetings. Core team overseeing the RTI process.

School B: Now, with common assessments and GLES, data is used daily in planning for learning.

School C: We meet as a "problem solving" team to review assessment data to help determine a course of action in support of student progress. DRA2 assessments help teachers determine teaching points as does a common assessment review of end-of-unit math assessments and writing prompts.

School D: Data is utilized at all times to guide instruction. During weekly PLC's, teams look at formative data to make instruction decisions. During monthly data team meetings the entire group discusses individual student data, intervention progress, and the data is used to make intervention decisions for the next month.

Summary

Chapter 4 contained quantitative data from participants' ratings obtained from surveys and qualitative data obtained from answers to open-ended questions by teacher participants and interview questions by elementary school principals. This information was sought to determine the instructional strategies and best practices employed by principals who were effective in raising student academic achievement. Chapter 5 contains the researcher's discussion of her findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Discussion of Findings

The focus for this study was to determine strategies, instructional techniques, and educational approaches that principals and school leaders from Title I classified schools employ to ensure student academic achievement.

Involvement of school leaders, particularly building principals, with student achievement is one of the most important pre-requisites for improvement of the quality of education and a front-line responsibility for principals. Most of the teacher respondents supported this statement. Feeney's research (2009), Harrris and Lambert (2003), Dinham (2008), and Ediger (2009) stressed the importance of collaboration between principals and teachers in all matters of student development and academic achievement. They pointed to the importance of principals becoming actively involved in student learning since it opens many doors for improvement in the academic performance of students. Leader involvement carries a high correlation with many positive aspects of teacher and student development. When principals assume a leadership role, they create models for their teachers. Motivation to improve performance is a result for teachers who work with a principal who establishes a model for effective leadership. When principals proactively lead, the need for corrective/reactive actions diminishes; change is more likely to occur and teachers demonstrate a desire to perform because they know and understand the goal and have been presented with a road map to ensure accomplishment.

In 1959, French and Raven, two well-known social psychologists, after years of research on the components of leader power, formulated five sources of power. They

believed there was a strong correlation between leadership and power. Leaders are able

to attract followers because they are viewed as having the power to achieve success.

There are, however, different sources of power. Some leaders are powerful because of

their job titles and position within the institutional hierarchy (this is termed as legitimate

power). Others enjoy power because of their ability to provide rewards (this is termed as

reward power). Still other leaders derive their power from the ability and authority to

punish others, which is also used to negatively reinforce unwanted behaviors (this is

termed as coercive power). A problem with these three sources of power is that none of

them are sustainable, long-term, or enduring. For example, if a leader relies too much on

power through reward then eventually she will be faced with the certainty that rewards

will become meaningless due to excessive use. The same is true for coercive power since

people will eventually discover a way to escape punishment. Dugan (2006) stated that if

leader power was about job titles then all CEOs, members of boards of directors, and

company executives would be miraculously powerful.

The importance of leadership power sources is that enduring leadership comes

from within and is characterized historically by great leaders. These power sources are

known as "expert power" and "referent power." Expert power refers to the power source

which leaders acquire due to their knowledge, skills, expertise, experience, credentials,

and understanding of the jobs performed by their followers. Stech (2008) stated that

referent power is associated with the charm, charisma, appeal, and attractiveness of

leaders to their followers. Under this power source, leaders enjoy power over their

subordinates because their attitude, approach, personality, and behaviors are liked by

their followers. They view the leaders as their helper, friend, and someone trustworthy and that is why they find themselves in a position to influence their followers (Stech, 2008).

When principals collaborate with their teachers on every issue concerning the academic development of students, they broaden the power sources from traditional sources of power (legitimate, reward, and coercive) to personal, sustainable, and enduring sources of power which are termed as expert and referent powers. When teachers experience principals who put in the necessary effort to address the varied needs they and their students have and who work to create a level playing field for all children, and use all of their abilities and experiences to mentor future leaders for our nation's schools, a great deal of respect is created for leaders in the hearts and minds of teachers (Stech, 2008). When principals move from their offices to assist teachers with their experience and knowledge they are exerting referent power. Many principals have a wealth of experience and knowledge from their own teaching and study of curriculum and instruction theory. When principals increase involvement in issues relating to student development they provide great insights and understanding of teaching strategies and techniques which also contribute to their acquisition of referent power (Dugan, 2006)

Attention given to the data pertaining to the needs of students in addition to their education background, mindset of students, and diversity establishes a cornerstone for efforts toward achieving student academic success in schools classified as Title I. Ninety five point seven percent of respondents to the teachers' survey expressed that 'student data is taken into consideration regularly to guide instruction.' Social psychologists and other

experts developed a consensus that the learning needs of each student generally differ. These differences are rooted in factors that are compounded by the variables differentiating students which were previously listed. Principals who urge their teachers to tailor instruction to meet the learning needs of all students, ensure development and achievement of each student (Gupton, 2009).

Much attention has been devoted to school environments in relation to the quality of learning. A healthy and safe environment alone may not ensure maximum teacher performance and student learning. However, without these components it may be impossible to achieve success in meeting required academic standards. When educators consider rapidly expanding needs in our schools as exhibited by students a healthy learning environment assumes more and more importance if we are to compete with standards set by other countries. Teachers play an important part in creating a safe and healthy learning environment within their classrooms which mirrors a limited span of control. Therefore, principals must be counted on to play an important role in the life of both teachers and their students. Dugan (2006) stated that even the smallest actions regarding policies and rules made and maintained by the principals can make a huge difference in schools' effectiveness. One of the most important reasons why some schools have succeeded in improvement of aggregate student performance is the tireless efforts by school leaders who are focused on ensuring that discipline, order, and organization within the school is guaranteed. This is also important because chaos or disorder in any environment for any period of time can be costly to student achievement. For example, if schools fail to prevent bullying this may have a negative impact on many

students who are struggling to feel accepted and comfortable in a school environment.

Dimmock and Walker (2005) found that if even one student is not corrected for

disrespect of other students and even teachers, many other students will learn an

unfortunate lesson on how this kind of behavior is allowed to occur. Another example

cited is a comparison of the first example with one that is based on a student suffering

from a disease after eating a school provided meal. If this is not dealt with immediately

and effectively it becomes almost impossible to restore the trust of parents in the school-

provided dining facilities (Dimmock & Walker, 2005).

When principals, as the highest authority in a school, work to ensure safety,

security, and order they send a strong message to all stakeholders about what to expect in

the conduct of students and the general order in the school. Parents become confident in

sending their children to school and there are few distractions to the process of learning

in the school. In fact, it becomes evident that a healthy and safe learning environment

will facilitate the process involved in student learning. The research shows that not even

a single respondent to the survey believed that their principal was not working to provide

a health, safe and therefore stimulating learning environment for students. This may be

one of the most important reasons for academic improvement noted in Title I classified

schools.

Visionary Leadership

The review of literature contained within Chapter 2 focused on the importance of

vision, mission, and strategies of school leaders as they work to positively affect teacher

performance and student achievement. Judge and Piccolo (2004) pointed to a need for

establishing and maintaining a strategic focus and mission as crucial for successful school leaders. This strategic focus and mission is even more important when leaders are working in schools which are classified as Title I, four of which form the sample of this study.

The findings presented in Table 6 concerning the survey statement, "The principal provides a clear mission and vision for our school" showed that 52.2% of respondents strongly agreed and 21.7% agreed. The combined percentage of 83.9% evidenced a significant consensus of teacher respondents to their belief that the principal is very important as the person who ensures that there is a clear vision and mission for the school and that staff understands its role in the process. The fact that almost 84% of teachers either agreed or strongly agreed with the survey statement accentuates the importance of the transformational leadership within a school. It is important, according to teachers, that the principal sets the course for them to follow and that their actions are supported along the way. The principal is, according to most teachers, an agent of change within the school since she/he points the way and leads followers to success in achieving the mission. It is clear that the kind, level, and intensity of transformational leadership, and the activity required to make this happen, will result from a strong and sweeping agreement among all teachers within the school (Wiseman, 2005). In the four schools within this study there was strong, undisputed, and intense agreement that no matter how they define agreement or how high the amount of agreement is, that agreement is absolutely necessary and is the responsibility of the leader to achieve.

Transformational Leadership

Duignan (2007) pointed to the examples from the life and death of Steve Jobs, the founder of Apple. Both academicians and researchers agree that Jobs is a perfect example of a visionary leader. He, according to them, proved to the world that effective leadership is based on a clear sense of vision and mission. In 1977, when Jobs co-founded Apple in his Northern California garage, he pronounced a vision for the company. He knew what he wanted to do, where he wanted the company to move, and how he was going to accomplish it. Jobs' vision, accentuated by his mission, was to transform the world of information technology using the simplicity and attractiveness of his computer designs and with creativity by inventing gadgets that would capture the hearts and minds of his potential consumers. Apple initially marketed the computers for $666.66 each. The Apple I earned the corporation $774,000. Three years after the release of Apple's second model, the Apple II, sales increased by 700%, to $139 million. Jobs left Apple in the late 1980s, citing that he was "burned out", but returned in 1996 to take steps which indicated to all that he had something important on his mind (Dunignan, 2007). Much like Steve Jobs' instigation of Apple's success in the 1970s, he is credited with revitalizing the company in the 1990s. With a new management team, altered stock options and a self-imposed annual salary of $1 a year, Jobs put Apple back on track. His ingenious products such as the iMac, effective branding campaigns, and stylish designs caught the attention of consumers once again.

A deeper analysis will reveal that in the absence of a vision along with a mission, the leader may be that in name only; instead, she or he may actually be considered as a

manager or administrator. Campbell, Dardis, and Campbell (2003) stated that managers, by definition, are characterized by their efforts to manage everyday affairs of the operation and maintain the status quo. People who manage people are those who do not display a vision backed by a mission to bring about any change in an organization and they become defenders of the status quo. Conversely, leaders who assume the responsibility to lead, work to influence people to adopt and embrace change. They can be described as transformational in an organization since their position is based on moving people to accomplish a mission. The researchers determined that it is impossible to bring about effective and enduring change without a clear vision and mission (Campbell et al., 2003).

Schools, operating under umbrella legislation termed as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), are in need of transformational rather than transactional leadership. Transformational leadership is a style that leads to positive changes in those who follow. Transformational leaders are generally energetic, enthusiastic, and passionate. Not only are these leaders concerned and involved in the process; they are also focused on helping every member of the group succeed as well. Transactional leadership also known as managerial leadership, focuses on the role of supervision, organization and group performance. The evidence gathered by the researcher caused her to conclude that the leadership style employed by a school leader or principal in most Title I classified schools in the United States is transactional (Hacker & Roberts, 2003).

The research focusing on school leaders was based on interviews of both school teachers and school principals in the study schools. School leaders were educated and

experienced enough to understand that there is a link between reward and effort, and they were using rewards with their teachers to promote maximum effort (Campbell et al., 2003). Leadership issues explored during the interviews focused more on dealing with present issues in the schools and the leaders' short-term vision. These school leaders used goal setting with clear benefits as an important tool to motivate their teachers. School leaders and their teachers were mutually dependent in the school operation and both parties were trying to extract something of value for themselves from the relationship (Dimmock & Walker, 2005). Bass and Riggio (2006) said that leaders exert power for the purpose of getting to something which is in the best interests of their followers. Therefore, the power and authority of school leaders rest in fulfilling the expectations of teachers (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

This leadership style, termed 'transactional', may be accepted on the surface by teachers and leaders as satisfying, but because of increasing challenges faced by schools today a transformational leadership style may be best since schools must change the techniques and strategies previously used in the classroom. Transformational leaders are seen to inspire followers based on a charisma which is accentuated by their ethical values, commitment to doing what is right and best for student achievement, their personality, and the vision they have for success (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). In educational systems these are the leaders who inspire teachers to travel the extra mile to reach a particular goal which is deemed necessary for the common good in any school. The problems surrounding troubled Title I classified schools cannot be solved if teachers continue to operate as normal and do not embrace change (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Campbell et al. (2003) verified through their research that staff cannot merely hope for change, rather it has to exert whatever effort is necessary to improve the state of education in the schools. Hacker and Roberts (2003) stated that leaders must work actively to create a sense of change in schools to a point that staff will carry on even in the leader's absence since there will be many people who have bought into the mission.

Recommendations

One of the primary reasons and thus a source of motivation to the researcher for this study was to determine some suggestions and recommendations for school leaders (particularly building principals), school policy makers on the state and district level, other researchers, and any interested stakeholder that could contribute to ensuring student academic achievement in Title I classified schools. This dissertation is intended to provide recommendations based on attention to the findings from the literature and the research conducted within the four study schools. This section contains the most important recommendations.

- The research showed that most schools and corporate institutions are directed by leaders who could be classified as transactional. This study contains much information on the traits and characteristics of these leaders. The focus of transactional leaders remains on transactions that take place between them and their followers. This relationship is similar to that between customers and suppliers or producers. This relationship exists and thrives because each creates value for the other. However, in the absence of value creation the transactional relationship can become meaningless. Title I schools with transactional leaders

exist because both leaders and followers provide a mutual system of support based in what each can do for the other in a system that is to be preserved as is. It is the researcher's conclusion that schools existing based on transactional leadership are less likely to progress with a process of increasing teacher performance and student achievement. Instead, there is a need for these schools to seek and acquire a transformational style of leadership where leaders do not create relationships based on transactions ("give and take" to preserve the status quo) but build relationships with teachers that are deeply involved with ethical values, trust, beliefs, respect, and pride. Title I schools should have leadership based on these transformational traits thus allowing leaders to guide their teachers through the tough phases of change in an organization which involve ambiguity and complexity.

- Having a proper, well-defined, clear, and focused sense of mission and vision is at the heart of leadership and it becomes even more important for troubled Title I schools that need rapid changes. There are no doubts in the fact that these schools have to move forward; however, in the absence of a vision from an inside leader, it is not possible. In the absence of a vision, even if the school undertakes all the necessary steps to promote academic development, it is like a ship without a rudder which will move in circles without any direction. Therefore, these schools need visionary leaders with strategic focus as evident from the literature as well as the research (Stech, 2008).

- Research revealed that the amount and intensity of principals' interest in student

development and an increase in student achievement has a direct cause and effect relationship. There are other important factors which have been a part of this research, however principals' interest as evidenced by their availability and presence in their schools clearly dominated the research findings. The researcher believes that successful schools do not result from control exerted by a principal from an office. She recommends that principals be ever-present in teachers' classrooms if progress in increasing student achievement is to be attained.

- It is incumbent upon successful leaders, particularly building principals, to develop their sources of information so that they have accurate, real-time student data. This data should include student educational history, cultural affiliation, race, family status, and socioeconomic background. Since each student is important and schools are charged with leaving no child behind, the researcher recommends that each school leader secure the optimum amount of data for each of their students.

- An environment, particularly that in which a school functions, should be both safe and healthy and, therefore a prerequisite for effective teaching performance and increased student achievement. Simply stated, the research continually shows that learning cannot take place in chaos and disorder. Principals should assume the responsibility for ensuring that any hindrance to an active and healthy learning environment is removed. This is even more necessary for Title I classified schools since students and teachers are already operating under less than prime conditions for educational success.

Conclusions

NCLB legislation posed significant challenges for school leaders working with Title I classified schools. There is much responsibility placed on all stakeholders within these schools to meet specific standards, and this responsibility is multiplied by the fact that students in these schools have already experienced academic difficulty. School leaders are under an educational microscope since they are held accountable for the schools meeting established performance standards and because a significant portion of funding is received from the federal government. There is tremendous pressure to show results with their students who generally exhibit weaker educational backgrounds and originate from lower socioeconomic circumstances. Since inception of NCLB legislation, educational institutions have dealt with the term "achievement gap" which dominated the headlines and sparked continuing debate about the role of principals and teachers and the methods and strategies they use to ensure student achievement. Wiseman (2005) stated that the power, authority, and position of building principals forms the basis or foundation for them to contribute greatly towards improving the performance of teachers and thus contributing to the increased academic achievement of students in the schools. If educators in the United States desire to establish and maintain viable standards for student performance thereby ensuring that our schools produce excellent students who can aspire to future leadership, then we must ensure that school leaders possess the qualities to accomplish that purpose (Wiseman, 2005).

This research clearly indicates a need for gathering further evidence on the effectiveness of Title I classified schools and the correlation between effectiveness of the

leader and academic achievement of students in these schools. Duignan (2007) pointed to the existence of varied viewpoints in the literature concerning the performance of leaders in effective schools. This study was limited to four schools based on their location and the availability of participants. However, the researcher recommends that future studies broaden the sample of schools to be studied not only within the same geographical area but also in different settings in different states of the Union. This will require that future researchers deal with an added variable of disparate regulations within each state. There exists also, in the researcher's opinion, a need to design and conduct surveys which are even more in-depth as to the methods and strategies school principals use to affect teacher performance and student achievement in schools. Possible examples could lie with exploring links between the personality styles of school principals and their impact on teacher and student morale, and also the impact of teacher expectations on student achievement (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Particular leadership styles of principals and their impact on teacher performance and student achievement could also be compared. The researcher has also uncovered possible additional research topics such as teaching experience, race, age, socioeconomic background which could contribute as secondary sources to the effectiveness of principals in Title I classified schools.

Appendix A

Teacher Survey

Please check the rating which corresponds to your response for each statement.

Following each statement, please answer the question designed to clarify your rating.

1. Staff is encouraged and supported to work together to increase student achievement.

____ Strongly disagree   ____Disagree   ____Neither agree nor disagree   ____Agree   ____ Strongly Agree

How does the school principal provide for staff at this school to work together?

2. The principal ensures that we have the resources and time we need to meet the

identified priorities to improve student success.

____ Strongly disagree   ____Disagree   ____Neither agree nor disagree   ____Agree   ____ Strongly Agree

What resources and time are provided by the principal at this school to meet the

identified priorities to be met to ensure student success?

3. The principal is involved throughout all aspects of our efforts to improve student

achievement.

____ Strongly disagree   ____Disagree   ____Neither agree nor disagree   ____Agree   ____ Strongly Agree

How is your principal involved in improving student achievement in this school?

4. The principal provides a clear mission and vision for our school.

____ Strongly disagree   ____Disagree   ____Neither agree nor disagree   ____Agree   ____ Strongly Agree

Our school's vision for its future is:

Our school's mission is:

5. The principal provides focused professional development that is based upon identified needs within our school. The principal makes sure that we have the necessary support to implement what is learned during professional development.

____ Strongly disagree ____Disagree ____Neither agree nor disagree ____Agree ____ Strongly Agree

How has the principal assisted my colleagues and me to learn and implement strategies and processes to improve my students' achievement?

6. The principal works to provide a safe and stimulating environment in the school.

____ Strongly disagree ____Disagree ____Neither agree nor disagree ____Agree ____ Strongly Agree

What does the principal do to provide a safe and stimulating school environment?

7. Our principal works with us to establish long and short term goals. The principal assists us in meeting these goals.

____ Strongly disagree ____Disagree ____Neither agree nor disagree ____Agree ____ Strongly Agree

What are examples of short and long term goals in your school? How is the principal working with you to meet these?

8. Necessary time and support is provided for teachers to design curriculum and instruction that provides all students with the necessary time and motivation to achieve understanding. Students are not left behind.

____ Strongly disagree ____Disagree ____Neither agree nor disagree ____Agree ____ Strongly Agree

How does the principal ensure that students are provided with necessary time to learn?

9. Communication with the principal is open and honest. I feel comfortable discussing school matters with the principal.

____ Strongly disagree ____Disagree ____Neither agree nor disagree ____Agree ____ Strongly Agree

The principal's communication with me makes me feel:

10. In this school all staff works to ensure that all students will learn.

____ Strongly disagree ____Disagree ____Neither agree nor disagree ____Agree ____ Strongly Agree

Our principal helps us to accomplish this by:

11. Student data is used regularly to guide instruction.

____ Strongly disagree ____Disagree ____Neither agree nor disagree ____Agree ____ Strongly Agree

Please provide ways in which you use data to guide instruction.

Appendix B

Principal Interviews

1. How do you provide expectations and the time for your teachers to work together collaboratively?

2. How do you secure the necessary resources to support your school's classroom instructional strategies?

3. How do you best work to support and, if necessary, change teachers' beliefs so that they proactively affect student achievement?

4. How do you involve teachers in creating and focusing on a vision for the school?

5. How do you personally work to motivate, inspire, and influence teachers in your school?

6. What does physical and emotional safety in a school mean to you. How do you make your school a safe place in which to learn?

7. How do you provide and facilitate professional development practices in your school? How does your school have a stimulating environment?

8. How do you ensure that professional development in your school is effective?

9. How do you ensure that teachers are providing constant feedback to students as they work toward reaching long-term teaching and learning goals for students? How does your school organize to ensure that teachers meet their long-term goals?

10. How do you provide mentoring and coaching for teachers as they strive to incorporate best teaching practices from professional development initiatives?

11. How do you use data to gauge student need and guide instruction?

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Vitae

Kimberly Cohen is the current principal of McKelvey Elementary in the Parkway School District. This is her third year as principal, however she served as an assistant principal for two years before becoming principal within the same building. Prior to her administrative positions Kimberly served as a middle school counselor in the Rockwood School District and an elementary school teacher in grades first, second, third, and fourth. She anticipates earning her Ed.D. in Educational Administration from Lindenwood University in 2012 and she earned her Master's degree in Educational Administration from Lindenwood University in 2007. Kimberly earned a Master's degree in K-12 Counseling from Missouri Baptist University in 2004 and a Master's degree in Elementary Education from Southwest Baptist University in 2001. She earned a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education with an emphasis in Early Childhood from Missouri State University in 1998.