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# The Academic Achievement Of African-american Students In Orange County Public High Schools

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THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS IN ORANGE
COUNTY PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS

by

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to determine the disparity between the academic achievement of African American students and the academic achievement of white American students in the state of Florida, and more specifically, in five high schools in Orange County Public Schools. The term "African American" included all students who self-identified as that race upon enrollment into an Orange County public school. The study included male and female African American students from different socio-economic levels. The term "differences in academic achievement" is most commonly referred to as "achievement gap."

Additionally, this study sought to determine the relationship, if any, in the achievement of African American students' academic achievement in five high schools in Orange County Public Schools, Orlando, Florida. In addition, the purpose was to identify differences in achievement level based upon the school attended, gender, socio-economic levels, class size, and qualifications of the teachers.

The methods and procedures used to determine if there was an achievement gap between African-American and white American high school students was to review: (a) gain in African-American students on the reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, from the 2003-2004 administration to the 2004-2005 administration in five Orange County public high schools, (b) difference between African-American students' 2004-2005 reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test percentage at proficient (level 3 and above) and white American students in five public high schools in Orange, (c) the relationship between African-American students' 2004-2005 reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test percent at proficient (level 3 and above) and the school poverty rate in all public high schools in

Orange County, (d) the characteristics of schools making gains in reading.

There were four conclusions based on the review of literature, as well as the data collected from the five high schools. Under the provision and penalties attached to the No Child Left Behind legislation, there was a noticeable gap in achievement between African-American students and their white American counterparts in each of the examined schools over a two year time period. In schools with a greater percentage of white students, African-American students, overall, performed at a higher level. The achievement gap was narrower and the percent at proficient and above was higher for all students in schools where white students represented a greater percentage of the students.

In schools with a lower percentage of students on free and/or reduced lunch, the percent of students reading at proficient or above was higher and the achievement gap was less between African-American students and their white counterparts. Furthermore, the data indicated that as the percent of students on free and reduced lunch at a given school increases, the rate of those reading at proficient and above for African-American students was lower. In schools with a wide array of diversity, students overall have higher achievement scores. Based on the data in the study, the school with the highest rate of student proficient and above, was the school with the greatest diversity population of students.

This dissertation is dedicated to the legacy of greatness that I stand upon; first my two

grandmothers, Ms. Minnie Lee Loman Hopkins (maternal) and Ms Josie Leslie Hite Colbert

Aker (paternal).

I am the living legacy of two strong women.

"To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the

greatest accomplishment." - Ralph Waldo Emerson

I, your granddaughter, dedicate this study to you and your legacy.

Second, to the woman who carried me and continues to keep the legacy alive,

my mother, Annie F. Hopkins Aker.

Even when you did not think I was listening or following your guidance – I was.

Thanks for setting the expectation of greatness.

I love you.

Athena

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My loving and devoted husband, Curtis LeMoyne Adams,

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My always supporting and encouraging parents, Ralph and Annie Aker, and the one who always believes in me my sister, Ralphetta Aker.

Thanks to each and every one of you – God Bless.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Over fifty years ago, the promise of the *Brown v. the Board of Education* case (1954) slowly opened access to improved schooling for African-American children and youth across the United States (The Federal Lawyer, 2004). From 1970 to 1980, the achievement gap between African-American and white students declined by 50 percent (Ipka, 2002). However, the gap began to increase once again in 1988 (Haycock, 2001). In this era of increased accountability in the field of education, educators and politicians are investigating ways to close the achievement gap. Unfortunately, the achievement gap between African-American students and white students continues to grow.

According to Jencks and Phillips (1998), this gap between the two groups begins before children enter kindergarten, and continues into adulthood. Data from the *Center for Educational Statistics Report* (1997) indicates that during the 1970s, approximately 25 percent of white American children ages three and four, attended preschool. This same percentage was found among African-American children. However, by 1991, only 31 percent of African-American children were enrolled in preschool, while 40 percent of their white American counterparts were preschool attendees. This nine percent gap in attendance may contribute significantly to the achievement gap between the groups. In fact, new research indicates the achievement gap may begin at birth (Barton, 2004). Infants with low birth weights are at risk of impaired development, including delayed motor and social development. They are more likely to fail or repeat grades (Barton, 2004).

The achievement gap continues kindergarten through twelfth grade. African-Americans, as a group, score below 75 percent of white Americans on most standardized measures (Munk,

2001). The achievement gap between white Americans and African-Americans becomes evident in course grades, test scores, course selection, and graduation rates (Comer, 2001). By the time, African-American students complete the fourth grade; these individuals are two years behind their white American counterparts in reading and mathematics achievement. When African-American students begin grade eight, they are at least three years behind; by grade twelve, they are four years behind (Comer, 2001). The gap between African-Americans and white Americans continues to grow throughout the schooling process.

Fletcher (2003) reported on a survey taken during the 2000-2001 school year that included 40,000 middle- and high-school students in 15 racially and economically diverse suburban school districts. It was concluded that 40 percent of African-American students and 30 percent of Hispanic students said that they had an average grade of a "C" or lower as opposed to only 13 percent of white students. Along with their disparity in grades, minority students are falling behind in graduation rates, and are less likely than white students to go to college. In 1998, only 60 percent of Hispanic students and 73 percent of African-American students completed high school, while 83 percent of white students did the same (Fletcher, 2003). Furthermore, in that same year, almost 50 percent of white students went to college, while only 34 percent of Hispanics and 41 percent of African-Americans did (Fletcher, 2003).

Although there has been a nationwide improvement in Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores since the 1980s, white students have raised their scores to a much greater degree than other students (Clayton, 2001). For instance, verbal Scholastic Aptitude Test scores jumped six points and mathematics scores rose seven points for African-Americans, while the verbal scores rose 11 points and the mathematics scores rose 18 points for white students. In 2003, whites scored an average of 1060 on the Scholastic Aptitude Test, while African-Americans scored an

average of 857, and Hispanic students score an average of 910 (Fletcher, 2003). Clayton (2001) also noted that part of the great discrepancy in Scholastic Aptitude Test scores among races could be due to the costly test preparation in which white, affluent students participate.

In fact, African-American students have fallen behind academically at all socio-economic levels (Zuckerman, 2001). African-American middle and upper class students show the greatest academic achievement gap when compared to their white counterparts. African-American students with college-educated parents scored lower on the $12^{th}$ grade reading portion of the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) than did their white peers whose parents only had a high school diploma (Fletcher, 2003). Even in well-off districts, African-American students had less economic advantages than their white peers, such as fewer books and computers in their homes (Fletcher, 2003).

A report generated from the Harvard Project (2002) noted that teachers make a difference in the classroom, and can actually be the most important educational resource a school can provide. The report stated that in just one academic year, the top third of teachers produced as much as six times the learning growth as the bottom third of teachers. Edley (2002) pointed out that in California there are 6.75 times more unqualified teachers in high-minority schools (greater than 90 percent minority enrollment) than in low-minority schools (less than 30 percent minority enrollment). By 2005-2006, the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) required that all teachers in core academic subjects be "highly qualified," and that states take action to ensure that minority students have equal access to those highly qualified teachers (Abedi & Dietel 2004).

The *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 required schools to close the achievement gap, but school districts designed their own programs to accomplish that feat (Nevin, 2006). Studies have been focused on techniques that have proven to be successful in promoting academic proficiency

for minority students (Harvard Project: Hearing on NCLB, 2003). To begin with, Krueger (2002) reported on a study conducted in the late 1980s that found that reducing class size increased student achievement among minority children. In fact, smaller classes in grades kindergarten through third grade raised test scores by about four percentile points for white students and eight points for African-American students (Krueger, 2002). A longitudinal study conducted with these students found that those minority students who were taught in smaller classes were more likely to apply to college (Krueger, 2002).

Taylor (2003) attempted to get to the heart of the matter by posing a question to the students themselves. She asked over 300 African-American students to tell her why they felt that African-American children did not score as well as other racial groups on standardized tests. Thirty-one percent of the students indicated that they hold themselves responsible for their lack of achievement. They responded that it was their lack of motivation and the fact that they simply did not apply themselves. Twenty-four percent referred to teacher behaviors. The students noted that they did not have teachers that made learning fun and interesting. Eighteen percent blamed it on lack of parental support. Many felt that their parents held low expectations for their academic career. Finally, 11 percent referred to their negative environment as the cause. Peer pressure seemed to be a common thread throughout many of these responses; as the need to belong to their peer group was stronger than their need to do well academically. They would be ridiculed for "acting white" if they were academically successful in school (Taylor, 2003).

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine the disparity between the academic achievement of African-American students and the academic achievement of white American

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students in the state of Florida, and more specifically, in five high schools in Orange County Public Schools. The term "African-American" included all students who self-identified as that race upon enrollment into an Orange County public school. The study included male and female African-American students from different socio-economic levels.

Additionally, this study sought to determine the relationship, if any, in the achievement of African-American students in the five high schools in Orange County Public Schools, Orlando, Florida based on school attended, gender, socio-economic levels, class size, and qualifications of the teachers.

Background and Significance

Research (Ipka, 2003, Edley 2002, and Johnston and Viadero 2000) indicated that in the late 1980s and 1990s, the achievement gap increased. Ipka (2003) theorized that this increase in the achievement gap was partially due to court decisions, especially the *School Board of Education of Oklahoma City v. Dowell* 1991 decision, and was further strengthened in the *Freeman v. Pitts* 1992 decision (Laitsch and Rodi, 2004). Additionally, pivotal Supreme Court cases during the 1990s spelled out procedures for court approval of the dismantling of school desegregation plans. These included *Missouri v. Jenkins* (1995) and the Connecticut state case, *Sheffs v. O'Neill* (1996). All of these court decisions served to dismantle the historical *Brown v. the Board of the Education* decision of 1954, which the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously outlawed segregation and declared that racially separate schools are inherently unequal.

An analysis of the data from the National Center for Educational Statistics (2001) indicated that the Standardized Achievement Test Scores of African-American students increased significantly in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. The results suggested that the reading test

scores of 17 year-old African-Americans increased throughout the 1980s and 1990; however, the achievement gap between African-Americans and white Americans increased in the 1990s. Findings further indicated that mathematics test scores of 13 year-old African-Americans and white Americans decreased significantly in the 1980s.

A review of findings from the National Center for Educational Statistics (2001) indicated that only 1 in 100 African-American 17-year-olds could read and interpret technical data, as compared with 1 in 12 of their white American counterparts. Analysis of this data also found that only 1 in 100 African-Americans could solve multi-step word problems and elementary algebra problems, as compared to 1 in 10 white American students. Additionally, only 3 in 10 African-Americans mastered the computation of fractions, common percents, and averages, while 7 in 10 white Americans mastered these skills. The gaps between these two groups continued to be supported by the data.

Franklin D. Roosevelt articulated these words more than a half century ago, "We seek to build an America where no one is left out." America must ensure that all children receive a quality education and have access to economic opportunities. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Although there have been gains in achievement test scores for minority students, gaps in proficiency between white children and minority children remain (Quality Education for Minorities Project, 1990). One of the primary goals of the 2001 *No Child Left Behind Act* was to narrow the achievement gap. NCLB required that all children reach high standards by demonstrating proficiency in English, Language Arts, and mathematics by 2014 (Abedi, 2004). *No Child Left Behind* was the landmark; bipartisan, educational legislation passed by Congress and signed into law by President Bush. Under *No Child Left Behind*, states described how they would ensure that all students, including those who are disadvantaged, would achieve academic

proficiency and that the achievement gaps among groups of students would be eliminated. Yet, according to Fletcher (2003), African-Americans at all socio-economics levels were being left behind; not just those who are disadvantaged.

During the 2004-2005 school year, the study, The Academic Achievement of African-American Students in Orange County Public High Schools, examined the academic progression of African-American students within the state of Florida, and, more specifically, in five high schools in Orange County Public School. This study examined the effects of different variables on the achievement of African-American students. The variables included poverty rate of the students, teacher qualification, and class size. The data also included the reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test. The goal of the study was to determine if African-American students made academic progress (gains) and to identify learning achievement gaps, if any, among the different schools.

<div align="center">Research Questions</div>

The research questions addressed in this study were:

1.   What was the gain in African-American students on the reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, from the 2003-2004 administration to the 2004-2005 administration in five Orange County public high schools? Gain is measured by the percent change in students reaching proficiency (level 3 and above).

2. What was the difference between African-American students' 2004-2005 reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test percentage at proficient (level 3 and above) and white American students in five public high schools in Orange County?

3. What was the relationship between African-American students' 2004-2005 reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test percent at proficient (level 3 and above) and the school poverty rate in all public high schools in Orange County?

4. To what extent did these characteristics; poverty rate, teacher certification, teachers' advanced degrees, and class size have a relationship to student gains in reading in the 2004 to 2005 FCAT administration?

## Definition of Terms

For the purpose of clarification, the following definitions of terms were used throughout the study. The researcher developed all definition not accompanied by a citation.

Advanced Degree: A college degree beyond the four-year bachelor's degree.

African-American: A term that is a preferred, self-selected label, rather than the governmental designation of black.

Black: A term primarily used by governmental agencies in the United States to identify persons of African decent (darker complexioned) residing in the United States.

Developmental Scores: A score used to better understand whether a student is "gaining" in achievement. It is used to measure at least a year's worth of progress.

Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT): An assessment instrument used to evaluate student achievement of the higher order cognitive skills represented in the Sunshine State Standards in reading, writing, mathematics, and science.

Gains: The percent change in students reaching proficiency (Level 3 or above).

Graduate: A student who receives a high school diploma, including diplomas awarded upon successful completion of the GED examination. Students receiving high school certificates are not included in the graduation rate calculation. (www.greatschools.com)

Graduation rate: The percentage of students who graduated within four years of entering grade 9 for the first time as reported by the state. Students who transfer to another school or district or who enroll in adult-education programs are removed from the group of students. Students who transfer into a school or district are included in the count of their graduating class and are tracked accordingly. (www.greatschools.com)

Highly Qualified: Having all requirements as set forth by the state of Florida in order to receive Florida teaching certification.

Level of improvement: Meeting "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) for that group.

Poverty Rate: The percentage of free and/or reduced lunch students.

Stability rate: The percentage of students from the October enrollment count who are still enrolled during the February enrollment count as reported by the state. (www.greatschools.com)

## Methodology

### Participants

In 2004, Orange County Public Schools was the fourteenth largest district of more than 16,000 in the nation, and was the fifth largest in Florida. To better serve schools and students, the district was divided into five distinct regional learning communities. These communities are the West Learning Community, the East Learning Community, the North Learning Community, the South Learning Community, and the Central Learning Community. There are seventeen high schools in the county, with a population of 48,148, as of August 10, 2004. This number includes

ninth grade centers and Robert Hungerford Preparatory High School. There was a total 13,963 African-American students from all of the high schools of Orange County Public Schools, in Orlando, Florida (www.ocps.k12.fl.us).

Table 1: Student Racial/ Ethnic Distribution (August 2004)

| Race | Percent |
| --- | --- |
| White | 40.58 |
| African-American | 28.41 |
| Hispanic | 25.72 |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 03.77 |
| Multi-Cultural | 01.15 |
| American Indian/Alaska Native | 00.37 |

Five high schools were selected from the learning communities in Orange County Public Schools, located in Orlando, Florida. In 2004, there were five learning communities in Orange County Public Schools based on geographical areas. Each learning community had an Area Superintendent that is responsible for the schools located within that community. For the five schools in the study, the total population of each school was used to determine the percentage of African-American students. Each school was listed with the number and percentage of students based on race, and the percentage of students on free and/or reduced lunch. The student and/or the parent identified race upon enrollment. Selected codes were authenticated by the school enrollment data provided by Orange County Public Schools. School names were omitted, and the schools were designated as schools one through five.

School One had a total enrollment of 3,300 students, with 21 percent African-American students. The free and/or reduced lunch rate was 7.0 percent.

School Two had a total enrollment of 3,349 students, with 9.8 percent African-American students. The free and/or reduced lunch rate was 24 percent.

School three had a total enrollment of 2,237 students, with 50 percent African-American students. The free and/or reduced lunch rate was 54 percent.

School Four had a total enrollment of 2600 students, with 98 percent African-American students. The free and/or reduced lunch rate was 56 percent.

School Five had a total enrollment of 1040 students, with 98 percent African-American students. The free and/or reduced lunch rate was 66 percent.

Table 2 provides data retrieved from Orange County Public Schools intranet website for online data (www.infor.ocps.net). The schools are listed in ascending order by the percentage of students receiving free and/or reduced lunch.

Table 2: School Demographics and Free and/or Reduced Lunch Percentage (2004)

| School Number | Enrollment | % of African- American Students | % of Free/or Reduced Lunch |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 3300 | 21% | 18% |
| 2 | 3349 | 9.8% | 24% |
| 3 | 2237 | 50% | 54% |
| 4 | 2600 | 94% | 56% |
| 5 | 1040 | 98% | 66% |

<u>Data</u>

FCAT data for the 2004-2005 school year and 2003-2004 school year was retrieved from the Florida Department of Education. The report was an overview of the school's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test section of Florida School Grades website at <u>http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org</u>. In addition to the school grade and district information, the data included the following information on Florida Comprehensive Assessment reading scores; the number of students enrolled in the grades tested, including number in each subgroup, if the school tested 95 percent of the students, if 37 percent of subgroup students scored at or above grade level in reading, and if there was a gain of ten percent in reading of students not on grade level.

Additional information was obtained from the School Accountability Report from the Florida Department of Education website (www.firn.edu). This information included class sizes, degrees of the teachers, teacher certification levels, and the percentage of students on free and/or reduced lunch. In addition to examining the individual data of the five schools, data for school poverty rates, certification levels of the teachers, the number of teachers with advanced degrees, and class size was compiled for each of the seventeen high schools.

Procedures

The data included school level data for the selected five high schools in Orange County Public Schools in Orlando, Florida. The school level information was obtained from the Florida Department of Education website (<u>www.fldoe.org</u>). On the Florida Department of education website, under the heading of educator, there was a subheading for school accountability reports. Three different accountability reports are found on this page; school grades, school report cards,

and adequate yearly progress (AYP). All three reports were available for all testing years and all grade levels. For the purpose of this study, two administrations of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test data was reviewed, specifically; the 2003- 2004 and the 2004-2005 administration. In order to obtain the needed data AYP was pulled for the five high schools and a school report card was obtained for all public high schools in Orange County. Detailed information including exact percent and number of students tested by ethnic group, the AYP detailed sheet was also included. The specific descriptive data was taken from each school's website and the School Improvement Plan that included a school profile. Additional information was gathered from the Great School site. All data from the websites was reported in percent and actual numbers included and/or tested. For all correlation, the information was downloaded into an excel spreadsheet for analysis. The software program utilized was the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Version 11.5 (SPSS, 2003). An interview was held with the instructional leader at the school with the greatest gains and the lowest gains.

## Delimitation, Limitations, and Assumptions

### Delimitation

This study was delimited to the high schools in Orange County Public Schools for the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 school years. This study was delimited to African-American students in attendance at the seventeen high schools during the 2004-2005 school year. The study focused on factors related to African-American students, and not those of other ethnic or racial groups within a school or program.

Limitations

Results of the study were dependent upon the accuracy of the data obtained from the On Line Data Access (ODA) Crystal Reports retrieved from Orange County Public Schools. Also, students and parents self report of home language, race, and economic status were not verified. Therefore, the study was dependent upon the accuracy of the data obtained from Orange County Public Schools' mainframe system. The study was dependent upon the accuracy of the data obtained from the Informational Technology Department of Orange County Public Schools for the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test scores. The study was further dependent upon the accuracy of the data obtained from the Florida Department of Education Informational Resources Network website on overall reading abilities within all student populations in Florida, and the component of success linked to the schools.

Assumptions

Assumptions in this study included the following: (a) data acquired from the On Line Data Access (ODA) Crystal Reports for Orange County Public Schools was accurate, (b) data acquired from the Informational Technology Department of Orange County Public Schools was accurate, (c) data acquired from ODA and Informational Technology Department would be a valid measure, (d) the data acquired, measured, and analyzed regarding African-American students is important to the profession. Since some school information was obtained from individual schools, it was assumed that administrators and teachers from the schools and programs were willing to provide information as part of a multiple site study.

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Significance of the Study</u></p>

By identifying significant educational patterns, this researcher had the potential to assist individual schools in addressing issues specified to meet the needs of African-American students and the general population of any high school. However, this researcher recognized that there was not only one approach to student success, but rather, a unique individual approach to meet the needs of each student and of each school.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

<u>Introduction</u>

In this era of increased accountability in the field of education, educators and politicians have investigated ways to close the achievement gap (Viadero, 1999). Unfortunately, the achievement gap between low-income students and minority groups, compared to middle and upper income white students, continued to grow (Viadero, 1999). According to Logan (2004), even after more than 50 years since the *Brown* decision, the achievement gap is still pronounced. Based on the fact, many stakeholders called for school reform (NASSP, 2004). Some questions arise out of these findings – what was the state of current school reform efforts? In the follow-up to the former, were these reform efforts effective in closing the achievement gap if there was in fact an academic achievement gap?

<u>School Reform</u>

The politicians' answer to this problem is new legislation. *The No Child Left Behind Act,* seeks to put the burden of student achievement onto local educational agencies, specifically the local public schools system. Educators are still investigating ways to reform the traditional high school into a place where all students can learn and achieve. The research about school reform is extensive and goes back many years (NASSP, 2004). In the preface to *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution*, it is stated, "The high school of the 21$^{st}$ century must be much more student-centered and above all much more personalized in programs, support services, and intellectual rigor" (NASSP, 1996).

One venue of high school reform efforts is through research and implementation of Smaller Learning Communities. Smaller Learning Communities are defined as "any separately defined, individualized learning unit within a larger school setting" (Cotton, 1998).

The smaller schools provide more personal attention and greater academic support than larger schools. They also outperform large schools on most measures of school success, including grades, test scores, attendance, and graduation rates. The impact of smaller schools is even greater for minorities and low-income students. Schools must personalize their learning environments to reach all students. When educators achieve this, children will receive the first-class education they deserve.

Traditionally, the large school model came into existence due to the belief that schools had to be large in order to offer the kind of math and science programs students needed to compete technologically with other countries (Cutshall, 2003). Since 1940, the average United States school district has risen from 217 to 2,627 students, and the size of the average school has risen from 127 to 653 students (Cutshall, 2003). About 70 percent of all high school students in the United States attend a school with 1,000 or more students, and a sizeable group go to schools of 2,000 or more (Cutshall, 2003). In 1999-2000, the average enrollment in a United States public high school was 752, and a few schools had enrollments topping 5,000 (Kennedy, 2000).

According to the Department of Education (2002)), nearly three-quarters of all American high schools have more than 1,000 students enrolled. In order to ensure that all students have access to a first-class education, grant money was made available to research and implement Smaller Learning Communities. Smaller Learning Communities were defined in the grant as, "Schools that include grades eleven and twelve, and enroll at least 1,000 students in grades nine and above."

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In the 1980s, there was a big push for school reformation with the publication of "A Nation at Risk." Theories started to examine the current education situation in this country (USDOE-NCEE, 1983). Much attention was given to the inner city. Research determined that the workplace must be viewed holistically. The conclusion of the research identified key elements of the reformation process (USDOE-NCEE, 1983).

The Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program (CSRD) (http://www.serve.org/UCR/index.html) identified eleven essential components of Comprehensive School Reform. They indicated "All efforts to align [a] whole school reform should be driven by [a] vision/mission to have a positive, lasting impact on student achievement and adult professionalism and job satisfaction." In the preface to *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution*, it is stated, "The high school of the 21st century must be much more student-centered and above all much more personalized in programs, support services, and intellectual rigor" (NASSP, 1996). Therefore, it became imperative to institute structural and strategic changes in curriculums to reach every child, especially at the high school level (NASSP, 2002). Unfortunately, within the state of Florida much of these reform efforts have concentrated on students within the primary levels (http://www.flmiddlegradesreform.com/background.cfm). As a result, school reform efforts have been implemented with some success at the primary educational levels. In fact, it was not until 2004 that the Florida Legislature passed SB 354, Public School Educational Instruction that created the *Middle Grades Reform Act* (http://www.flmiddlegradesreform.com/background.cfm).

The *Middle Grades Reform Act* was created to provide added focus and rigor to middle grade academics, with reading as the foundation, so that students promoted from the eighth grade will be ready for success in high school. However, it was not until 2006 that state legislation and

educators started to focus on the achievement of all students at the secondary level (http://www.fldoe.org/hsreform/). Therefore, the underlying goal was to determine if there was an achievement gap between African-American and white American high school students; and if so, what were the contributing factors. The issue was: What reformations are in effect on the secondary level, and are they effective for all students?

With this renewed focus on school reform efforts, all schools levels were being held accountable. Accountability systems, including grading of schools in 28 states, created great pressure on the leadership and decision-making in all public schools.

In an environment of high stakes testing, many changes have taken place in education concerning curriculum refinement, allocation of resources, test preparation, and time usage. The intent of an accountability system, however, was ultimately to improve academic achievement among all students (http://fldoe.org/hrreform/).

<div align="center">Student Voice</div>

Some educators argue that one must seek to include all students by incorporating the power of the individual student. In an article titled "*Assume the Best for Student Success*" (Smith, 2002), the author talks of the powerlessness of students in the traditional school setting. He states that one way to diminish this feeling is to provide students with choices whenever possible. Choice is often referred to as "student voice." The concept of student voice has been characterized by two popular concepts. The first "voice" is as an individual expression. Advocates of the writing workshop approach to the teaching of writing put forth this concept. Workshop advocates emphasize students' desire to express their unique selves in writing, and state that traditional writing instruction frustrates this desire. The second concept of "voice" is

the voice of participation. This concept comes from advocates of critical pedagogy. These advocates call for critical dialogues between teachers and students. Within these dialogues, student voices would be heard.

Traditionally student voice has not been heard nor recognized in the public school arena. The reason for listening and valuing student voice can be viewed from several different angles. One is from social and legal contexts. Children are making choices about which parent should be the major caretaker in custody suits, children are taking their birth parents to court, children are being afforded protection for neglect and abuse, and children and infants are being granted the right to make an adjustment to life in a family by way of the federal *Family Leave Act.* All of these situations reflect and contribute to a new awareness of children as citizens and successors to the future.

Children's voice is also seen in a scientific context. This context has been created by the medical and social science research community, and it involves an emergent understanding about how humans learn. Piaget's research demonstrates that healthy humans, from infancy on, are active participants in learning about, and constructing views of, the social world they encounter. Since schooling is one of the most powerful shapers of both learning and acquiring world-view, it makes sense to attend to ways in which children actively shape their contexts and begin to model their worlds and the way in which we, in turn, shape the possibilities available for the learners.

Ruddock (1996) argues that in developing school improvement strategies, the views of children are of fundamental importance. Davie and Galloway (1996) also point out the benefits of acknowledging student voice. They argue that this process provides a desirable model of working cooperatively and helps give students a sense of ownership in their own educational

journey. From a sociological viewpoint, the principle justification for giving children a voice is epistemological. The reality experienced by children in educational settings cannot be fully comprehended by inference and assumption. The meanings that students attach to experiences are not necessarily the meanings that their teachers would ascribe. The subcultures that children inhabit in classrooms are not always visible to adults.

Whether students have an opportunity to contribute meaningfully to centrally developed school curricula is a question that deserves close study. Student voice has been marginalized in western schools. Students' opinions in curriculum-making practices, at best, are only sought after significant decisions have already been made and officially approved persons have determined the curriculum. This omission suggests a symptom of the wider political context in which educational initiatives are made primary, with a concern on the quantitative world of the technology of change rather than the qualitative world of values. Although students are considered central to schooling, they are rarely consulted in curriculum-making decisions (Dyson, 1995). If learner input is sought at all during the curriculum-making process, it may be solicited during the trial, pilot, or stage.

At the school and subject level, the curriculum has tended to be something "planned for" and "done to" students (Klein, 1989). Erickson and Schultz (1992) claim that the systematic silencing of student voice is consistent with traditional, authoritative structures in schools, and a consequence of methodological preferences for research techniques in formulating and implementing procedures.

An important role of research is to challenge the meanings and models embedded in theory; to question and to analyze. In the context of the classroom, researching the experiences,

knowledge, and understandings of students can provide a powerful and effective vehicle for researchers to address.

LeCompte (1993) observed that "researchers seek out the silenced because their perspectives often are counter-hegemonic"; that is, children's views of the world do not necessarily reflect the view of the dominant, majority adults. Because they do not reflect the dominant majority view of the world, such voices have the power to criticize the dominant power structure; to question "how things are," and what is meant by good, and even provide new theories of how the world might be ordered. Eliciting such perspectives, however, involves dedication in teaching practices as well as proclamation and belief in the "best interests of all children." There is increasing interest in allowing students to find their voices; in listening to what they have to say; and in returning responsibility to them for their own motivation and learning. They are the primary stakeholders in their own learning processes.

Taylor (2003) attempted to get to the heart of student learning and the reasons for achievement by posing questions to the students. She asked over 300 African-American students to tell her why they felt that African-American children do not score as well as other ethnic groups on standardized tests. Thirty-one percent of the students indicated that they hold themselves responsible for their lack of achievement. They responded that it was their lack of motivation and the fact that they simply did not apply themselves. Twenty-four percent referred to teacher behaviors. The students noted that they did not have teachers that made learning fun and interesting. Eighteen percent blamed it on lack of parental support. Many felt that their parents held low expectations for their academic careers. Finally, 11 percent referred to their negative environment as the cause. Peer pressure seemed to be a common thread throughout many of these responses, as their need to belong to their peer group was stronger than their need

to do well academically. Non-white students would be ridiculed for "acting white" if they had academic success in school.

Not only are students stakeholders in their learning, but teachers can be too. Studies have found that teachers make a difference in the classroom, and can actually be the most important educational resource a school can provide. Haycock (2001) reported that, in just one academic year, the top third of teachers produced as much as six times the learning growth as the bottom third of teachers. Adults often underestimate the ability of children to be shrewd observers, to possess insight and wisdom about what they see and hear, and to possess internal resources we routinely discount. Children and adults combine power and create new forms of wisdom when they explore learning together.

Balanced Leadership

In addition to looking at students and teachers, recent research is now looking at the role of the educational leader, the principal, in raising student achievement. In 1998, Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) began synthesizing research on student characteristics, and teacher and school practices associated with school effectiveness. McREL is a nationally recognized, private, nonprofit organization dedicated to improving education for all students through applied research, product development, and service. The research aspect resulted in specific guidance on the curricular, instructional, and school practices that, when applied, can result in increased student achievement.

However, the role of the instructional leader, the principal, had not been explored until the early 2000's. In 2003, Waters, Marzano, and McNulty, the McRel team, changed focuses and conducted an analysis of leadership from over a 30-year span. Specifically, the research report,

entitled, *Balanced leadership: What 30 years of research tells us about the effect of leadership on student achievement*, detailed the outcomes of a meta-analysis of research on the effects of principal leadership practices on student achievement.

The research discovered 21 leadership responsibilities that were significantly associated with student achievement. These 21 leadership responsibilities have resulted in a balanced leadership framework which describes the knowledge, skills, strategies, and tools leaders need to positively impact student achievement. The Framework arranges the 21 responsibilities of effective leaders into three key components: Focus of Leadership, Building purposeful community and Magnitude of change.

McREL's balanced leadership framework stands apart from previous information for school leaders. This framework is predicated on the notion that effective leadership means more than simply knowing what to do; it's knowing when, how, and why to do it. Effective leaders understand how to balance pushing for change, while at the same time protecting aspects of culture, values, and norms worth preserving. They know which policies, practices, resources, and incentives to align and how to align them with organizational priorities. They know how to gauge the magnitude of a change they are calling for, and how to tailor their leadership strategies accordingly. Finally, they understand and value the people in the organization. They know when, how, and why to create learning environments that support people, connect them with one another, and provide the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to succeed. This combination of knowledge and skills is the essence of balanced leadership. It is essential to student achievement.

<u>The Achievement Gap</u>

According to *Education Weekly*'s special report on the achievement gap (Johnston & Viadero, 2000), about 3.4 million students entered kindergarten in United States public schools in the fall of 2000. The issue is that researchers foresee widely different futures for these students. Whether they are white American, African-American, Hispanic, Native American, or Asian American, to a large extent this racial and ethnic background will predict their success in school, whether they go to college, and how much money they will earn as adults. Despite decades of attention, gaps in the achievement of minority students remain one of the most pressing problems in education (Viadero, 1999). Raul Yzaguirre, (Johnston & Viadero, 2000) the president of the National Council of La Raza, a Hispanic advocacy group in Washington reiterated that closing the gap has to be a societal goal, to do otherwise is to admit to failure, tolerate racial differences, and to give up on the very fundamental ideals of America.

Huge progress was made between the 1970s and the 1990s to reduce academic achievement gaps (Harvard Educational Letter, 2006). It was during this period of time that the gap between blacks and whites closed substantially (Johnston & Viadero, 2000). However, progress had stalled on closing the achievement gap since the end of the 1990's. In addition, new factors of a much stronger focus on test scores in K-12 education and the erosion of affirmative action policies in university admissions raised the achievement gap issue to the forefront of national debate (Johnston and Viadero, 2000). The "new" achievement gap, according to Ronald Ferguson (2006), is the gap between students of different racial groups whose parents have roughly the same amount of education. He explains that achievement gaps are not facts of nature. They are mostly because of difference in life experience. Other factors have also been linked to the unequal participation of minorities, especially African-American students, in education

(Thompson and O'Quinn, 2001). These factors included understaffed and under-equipped schools, judgments about ability, tracking, number and quality of upper level courses offered, access to qualified teachers, access to resources, and curriculum emphasis (Clark, 1999).

Regrettably, in a study conducted in 2000 showed that the achievement gap was already large when children enter kindergarten (Johnston & Viadero, 2000). Then, as the students go through school, the gap continued to increase. Comer's School Development Program, Direct Instruction, and Success for All are three programs that had a significant effect on the achievement of students in highly diverse schools (Borman, 2003).

Surprisingly, the summer break was also a factor that had widened the achievement gap (Borman, 2003). Minority students tended to have fewer learning experiences over the summer to sustain the skills that they acquired throughout the school year. Borman (2003) reported on a program that had attempted to remedy this problem. Over the summer, the Chicago Summer Bridge Program provided a free enrichment camp to students so that the transition back to school would require less remediation.

In a study (Taylor, 2003), it was noted that many teachers perceived that they were changing the way they teach. Teachers perceived that leaders, district and building level administrators, and government officials are making decisions that were focused on testing and that were not necessarily in the best interests of students. In the Harvard Research on the achievement gap (2006), Ronald Ferguson suggested that schools must try to provoke lifestyle changes that cause people to be a bit more focused on cultivating a love of learning among kids.

Studies found that teachers make the difference in the classroom and can actually be the most important educational resource a school can provide (Kopp, W, 2000 & Wadsworth, 2001). Haycock (2001) reported that, in just one academic year, the top third of teachers produced as

much as six times the learning growth as the bottom third of teachers. It is crucial for educators to hold high expectations for minority students because studies have shown that doing so significantly influences the academic performance of underrepresented minorities (Haycock, 2001).

<center>*No Child Left Behind Act*</center>

In this climate of change in educational practices, with high stakes testing and accountability, many urban high schools have investigated ways to address the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB*)* and meet Annual Learning Gains (AYP) criteria. The passing of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) inspired both support and criticisms. NCLB was the latest revision of the ESEA. It was passed by Congress in 2001, and signed into law by the Bush administration in 2002. It was known as the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001. The opening of the act reads, "To close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility, and choice, so that no child is left behind" (Public Law 107-110).

*No Child Left Behind Act* made major changes in the federal government's role in education (Edley, 2002). *No Child Left Behind Act* contained many promises related to raising student achievement and closing the achievement gaps – including gaps by race, ethnicity, poverty, disability, and limited English proficiency (U.S. Department of Education (NAEP) 1998). The law increased testing, reporting, and other requirements for schools. The foundational principle in NCLB was the agreement between Congress and the Administration on the importance of further action to hold states, districts, and schools accountable for improving educational outcomes of all children (Edley, 2002).

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The key program of NCLB is Title I, the flagship teaching and learning program that

reached 12.5 million students in high-poverty schools (Edley, 2002). ESEA programs provided

funds to improve teacher training, student literacy, school technology, and school safety. With

NCLB, the goal was to guarantee every child an equal opportunity to succeed in our nation's

public schools by mandating high standards and high expectations for every child (Public. Law

No. 107-110, 2001).

NCLB contained many provisions that related to closing the achievement gap between

minorities and low-income students. It furnished Title I with the largest funding increase in its

history. Through NCLB, schools were not only accountable for their average improvement

scores, but more specifically those scores that were connected to low-income and minority

students. The NCLB Act stated that every state, district, and school must annually collect, and

publicly report their data on students' achievement disaggregated by race, ethnicity, socio-

economic status, limited English proficiency, disability, gender, and migrant status (Edley,

2002). Edley (2002) who testified before the U.S. House of Representative Committee on

Education and the Workforce, stated,

> I believe… that for the first time the academic achievement of the major racial
> and ethnic groups, socio-economically disadvantaged students, English Language
> learners, and children with disabilities, will be at the core of whether our schools
> are judged to be successful. No longer can schools with skyrocketing drop out
> rates or racially identifiable pockets of academic stagnation and failure earn a
> passing grade (pg. 3).

Two other recent pieces of legislation have come from the NCLB that were to serve to

increase student achievement (Edley, 2002). One was the call for "highly qualified" teachers.

This meant that teachers must hold a valid certification in the area in which they are teaching.

Edley (2002) pointed out that in California, there are 6.75 times more unqualified teachers in

high-minority schools (greater than 90 percent minority enrollment) than in low-minority schools (less than 30 percent minority enrollment). By 2005-2006, the NCLB required that all teachers in core academic subjects be "highly qualified" and that states take action to ensure that poor and minority students had equal access to those highly qualified teachers. Another study conducted by Darling-Hammond (2000) found that nationally, in schools with the highest minority enrollments, students were found to have less than a 50 percent chance of getting a mathematics or science teacher with a license and a degree in the field that they teach.

The piece of important Florida legislation was the class size amendment. In November 2002, Section 1 of Article IX of the state of Florida Constitution was amended. The amendment was to establish, by the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year, the maximum number of students that can be assigned to a teacher. For the high school teacher, grade 9 through 12, the maximum number was 25 students. In order for districts to be in compliance with the amendment, the Legislature enacted SB-30A. This called for implementing the reduction of the average number of students in each classroom by at least two students per year, beginning with the 2003-2004 fiscal year, until the maximum number of students per classroom did not exceed the 2010-2011 maximum.

### The Brown Decision

Research (Ipka, 2003) indicated that the achievement gap in the late 1980s and 1990s had increased. It was theorized (Ipka, 2003) that this increase in the achievement gap was partially due to court decisions, especially the *School Board of Education of Oklahoma City v. Dowell* 1991 decision, and further strengthened in the *Freeman v. Pitts* 1992 decision. Additionally, pivotal Supreme Court cases during the 1990s had spelled out procedures for court approval of

the dismantling of school desegregation plans (Weiler, 1998). These included *Missouri v. Jenkins* (1995) and the Connecticut state case, *Sheffs v. O'Neill* (1996). All of these court decisions served to dismantle the historical *Brown v. the Board of the Education* decision of 1954.

The *Brown* decision called for federal action to desegregate public schools in the United States and provided equality in educational opportunities for all students. Historically, political and social forces had strategically converged to directly influence the formation and implementation of educational policies that sought to equalize educational opportunities for members of minority groups (Ipka, 2003). The equalization of education for all children was the primary purpose and promise of the *Brown* decision. Unfortunately, the reality was that the promise of *Brown* had not been fulfilled. Public schools were desegregated and the achievement gap continued to exist. A review of the social and historical context of the United States educational system would legitimize this conclusion.

In the book, *The Jim Crow Laws and Racism* (2000), records indicated that hundreds of people streamed into the United State Supreme Court building on May 17, 1954. Some of them saw the words "Equal Justice Under Law" carved in marble on the front of the building. That day they believed they would learn if those words were true (Fremon, 2000). The ruling of the United States Supreme Court was given. Some researchers deemed the court's judgment as perhaps the most important decision in decades in the area of racial equality. According to the Harvard Project (2002), the *Brown* ruling was a decision about the basic structure of American society.

The Brown case was not an abstract case about the issue of segregation, but involved four communities whose cases were combined. There were also 13 plaintiffs in the *Brown* case (Orfield & Lee, 2004). They were Mrs. Darlene Brown, the Reverend Oliver Brown, Mrs. Lena

Carper, Mrs. Sadie Emmanuel, Mrs. Marguerite Emmerson, Mrs. Shirla Fleming, Mrs. Zelma

Henderson, Mrs. Shirley Hodison, Mrs. Maude Lawton, Mrs. Alma Lewis, Mrs. Iona

Richardson, Mrs. Vivian Scales, and Mrs. Lucinda Todd. The cases were combined because all

of them were substantially similar with respect to buildings, transportation, curricula, and

educational qualifications of teachers. Another common thread running through all of the cases

was that all the plaintiffs were African-American minors who sought admission to the public

schools of their communities on a non-segregated basis. In each instance, they had been denied

admission to schools attended by Caucasian children under laws requiring or permitting

segregation according to race (Brown et al. v. Board of Education of Topeka et al. * 347 U.S.

483 1954).

The various suits involved in the *Brown* case were from four different states: Kansas,

South Carolina, Virginia, and Delaware. In the Kansas case, *Brown v. Board of Education*, the

plaintiffs were African-American children of elementary school age residing in Topeka.

Specifically, the case was filed by Linda Brown, an eight-year-old African-American girl in

Topeka, Kansas who wanted to go to a nearby public school. The elementary schools in Topeka

were segregated. However, other public school in the community operated on a non-segregated

basis.

In the South Carolina case, *Briggs v. Elliott*, the plaintiffs were African-American

children of both elementary and secondary school age who were residents of Clarendon County.

They brought action in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of South Carolina,

to enforce the provision in the state constitution and statutory code that provided for equal access

to public schools by all racial groups. Clarendon County however, followed the practice of

segregation of African-American students from white students in public schools. In this case, the school building designated for the African-American students was substandard.

In the Virginia case, *Davis v. County School Board*, the plaintiffs were African-American children of high school age who were residents of Prince Edward County. The African-American school in the county was found to be inferior in physical plant, curricula, and transportation.

In the Delaware case, *Gebhart v. Belton*, the plaintiffs were African-American children of elementary and secondary school age in New Castle County. The schools of the African-American students were inferior with respect to teacher training, pupil-teacher ratio, extracurricular activities, physical plant, and time and distance involved in travel. The local outcome of this case was different in that the Chancellor gave judgment for the plaintiffs and ordered the students immediate admission to schools previously attended by only white children. The drawback of the judgment was that, on an appeal to the Supreme Courts, the defendants might have been able to obtain a modification of the decree after equalization of the African-American and white schools had been reached. Since the *Brown* case was the first to reach the Supreme Court level, the four cases were referred to as *Brown v. the Board of Education*.

When the *Brown* case went to the Supreme Court, Thurgood Marshall, the NAACP's lead attorney, argued on behalf of the plaintiffs that school segregation was a violation of individual rights under the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. He also asserted that separate schools kept people who had formerly been slaves "as near that stage as possible." This was the unanimous opinion of the Supreme Court on May 17, 1954.

The court declared the concept of "separate but equal" unconstitutional. The opinion was given by Chief Justice Earl Warren. It also served to validate the research presented in the case on the damaging effects of segregation on "children of the minority group." The effects of

segregation had been described by Chief Justice Warren as a "deprivation of equity in educational opportunity," and he stressed the importance of "education as a principal instrument in awaking the child to cultural values." Specifically, Chief Justice Warren uttered these words,

> We come then to the question presented: Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other "tangible" factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities? We believe that it does. (http://www.nationalcerter.org/brown.html pg. 2)

In a review of the literature, the decision in the *Brown* case was based upon research on the damaging effects of segregation on minority groups. In this context of the case, segregation (Allport, 2004) was defined as, restriction of opportunities for different types of associations between the members of one racial, religious, national or geographic origin, or linguistic group and those of other groups, which results from or was supported by the action of any official body or agency representing some branch of government.

This particular type of "segregation" was segregation in which the groups involved did not enjoy equal social status. The group of lesser social status was referred to as the segregated group. It did not include segregation of criminals or of individuals with communicable diseases, which aims at protecting society from those who might cause it harm (Brown et al v. Board of Education of Topeka et al * 347 U.S. 483 1954).

The original court report of 1953, *Current Trends in Negro Education, and Shorter Papers* (reprinted in 2004), indicated that minority children learn the inferior status to which they are assigned. They observed the fact that they were usually segregated and kept apart from others who were treated with more respect by society as a whole. They often reacted with feelings of inferiority and a sense of personal humiliation. Many of them became confused about their own personal worth. On one hand, minority children required a sense of dignity like all other human

beings; on the other hand, almost nowhere in the larger society did they find their own dignity as human beings respected by others. Under these conditions, the minority child was thrown into a conflict with regard to his feelings about himself and his group. He wondered whether his group and he, himself, were worthy of no more respect than they received. This conflict and confusion lends to self-hatred and rejection of one's own minority group (Brown et al v. Board of Education of Topeka et al * 347 U.S. 483 1954).

The report further indicated that minority children of all social and economic classes often react with a generally defeatist attitude and a lowering of expectations and personal ambitions. In the production of such negative attitudes and expectations, segregated schools impair the ability of the child to profit from the educational opportunities provided him.

The final report submitted by the Supreme Court (1954) concluded that, "While the range of individual differences among members" of the African-American "minority group," noted as the rejected group, are as wide as among other groups, "the evidence suggested that all of these children are unnecessarily encumbered in some ways by segregation and its concomitants" (Brown et al v. Board of Education of Topeka et al * 347 U.S. 483 1954).

Based on these findings, the legal doctrine of "separate but equal" schooling was overturned. The Court, with the stroke of a judge's pen, had made possible the enrollment of African-American children in schools that had denied them entrance that very same morning. However, the key phrase is "made possible."

Immediately following the court's decision, editorials across the nation reflected the full range of sentiments of support and of opposition to the decision. Some groups vowed resistance to the judicial opinion. Many Americans, on the other hand, heard the news as if it were a proclamation of too long delayed deliverance from oppressive rules and social practices.

After the 1954 Supreme Court gave its unanimous decision that began the first part of dismantling inequalities that had existed for centuries. How would the integration of schools be enforced? The only thing that was certain was that the judges would not oversee desegregation themselves. School districts would handle desegregation individually.

In 1955, the Supreme Court made a second announcement in the *Brown* case sometimes referred to as *Brown II.* It called on districts to integrate their schools with "all deliberate speed." Due to the vagueness of this phrase, "all deliberate speed," there were various reactions across the nation. Some districts desegregated their schools within a year, while others resisted to the point of violence (Fremon, 2000).

<div align="center">An Historical Review of Segregation</div>

In order to fully understand the reaction of both sides to the decision, an historical review of segregation in the era of Jim Crowism must be conducted. According to historians (Litwacks, 2004), approximately 50 years after the Emancipation Proclamation, the white South reached a consensus about how to resolve growing racial tensions. This was the first emergence of segregation. During the post Civil War era and the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment (1865), segregation evolved in both custom and law. During this time, approximately 90 percent of African-Americans still lived in the South, and the dominant racial attitudes were nothing less than a religious and moral creed (Litwacks, 2004). Whites feared that a new African-American, born to freedom, undisciplined by slavery, and unschooled in racial etiquette, could not be trusted to stay in his/her place without legal force. Therefore, between 1890 and 1915, the white South constructed an imposing and extensive system of legal and extra-legal mechanisms to segregate the races. These laws allowed for the continuation of the institutionalized and

customary subordination of African-American men and women. They served to keep and enforce ignorance among African-Americans. These new laws became known as Jim Crow laws. The Jim Crow laws were the legal statutes used to enforce segregation for more than a half century.

The interesting thing about the term "Jim Crow" is that it is based upon the characterization of black people at the time. It originated in the early 19th century in minstrel shows. Thomas "Daddy" Rice, a white minstrel, popularized the term of "Jim Crow" (Gavins, 2004). Rice imitated the dancing, singing, and demeanor generally ascribed to African-American character. Calling it *Jump Jim Crow*, he based the routine on a performance conducted by a slave; an elderly and crippled Louisville stableman belonging to a Mr. Crow. By the 1890s, the term "Jim Crow" had become the shorthand for segregating the races in the South.

The doctrine of Jim Crow was upheld by many state laws throughout the South. A law enacted in Louisiana in 1890, forbade any railroad passenger to enter "a coach or compartment to which by race he does not belong" (Litwack, 2004). Homer Plessy, a black man, who had purchased a first-class ticket on the East Louisianan Railway, claimed his rights had been violated under the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments when he was denied a seat in that section. Plessy was forcibly ejected from the train and placed in the parish jail in New Orleans.

In *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), the United States Supreme Court, by an eight to one vote, rejected Plessy's appeal and found no problem with accommodations that were "equal but separate." This decision embraced the popular views on race.

Social prejudice may not be overcome by legislation. The majority view, written by Supreme Court Justice Henry B. Brown, was that this decision was less than dramatic in its impact. For many African-American Southerners, it simply underscored and reinforced what they already knew from personal experiences, that the quality of their lives and freedom

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depended upon the will of the majority of whites in the locality or state (Litwack, 2004). The court's judgment, along with the elaborate structure of Jim Crow, remained in force for more than half a century, as did the reality of separate and unequal treatment.

Racial segregation was hardly a new phenomenon. The restrictive Black Codes, along with a few segregation laws, were passed by the first post Civil War governments. What replaced the Black Code after Reconstruction was an informal code of exclusion and discrimination. As noted by an English traveler in 1966, "Whatever the Negro's legal rights, he knows how far he may go, and where he must stop" and that "habits are not changed by paperwork" (Litwick, 2004). Unfortunately, this was the prevailing mindset of most people, white and black, at the time.

In 1904, the term "Jim Crow" made its first official appearance as an entry in the *Dictionary of American English*. This entry further legitimized in the nation the concept of segregation. The Jim Crow era served to separate everything: public accommodations, education, employment, and housing. Its impact swept through cemeteries, courts, hospitals, and recreational facilities. By 1885, most states already had legally mandated separate schools (Litwack, 2004). In many places this separation was even a popular concept to both races. Additionally, in many of the urban Southern cities, legalized, segregated, residential patterns were firmly entrenched in the statutes.

Racially exclusive schools characterized much of Atlanta, Richmond, and Montgomery by the mid 1890s. Outside of the law, Jim Crow laws served to reinforce white supremacy and black subordination, and often this was enforced by bloody terror strikes (Garvins & Tillman, 2004). It would take 58 years after the *Plessy v. Ferguson Case* (1896) for the United States

Supreme Court to review and reverse the case and provide equal protection under the law for African-Americans.

It has now been more than 50 years since the historic 1954 *Brown* decision, and legal scholars and social scientists continue to debate the merits of school desegregation mandates (Ipka, 2003). Today, debates intensify and desegregation policies continue to be scrutinized and quietly dismantled (Ipka, 2003). A review of recent legislation and minority student achievement makes it clear that the promise of the *Brown* decision has not been fulfilled (Lewis, M. 2003).

First, the 1990s ended active federal judicial involvement in school desegregation. This decade was characterized by increased legal challenges to mandated school desegregation policies. Several public school districts ceased enforcing desegregation plans and returned to neighborhood schools (Ipka, 2003). This shift away from the ideology behind the *Brown* decision was possibly due, in part, to the leadership of the nation at the time**.** The result has been that many urban school districts are moving toward increasing segregation of their schools as students return to neighborhood schools (Orfield, 1996).

The second important trend in school desegregation is increased attention to access to education and academic performance of minority students (Willis, 1994). Both school districts involved in court cases and those involved in desegregation planning have shifted attention away from a focus on desegregation efforts, which primarily concern student assignment to achieve racial integration, and toward increased attention to issues related to within-school equity and integration.

According to Ipka (2002), the Reagan era abandoned school desegregation initiatives in favor of a more sociopolitical context. During the Reagan presidency, the United State Justice Department adopted a hands-off approach to forcing states to comply with desegregation

mandates. Additionally, the Reagan, Bush I, Clinton, and Bush II administrations did not take a

firm stand on school desegregation. As Reynolds (1982) noted, President Reagan believed that

many of the public policies from the 1980s created unfair advantages for African-Americans in

America, which he believed then resulted in practices that discriminated against white

Americans. He felt that racial quotas and affirmative action quotas were therefore both morally

wrong and unconstitutional. His desire was to create a color-blind society in which race was a

neutral issue in public policy formulation. With this new leadership philosophy, the courts

tended to begin to establish a legal standard that facilitated the resegregation of the public

schools.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the desegregation focus was different. The focus was on the

physical integration of African-American and white students through such measures as busing,

school choice, magnet schools, use of ratios, redrawn school district boundaries, mandatory and

voluntary intra- and inter-district transfers, and consolidation of city districts with suburban

districts (Willis, 1994). While many of these efforts are continuing in school districts across the

nation, courts are declaring increasingly large urban districts unitary (Denver, CO; Willington,

DE: Savannah, GA: Kansas City, S; Cincinnati and Cleveland, OH; Oklahoma City, OK;

Buffalo, NY; and Austin, TX).

In the 1991 *School Board of Education Oklahoma City v. Dowell* decision, the United

States Supreme Court ruled that once a previously segregated school district has implemented

"practicable" strategies to eliminate segregation, it can be declared "unitary," and released from

desegregation orders and released from court ordered busing. The court also stipulated that the

districts could be released from court ordered desegregation requirements (Ipka, 2003). This

meant that districts could be freed from court ordered oversight if they have desegregated their

students and faculty and met the other requirements of mandatory desegregation, such as transportation and facilities. The court further ruled that school districts are not responsible for remedying local conditions such as segregated housing patterns (Fife, 1996). This gave school districts the legal sanction to dismantle desegregation efforts and to return to segregation (Weiler, 1998).

This ruling was only strengthened in *Freeman v Pitts,* 1992. The court attempted to further define "practicable." The United States Supreme Court ruled that, if a district has done everything reasonable to achieve desegregation, it could be declared unitary before reaching 100 percent compliance. In order to achieve this, the school district must demonstrate a good faith commitment to compliance (Ipka, 2003). In other words, a school district does not have to comply with all six of the "Green factors" in order to achieve unitary status (www2. edweek.org/rc/issues/desegregation/, 2007).

Districts and courts alike began to distinguish between "de jure" segregation, segregation actually caused by government action, and "de facto" segregation, segregation caused by such things as housing patterns. De jure is still illegal and de facto is considered just a fact of life (www2. edweek.org/rc/issues/desegregation/, 2007). *Freeman v. Pitts* was crucial to desegregation efforts because it allows districts to be incrementally released from judicial oversight (Ipka, 2002).

A district is released from judicial oversight after being deemed as having achieved "unitary status." A "unitary school system is one that has not operated segregated schools for a period of several years and has eliminated the relics of its prior discrimination." Unitary status requires a judicial determination that a school district has implemented a desegregation plan in good faith. Upon finding that a school system accused of segregation has achieved "unitary

status," the district courts must end their supervision of the school system

(http://laws.findlaw.com/11th/979199opn.html US v STATE OF GA).

Under the *Freeman v. Pitts* ruling, school districts across the country have come to terms

with the end of court desegregation orders that for years influenced, or even dictated, many of

their decisions about educational policy. Many were relieved to see an end to expansive judicial

intrusion. School districts no longer have to such things as labyrinthine busing maps and

mandates that they feel took precedence over common sense (www2.

edweek.org/rc/issues/desegregation/, 2007).

This era in the 2000s is seemingly being noted as the time of resegregation based on the

ruling of *Freeman v. Pitts*. This was the one court case that allowed school districts to be

incrementally withdrawn from court supervision. In other words, a school district did not need to

achieve unitary status in all six of the "Green factors": student assignment, faculty, staff,

transportation, extracurricular activities, and facilities, before being released from court

supervision (Weilder, 2000).

The "Green factors," coined by the Supreme Court decision in *Green v. School Board of*

*New Kent County*, were typical components of a school system where desegregation was

mandatory. These factors were also many of the complainants in the *Brown* case. Thus, the

*Freeman* decision effectively weakened the Green standards by allowing schools to desegregate

incrementally, although it did not release districts from their obligation to desegregate (Fife,

1996).

The *Missouri v. Jenkins* case (1995) was one of the most complex desegregation cases in

the United States (Weller, 1998). From 1985 to 1995, the state of Missouri had spent $1.4 billion

on a court-ordered desegregation plan for the Kansas City School District. In 1995 however, the

U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a desegregation plan did not have to continue just because minority students' achievement scores remained below the national average. The state of Missouri could not be required to provide funding for programs and various kinds of school improvement activities, or to pay for a plan aimed at attracting white students from suburban districts for an undetermined amount of time, simply because minority student achievement scores remained below the national average. The state could only be required to do what was practical for remedying the vestiges of segregated schooling (Fife, 1996). In 1997, a Federal judge ruled that the state could be freed from financial responsibility by approving a settlement paying $315 million that would cut out $100 million in annual state subsidy for school desegregation efforts after 1999. The court ordered that the district continue to work toward narrowing the gap in test scores between African-American and white American students by the end of 1998-99 (Hendrie, 1997).

However, according to a special report on desegregation in *Educational Weekly* (http://www.EdWeek.org, 2004), civil rights activists say this shift marks a step backward. They argued that as the nation becomes more multicultural, integration was more important than ever. For Latinos, who had become the largest group of minority students, segregation had been steadily increasing ever since the first national data was collected in the late 1960s. Additionally, the Supreme Court did not recognize Latinos until 19 years after the *Brown* decision, and there was never any significant enforcement of desegregation for Latinos (Orfield & Lee, 2004).

Many studies suggested that far from being a relic of the past, school segregation had gotten worse in the 1980s and 1990s, stretching to encompass Latinos and suburban minority students, as well as inner city African-Americans. In an report in *Educational Weekly* in 2002 dealt with school segregation rising in the South, researchers concluded that public schools in

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many parts of the South have grown more segregated by race across state lines, between school districts, and within them, and even within school buildings (http://www.EdWeek.org, 2004).

Other studies (Richard, 2002) concluded that white and African-American students are more segregated in 2002 than in the 1990s, and it appeared to be on the rise in some Southern cities. Latino segregation dropped, but remained higher than black and white levels. Integration rates also dropped in majority-black school districts in larger metropolitan areas in the 1990s. In Nashville, Tennessee, the percentage of black students who attended schools that have at least 80 percent minority enrollment had climbed from 13 percent in 1980, to more than 22 percent. Additionally, magnet schools for gifted students in Nashville had seen their enrollment become more white over a three year period (www2. edweek.org/rc/issues/desegregation/, 2007). The results of Harvard University's Civil Rights Project (Orfield & Lee, 2004) demonstrated that, while schools in the South still have more integration of African-American and whites than before the desegregation movement, they have lost ground on that front over the past decade.

This desegregation movement held true for Hispanic students. In a report released in July 2001, it highlighted an emergence of the increased Hispanic presence in the United States. With this increase, segregation of Latinos from non-Hispanic whites in schools was even greater than it was for African-Americans. Seventy percent of African-American, K-12 students attended predominantly minority schools in the 1998-1999 school year, compared with 66 percent in 1991-1992, and 63 percent in 1980-1981. Latinos were even more likely to attend predominantly minority schools, with 76 percent attending such schools in 1998-1999, up from 73 percent in 1991 (Orfiled & Lee, 2004).

Additionally, Latinos confronted very serious levels of segregation by race and poverty, and non-English speaking Latinos tended to be segregated in schools from each other. The data

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showed no substantial gains in segregated education for Latinos even during the Civil Rights era. The increase in Latino segregation was particularly notable in the West. There had also been a massive demographic transformation of the West, which had become the nation's first predominantly minority region in terms of total public school enrollment. This had produced a sharp increase in Latino segregation (Lee, 2004).

The return of segregation to American schools has been attributed to the impact of the *Freeman v. Pitts* 1992 court decision. The extent of that impact was verified in the 2002 Mumford study (Logan, 2004), which concluded decisively that increased school segregation was the direct result of policies that were reversed in the 1990s. The study found that the national average level of segregation of black elementary children from white elementary children showed a two-point increase, compared to 1989-1990; a small shift, but especially significant when residential segregation was declining by three or four points in the same period (National Center of Educational Statistics: Common Core of Data, 1991-1992 and 2002-2003). The study went on to say that in many places there has been a clear retreat from efforts to desegregate African-American schoolchildren. Therefore, when the authors compared neighborhoods in which there had been major policy initiatives addressing racial imbalance in schools, they found that "increased school segregation in these cases did not result from changes in where children lived." It was concluded that the trend of resegregation was caused by "changes in policies that once worked effectively to reduce school segregation, but were reversed in the 1990s" (Logan, 2004).

Minority Achievement Gap

There have been gains in science and mathematics achievement test scores for minority students in the early 2000's, although gaps in proficiency between white children and minority children remain. The National Statistic Foundation concluded that beyond the year 2002, the country was facing a serious shortage of scientists and mathematicians. To remain economically competitive, the United States must educate and advance minority students in science and math; for it is predicted that by the year 2050, minority subgroups will outnumber white subgroups. Minority children represent the most rapidly growing segment of the school-age population.

Numerous factors have been linked to the unequal participation of minorities in science and mathematics education. These include understaffed and under-equipped schools, which are usually found in minority communities; judgment about ability; tracking; number and quality of science and mathematics courses offered; access to qualified teachers; access to resources; and curriculum emphasis (Orfiled & Lee, 2004).

More than 50 years ago, the promise of the *Brown* case slowly wedged open access to improved schooling for African-American children and youth across the United States. From 1970 to 1980, the achievement gap between African-Americans and white American students declined by 50 percent. However, the gap began to increase once again in 1988 (Haycock, 2001).

An analysis of the data from the *National Center for Educational Statistics* (2001) indicated that the standardized achievement test scores of African-American students increased significantly in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. The results suggested that the reading test scores of 17 year-old African-Americans increased throughout the 1980s and 1990; however, the achievement gap between African-Americans and white Americans increased in the 1990s.

Findings further indicated that mathematics test scores of 13 year-old African-Americans and white Americans decreased significantly in the 1980s.

The *National Center for Educational Statistics* further (2001) indicated that only 1 in 100 African-American 17-year-olds could read and interpret technical data as compared with 1 in 12 of their white American counterparts. Analysis of this data also found that only 1 in 100 African-Americans could solve multi-step word problems and elementary algebra problems, as compared to 1 in 10 white American students. Additionally, only 3 in 10 African-Americans had mastered the computation of fractions, common percents, and averages, while 7 in 10 white Americans had mastered these skills. The gaps between these two groups continued to be supported by the data.

According to Jencks and Phillips (1998), these gaps between the two groups begin before children entered kindergarten and continued into adulthood. Data from the *Center for Educational Statistics Report* (1997) indicated that during the 1970s, approximately 25 percent of white American children ages three and four, attended preschool. This same percentage was found among African-American children. However, by 1991, only 31 percent of African-American children were enrolled in preschool, while 40 percent of their white American counterparts were preschool attendees. This nine percent gap in attendance rates may contribute significantly to the achievement gap between the groups.

The achievement gap continued from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. In fact, research indicated the achievement gap may begin at birth (Barton, 2004). Infants with low birth weights were at risk of impaired development, including delayed motor and social development. They were more likely to fail or repeat grades. African-Americans, as a group, scored below 75 percent of white Americans on most standardized measures (Munk, 2001). The achievement gap

between white Americans and African-Americans became evident in course grades, test scores, course selection, and graduation rates (Comer, 2001). By the time African-American students completed the fourth grade, these individuals were two years behind their white American counterparts in reading and mathematics achievement. When African-American students began grade eight, they were at least three years behind; by grade 12, they were four years behind (Comer, 2001). The gap between African-Americans and white Americans continued to grow throughout the schooling process.

Some indications pointed to the fact that socio-economic levels were not a factor in the underachievement of black students. In Fairfax County, Virginia, African-American students were consistently scoring lower on state standardized tests as compared to poor Virginia districts. This was surprising for one of the nation's wealthiest school systems. According to John Johnson, education chairman for the Fairfax County NAACP and father of two students in the county schools, "Something is broken with the way we teach a segment of the population." African-American elementary students are outperformed on reading and math tests by white and some other students, including Hispanics, poor children, and immigrants learning English.

In fact, the district had not noticed that African-Americans were performing lower than other students. The district was accustomed to receiving accolades for its achievements. It was not until the standardized test taken by Virginia students used to measure performance under the federal *No Child Left Behind Act*, which required the district to present overall performance data as well as the scores of racial groups, poor children, and disabled children, did the district realizes there was an issue. In Fairfax, 59 percent of African-American third-graders passed last year's state reading test. By comparison 74 percent of the African-American third graders in Richmond passed the test and about 71 percent of Norfolk students. Statewide, the passing rate

for African-American children was 67 percent and 79 percent of all Fairfax students passed the exam.

According to Zuckerman (2001), all minority students fell behind academically at all socio-economic levels. In fact, African-American middle and upper class students were the ones that showed the greatest academic achievement gap when compared to their white counterparts. African-American and Latino students with college-educated parents scored lower on the $12^{th}$ grade reading portion of the National Assessment for Educational Progress than did their white peers whose parents only had a high school diploma. Even in well-off districts, African-American and Hispanic students had less economic advantages than their white peers, such as fewer books and computers in their homes (Fletcher, 2003).

Marlantes (2001) reported on the actions that Cambridge, Massachusetts took to segregate students with diverse economic advantages. They required students and their parents to list their top three choices of schools they would like to attend, and then selected one of those schools for them to go to. Since Cambridge's primary goal was to have all their schools with the same percentage of students on free and reduced lunch, many students wound up with a school that was not their first choice. Many other districts, including La Crosse, Wisconsin, Wake County, North Carolina, and Manchester, Connecticut, have also tried to enact programs that made their school populations equal along economic lines. They found that when African-American students were integrated into schools with mostly low-income whites, their scores showed little improvement. On the other hand, when they were integrated into schools with more middle and upper class whites, they performed much better.

Fletcher (2003) reported on a survey taken during the 2000-2001 school year that included 40,000 middle- and high-school students in 15 racially and economically diverse

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suburban school districts. It was concluded that 40 percent of black students and 30 percent of

Hispanic students said that they had an average grade of a "C" or lower as opposed to only 13

percent of Caucasian students. Along with their disparity in grades, minority students were

falling behind in graduation rates and were less likely than white students to go to college. In

1998, only 60 percent of Hispanic students and 73 percent of African-American students

completed high school while 83 percent of white students did the same. Furthermore, in that

same year, almost 50 percent of white students went to college while only 34 percent of

Hispanics and 41 percent of African-Americans did.

Although there has been a nationwide improvement in SAT scores since the 1980s, white

students have raised their scores to a much greater degree than other students (Clayton, 2001).

For instance, verbal Scholastic Aptitude Test scores jumped six points and math scores rose

seven points for African-Americans, while the verbal scores rose 11 points and the math scores

rose 18 points for white students. Caucasians scored an average of 1060 on the Scholastic

Aptitude Test, while African-Americans scored an average of 857, and Hispanic children scored

an average of 910 (Fletcher, 2003). Clayton (2001) also noted that part of the great discrepancy

in Scholastic Aptitude Test scores between races could be due to the costly aptitude test

preparation in which many affluent students participated.

All indications and research confirmed that the achievement gap is not getting smaller.

Since the days of the Reagan administration, the United States Justice Department has done little

to force states to comply with desegregation mandates. Affirmative action programs and other

policies designed to assist minority group members in gaining equal access to educational

opportunities continued to be challenged by school districts throughout the nation. Even in the

time of the *No Child Left Behind Act,* the academic achievement gap between minority and non-minority students continued to grow.

One court decision in the spirit of *Brown v. Board of Education* was decided in August of 2004. The Connecticut state case, *Sheffs v. O'Neill* (1996), called for a four-year, $45 million expansion of the state's school integration efforts. Most of the money would pay for voluntary programs that offer students the chance to attend schools outside their local communities. This case stood out nationally as an attempt to use the courts to integrate schools, long after most such drives had waned.

The suit was filed in 1989 by a group of African-American, Hispanic, and white students in the Hartford area. The lawsuit argued that the extreme racial and ethnic isolation in the city's schools was a violation of the state's constitutional ruling on segregation in public education. The state Supreme Court agreed, and stated in its 1996 decision that the state was liable for correcting the problems of such isolation, even if it did not intentionally cause them. State officials were then trying to figure out how to comply with the decree.

The real hope for improvement was offered in the language on the Supreme Court's recent decision on affirmative action and the integration of higher education. In June 2003, the Supreme Court ruled, in *Grutter v. Bollinger,* that affirmative action must be upheld in higher education. Justice O'Connor's majority opinion concluded, "Numerous studies show that student body diversity promotes learning outcomes and better prepares students for an increasingly diverse workforce and society, and better prepares them as professionals" (Grutter v. Bollinger, 123 S.Ct.2325 (2005).

These benefits were not theoretical, but real, as major American businesses had made it clear that the skills needed in an increasingly global marketplace can only be developed through

exposure to widely diverse people, cultures, ideas, and viewpoints. What  more, high-ranking

retired officers and civilian leaders of the United States military assert that, based on [their]

decades of experience, they believe that a highly qualified, racially diverse officer group is

essential to fulfill its mission. The military must train and educate a highly qualified, racially

diverse officer corps in a racially diverse setting. From this analysis, the conclusion is that this

same principle must be applied to our country's other; more selective institutions. For them to

remain competitive, they must remain both diverse and selective (Orfield and Lee, 2004). The

Court's decision strongly reaffirmed some of the basic goals of *Brown v. the Board of Education.*

In 2002, President Bush signed the biggest school reformation act ever enacted, the *No Child*

*Left Behind Act*. The statistics required by the *No Child Left Behind Act* are dramatically

documenting the inequalities between white and minority students by identifying "failing"

schools. America must ensure that all children receive a quality education and have access to

economic opportunities. The country is, in fact, being re-segregated. The promises of *Brown*;

equalization of education for all students, the new good faith integration policies, and the

positive impact on achievement of students of all racial and socio-economic groups, were

certainly areas to continue to research and monitor. Two of the clearest lessons of *Brown*, and the

entire Civil Rights experience, were that segregation does not work, and that achieving

desegregation requires explicit and enduring commitment (Orfield and Lee, 2004).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to define the methods and procedures used to determine: (a) gain in African-American students on the reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, from the 2003-2004 administration to the 2004-2005 administration in five Orange County public high schools, (b) difference between African-American students' 2004-2005 reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test percentage at proficient (level 3 and above) and white American students in five public high schools in Orange, (c) the relationship between African-American students' 2004-2005 reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test percent at proficient (level 3 and above) and the school poverty rate in all public high schools in Orange County, (d) the characteristics of schools making gains in reading.

This chapter consists of six topics: defining the statement of the problem and outlining the desired outcome of the investigation; identifying the four research questions that guided this study; discussing the demographics of each school involved in the study and the number of African-American students at the schools; addressing the data collection process; discussing the reliability and validity of the study; and explaining the design of the study, including the collection and analysis of the data.

Statement of the Problem

This study was conducted to determine the relationship between the academic achievement of African-American students and the academic achievement of white American students in the state of Florida, and more specifically, in five high schools in Orange County

Public Schools. The term "African-American" included all students who self-identified as that race upon enrollment into an Orange County public school. The study included male and female African-American students from different socio-economic levels. The term "differences in academic achievement" is most commonly referred to as "achievement gap."

Additionally the study was to determine the relationship, if any, between African-American student academic achievements in five high schools in Orange County Public Schools, Orlando, Florida. In addition, the purpose was to identify differences in achievement level based upon the school, gender, socio-economic levels, class size, and qualifications of the teachers.

<u>Research Questions</u>

The research questions addressed in this study are:

1.  What was the gain in African-American students on the reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, from the 2003-2004 administration to the 2004-2005 administration in five Orange County public high schools? Gain is measured by the percent change in students reaching proficiency (level 3 and above).

2.  What was the difference between African-American students' 2004-2005 reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test percentage at proficient (level 3 and above) and white American students in five public high schools in Orange County?

3.  What was the relationship between African-American students' 2004-2005 reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test percent at proficient (level 3 and above) and the school poverty rate in all public high schools in Orange County?

4. To what extent did these characteristics; poverty rate, teacher certification, teachers' advanced degrees, and class size have a relationship to student gains in reading in the 2004 to 2005 FCAT administration?

## Population

In 2004, Orange County Public Schools System was the 14th largest district of more than 16,000 in the nation, and was the fifth largest in Florida. To better serve schools and students, the district was divided into five distinct regional learning communities. These communities were the West Learning Community, the East Learning Community, the North Learning Community, the South Learning Community, and the Central Learning Community. There were 17 high schools in the county, with a population of 48,148, as of August 10, 2004. This number included ninth grade centers and Robert Hungerford Preparatory High School. There was a total 13,963 African-American students in attendance at all of the high schools in Orange County Public Schools, in Orlando, Florida (www.ocps.net).

## School Profiles

Five high schools were selected from the learning communities in the Orange County Public Schools System, located in Orlando, Florida. The profiles that follow reflect data as of June 2007.

## School One

School number one was the first school in Orange County to desegregate. The students were from mostly lower to middle class households. The school has continued to serve a very diverse population of students. As of June 2007, 50 percent of the students were African-

American, followed by the Hispanic students who represented 33 percent of the student population. Thirteen percent were white, 2 percent were Asian/ Pacific Islanders and <1 percent were American Indian /Alaskan Native and/or multi-racial. Fifty percent of the students were on free and/or reduced lunch and 26 percent of the students were limited English proficient. According to the Florida Department of Education, School number one has fluctuated between a grade of an F and a D.

## School Two

School number two is located west of downtown Orlando. The 108-year-old school served a primarily minority-based population. In 2004, the school was rebuilt and maintained the same name. In the words of *Orlando Sentinel* columnist David Porter (2002), "Many of school two's students come from some of Orlando's toughest and neediest neighborhoods." Sixty-one percent of the students were on free and/or reduced lunch and 96 percent of the students were African-American. Additionally, the school experienced academic challenges. The school has received an "F" for five consecutive years on the annual Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test from 2001 - 2005. Yet in the face of all of this, school two was a tradition-rich public high school that had produced some of Orlando's most prominent leaders and scholars.

## School Three

School number three is located in an area that has experienced a severe change in the demographics of the surrounding communities over the last 20 years. When the school first opened its doors, the students were mostly white and middle class. In June 2007, school three was 82 percent African-American, and only 5 percent white. Other demographic groups represented at the school were: Hispanics, at 10 percent and 2 percent Asian/Pacific Islanders.

There were less than 1 percent multi-racial students and American Indian/Alaskan Native. Sixty-three percent of the students were limited English proficient. The building had undergone many renovations; however, the county is slated to begin building a new campus on the current site of the ninth grade campus in 2008.

School Four

School four was a comprehensive high school with an enrollment of 3,300 students; it is located just north of Walt Disney World and west of Universal Studios, and was the fourth school in our study. The surrounding communities were middle to upper middle class, working households. The school encompassed 50 acres in four main, two-story classroom buildings in a suburban setting. A beautifully landscaped facility housed a state-of-the-art auditorium, media center, gymnasium and television production studio, and blend aesthetically with the surrounding residential and commercial communities.

School four opened its doors in 2001 as the home of the Titians. Since that time, the school had maintained a grade of a B from the Florida Department of Education. In June 2007, 51 percent of the students were white, 23 percent were African-American, 17 percent were Hispanic, 8 percent were Asian/Pacific Islander, 1 percent were multi-racial, and <1 percent were American Indian/Alaskan Native. Additionally, 17 percent of the students were eligible for the free and/or reduced lunch program.

School Five

The fifth school is located in a Central Florida residential community, bordering the city of Orlando. The surrounding metropolitan area was one of the fastest growing areas in the United States and possesses a diversified economic base that includes electronics, manufacturing, light

industry, education, and tourism. Many of the community residents were college graduates in professional and business careers with high academic expectations, as well as a history of support for public education.

School five was a comprehensive high school located on two campuses: the main campus and the freshman campus. There were 3,755 students in the 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grades, with a total of 228 teachers. The school's demographic make-up was 13 percent African-American, 71 percent white, 13 percent Hispanic, 3 percent Asian, and no other groups were more than 1 percent of the total population. Twenty-four percent of students were on free and/or reduced lunch. The school had maintained a rating of an A school from 2000 until 2006, when the school declined to a B, because of not producing success among the lower achieving students.

<div align="center">Data Collection</div>

Data for this study were collected between May 2007 and October 2007. The information was accessed through two major websites. The first is an Orange County Public Schools secured website: Online Data Access. The other information was collected from the Department of Education websites. All needed data, including school based FCAT reading scores, was downloaded into an SPSS file.

Upon the completion of the analysis of the data, the principals of the top performing school and the lowest performing school were contacted. Each of the involved principals was contacted via email. In addition to a brief overview of the purpose of the study, they were informed that permission was granted from Orange County Public Schools and the University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board to conduct the research. A copy of the individual

consent form was forwarded to them and collected, with their signatures, prior to the beginning of the interview.

In order to assure the correctness of the interview, the session was taped. After the interview, the tape was stored in a secure location and then transcribed. The manuscript of the interview was stored in a secured location for the appropriate amount of time. A copy of the interview questions and the informed consent form are located in Appendix C of this paper.

<p style="text-align:center"><u>Reliability and Validity</u></p>

There are several factors that contributed to the reliability and validity of the study. All of the information collected for this study was from district or state supported websites.

The Online Data Access (ODA) Crystal Reports retrieved from Orange County Public Schools provided school-based FCAT data, enrollment verification, and demographic information. Also, students' and parents' self-report of home language, ethnicity, and economic status are not verified at the school or district. It is based solely on the word of the registering parent or guardian. The validity is further linked to the accuracy of the data obtained from Orange County Public Schools' data system. The state sponsored website used to locate relevant data for the study was the Florida Department of Education; specifically, the Florida Informational Resources Network website, under the category of School Accountability Reports for the 2004-2005 school year. The school-based FCAT scores, as well as overall reading abilities of all students in Florida and the component of success linked to the schools, are located on this website.

## Data Analysis

All data was collected and stored on a secure website located at Freedom High School, a member of Orange County Public Schools. The data was in a spreadsheet format; this data was also imported into a computer spreadsheet format. The software program utilized was the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Version 11.5 (SPSS, 2003).

## Summary

Chapter Three outlined the procedures and instrumentation used in this investigation regarding the academic progression of African-American students within the state of Florida; and more specifically, Orange County Public high schools during the 2004-2005 school year. Next, this study examined the effects of different variables on the achievement of African-American students. The different variables included: poverty rate, teachers' qualifications, and class size. The data included standardized test scores (FCAT). The goal was to reveal the academic progress of African-American students and identify learning achievement gaps, if any. Data collected from the various sources is further analyzed in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

This study was designed to determine the relationship between the academic achievement of African-American students and the academic achievement of non-African-American students in the state of Florida, and more specifically five Orange County public high schools. The academic achievement level was based on their performance on the state's mandatory assessment test—Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT).

This chapter provides a demographic profile of each school for the relevant school years and data analysis for the four questions addressed in this study.

1.  What was the gain in African-American students on the reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, from the 2003-2004 administration to the 2004-2005 administration in five Orange County public high schools? Gain is measured by the percent change in students reaching proficiency (level 3 and above).

2. What was the difference between African-American students' 2004-2005 reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test percentage at proficient (level 3 and above) and white American students in five public high schools in Orange County?

3. What was the relationship between African-American students' 2004-2005 reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test percent at proficient (level 3 and above) and the school poverty rate in all public high schools in Orange County?

4. To what extent did these characteristics; poverty rate, teacher certification, teachers' advanced degrees, and class size have a relationship to student gains in reading in the 2004 to 2005 FCAT administration?

The results are represented by accompanying tables and figures. The conclusions, as well as recommendations for further research, are discussed in Chapter Five.

<u>Demographics</u>

This section of the research provided an overview of the studied schools. The information included was the total student enrollment in the testing grades as well as the number of White and African-American students in the testing grades. The percent of African-American students who tested as proficient or above in reading was also included. Proficient as defined by the Florida Department of Education is scoring at level three or above. Student scores are classified into five achievement levels, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest. This proficient rate was one of the factors that contribute to the grading of Florida Public Schools.

A complete explanation can be found at <u>http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org</u>. However, schools are assigned a grade based primarily upon student achievement data for the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test. School grades are calculated based on annual learning gains of each student toward achievement of Sunshine State Standards, the progress of the lowest quartile of students, and the meeting of proficiency standards (level 3 or above). The school must also test over 90% of the eligible students. In the state of Florida, all students are administered the FCAT reading and math exams in grades 3-10. Therefore, monitoring how much students learn from one year to the next. School grades were determined based on a point system. Schools were awarded one point for each percent of students who score high on the FCAT (3 and above) and/or make annual learning gains.

School One

During the 2003-2004 school year, School One had 1,410 students enrolled in the testing

grades (ninth and tenth). Of the 1,410 students, only 1,343 (97%) of the students were tested. Two hundred fourteen students that were eligible to take the exam were white students and only 204 (95%) actually took the exam. Likewise, 698 of the eligible students were African-American and 667 (96%) took the exam. Only 15 percent of the students tested met high standards in reading (proficient). According to the state of Florida's School Accountability grading system, School Number One received a grade of a F during this school year.

During the 2004-2005 school year, School One had 1,145 students enrolled in the testing grades (ninth and tenth). Of the 1,145 students, only 1,100 (96%) of the students were tested. One hundred thirty-nine students that were eligible to take the exam were white students and only 133 (96%) actually took the exam. Likewise, 588 of the eligible students were African-American and 563 (96%) took the exam. The school received a grade of a F during the 2004-2005 school term also. Only 14 percent of the students tested met high standards in reading (proficient).

School Two

During the 2003-2004 school year, School Two had 653 students enrolled in the tested grades (ninth and tenth). Of the 653 students, 554 (89%) took the exam. Five of the eligible students were white and three (60%) of them took the exam. Six hundred thirty-one of the eligible students were African-American and 538 (87%) actually took the exam. A total of nine percent of the students tested met high standards in reading (proficient). In accordance with the Florida's School Accountability grading system, School Two received a grade of a F during the 2003-2004 school year.

During the 2004-2005 school year, School Two had 592 students enrolled in the tested

grades (ninth and tenth). Of the 592 students, 560 (95%) took the exam. Nine of the eligible students were white and all of them took the exam. Because nine students out of 592 represents less than one percent of the school, white students do not count as a subpopulation for the measurement of Adequate Yearly Progress. Five hundred sixty-nine of the eligible students were African-American and 538 (95%) actually took the exam. Eight percent of the students met high standards in reading (proficient or above). The school received a grade of a F during this school year.

## School Three

School Three had a total enrollment of 1,652 eligible students during the 2003-2004 school year and 1,569 took the exam. Of the eligible students, 87 were white and 82 (94%) took the exam. Additionally, 1,322 African-American students were eligible to take the exam and 1,257 (95%) tested. Under the provisions of the state of Florida's School Accountability report, School Three received a grade of a F during the 2003-2004 school year, and only 13 percent of the students met high standards in reading (proficient).

In 2004-2005, there were 1,183 eligible students for the exam and 1,116 took the exam. Of the eligible students, 48 were white and 45 (94%) took the exam. Nine hundred seventy-nine of the eligible students were African-American and 926 (95%) took the exam. During the 2004-2005 school year, School Three achieved the grade of a D; however, only 14 percent of the students met high standards in reading (proficient).

## School Four

School Four received a grade of a B during the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 school years. In 2003-2004, overall, 45 percent of the students met high standards in reading (proficient). A

total of 1,445 out of 1533 (94%) were tested. The students tested included 786 whites out of 821 (96%) and 339 African-American students out of 363 (93%). In 2004-2005, 50 percent of the students met high standards in reading and 1,720 out of 1,754 (98%) of all eligible students were tested. The number of students tested included 881 white students out of 895 (98%) and 397 African-American students out of 403 (99%).

## School Five

School Five received a grade of an A during the two consecutive school years, 2003-2004, and 2004-2005. Also, over 50 percent of the students met high standards in reading during the two-year period: 57% in 2003-2004 and 56% in 2004-2005. There were 1,758 students out of 1,852 eligible students (96%) who participated in the exam during the 2003-2004 school term. The students tested included 1,119 out of 1,159 (97%) eligible white students and 268 African-American students out of 296 (93%). During the 2004-2005 school year, there were 1,996 eligible students and 1,969 (99%) actually took the exam. Of the eligible students, 1193 were white and 337 were African-American. One thousand one hundred eighty-two (99%) of the eligible white students took the exam, as well as 328 (97%) of the eligible African-American (97%).

Tables 3 and 4 provide an overview of the demographic information. The information was retrieved from the Florida Department of Education Florida School Grades website (hppt://schoolgrades/fldoe.org).

Table 3: Demographic Information of All Eligible Students Tested 2003-2004 and 2004-2005

| School | School Grade | Enrollment in Testing Grade | Students Tested | Percent Students Tested | Percent of Students reading at Proficient or Above |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **One** | | | | | |
| 2003-04 | F | 1410 | 1343 | 97 | 15 |
| 2004-05 | F | 1145 | 1100 | 96 | 14 |
| **Two** | | | | | |
| 2003-04 | F | 653 | 554 | 89 | 9 |
| 2004-05 | F | 592 | 560 | 95 | 8 |
| **Three** | | | | | |
| 2003-04 | F | 1652 | 1569 | 95 | 13 |
| 2004-05 | D | 1183 | 1116 | 95 | 14 |
| **Four** | | | | | |
| 2003-04 | B | 1533 | 1445 | 94 | 45 |
| 2004-05 | B | 1754 | 1720 | 98 | 50 |
| **Five** | | | | | |
| 2003-04 | A | 1852 | 1758 | 96 | 57 |
| 2004-05 | A | 1996 | 1969 | 99 | 56 |

Table 4: Demographic Information of All White Students Tested 2003-2004 and 2004-2005

| School | School Grade | White Students Enrolled in Testing Grades | White Students Tested | Percent of White Students Tested |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| One | | | | |
| 2003-04 | F | 214 | 204 | 95 |
| 2004-05 | F | 139 | 133 | 96 |
| | | | | |
| Two | | | | |
| 2003-04 | F | 5 | 3 | 60 |
| 2004-05 | F | 9 | 9 | 100 |
| | | | | |
| Three | | | | |
| 2003-04 | F | 87 | 82 | 94 |
| 2004-05 | D | 48 | 45 | 94 |
| | | | | |
| Four | | | | |
| 2003-04 | B | 821 | 786 | 96 |
| 2004-05 | B | 895 | 881 | 98 |
| | | | | |
| Five | | | | |
| 2003-04 | A | 1159 | 1119 | 97 |
| 2004-05 | A | 1193 | 1182 | 99 |

Table 5: Demographic Information of African-American Eligible Students Tested 2003-2004 and 2004-2005

| School | School Grade | African-American Students Enrolled in Testing Grades | Actual African-Americans Tested | Percent of African-American Students Tested |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| One | | | | |
| 2003-04 | F | 698 | 667 | 96 |
| 2004-05 | F | 588 | 563 | 96 |
| | | | | |
| Two | | | | |
| 2003-04 | F | 631 | 538 | 87 |
| 2004-05 | F | 569 | 538 | 95 |
| | | | | |
| Three | | | | |
| 2003-04 | F | 1322 | 1257 | 95 |
| 2004-05 | D | 979 | 926 | 95 |
| | | | | |
| Four | | | | |
| 2003-04 | B | 363 | 339 | 93 |
| 2004-05 | B | 403 | 397 | 99 |
| | | | | |
| Five | | | | |
| 2003-04 | A | 296 | 268 | 93 |
| 2004-05 | A | 337 | 328 | 97 |

## Analysis of Data

This section is arranged according to the four research questions that guided this study.

The research questions are stated, followed by discussion of the data.

Research Question 1

What was the gain in African-American students on the reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, from the 2003-2004 administration to the 2004-2005 administration in five Orange County public high schools? Gain is measured by the percent change in students reaching proficiency (level 3 and above).

The purpose of this question was to establish if the studied schools were made gains as measured by the percent change in students reaching proficiency in reading (level 3 or above). Table 6 outlines percent of students achieving at or above proficient (level 3 or above) in the area of reading for the 2003-2004 and the 2004-2005 FCAT testing administration. Improvement is noted by the percent of gain column. This information was retrieved from the Florida Department of Education website, Florida School Grades (http://schoolgrades/fldoe.org).

Table 6: Percent of African-American Students Reading At or Above Proficient (Level 3 or Above on FCAT) for the 2003-04 and 2004-05 Administration

| School | Percent Proficient 2003-04 | Percent Proficient 2004-05 | Percent Gain | Met AYP under Safe Harbor |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| One | 13 | 10 | -3 | No |
| Two | 8 | 9 | 1 | No |
| Three | 11 | 9 | -2 | No |
| Four | 24 | 30 | 6 | No |
| Five | 27 | 20 | -7 | No |

Two of the schools, School Two and School Four experienced a reduction in the percent of African-American students not proficient in reading with a loss of 1% and 6% respectively. Conversely, the other three schools experienced an increase in the percent of African-American students not proficient in reading. School One (87% to 90%) gained three percent, School Three

(89% to 91%) gained two percent, and School Five (73% to 80%) gained seven percent. Since

any difference is based on the overall percentage of the school's total African-American

population, any positive gain would be significant.

If a school is successful in achieving a high percent of all students reaching proficiency,

the school is rated as have reached Annual Yearly Progress. If a school does not make AYP and

the school's grade is a C or higher, then the school can apply for provisional AYP under the

"Safe Harbor" rule. A school that has met the requirements of participation (a grade of C or

better) as well as the State's other indicators (writing, graduation rate, and school grade) but has

not met the reading and/or mathematics proficiency targets can still make AYP through a

provision in NCLB called Safe Harbor. In Safe Harbor, the percentage of non-proficient students

must be decreased by at least 10% from the prior year in the subject being evaluated. In addition,

the subgroup must take progress in writing proficiency and gradation rate. For the purpose of this

research the focused subgroup was African-American students.

Based on the rules of NCLB, only School Four and Five could apply for provisional AYP

under the Safe Harbor rule for the subgroup of African-American students. However, neither

school improved their African-American subgroup 10% from 2003-2004 testing administration

to the 2004-2005 testing administration. Therefore, the two schools did not met the criteria for

provisional APY for this one criteria (subgroup).


Research Question 2

What was the difference between African-American students' 2004-2005 reading portion
of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test percentage at proficient (level 3 and above) and
white American students in five public high schools in Orange County?


The purpose of this question is the essence of the research: Are schools educating the

African-American students to the same level of proficiency as their white counterparts at the same schools? This question would address whether or not there are gaps in achievement between the two groups. Three pieces of information were examined to address this question: the percent of proficient or above African-American students in each of the schools, the percent of proficient or above white students in each school, and the overall school Percent of students reading at proficient or above. Tables 7 through 9 show the reading achievement of each group, compare the differences between the groups, as well as how each group's reading proficiency relates to the total proficiency of the school. This information was retrieved from the Florida Department of Education website, Florida School Grades (http://schoolgrades/fldoe.org).

Table 7: Comparison of Percent of Reading Proficiency of African-American Students and White Students for 2004-2005 FCAT Administration

| School | Percent of African-Americans Proficient | Percent of Whites Proficient | Percent Differences Between Groups | School's Percent Proficiency or Above |
|--------|------|------|------|------|
| One    | 7    | 22   | 15   | 14 |
| Two    | 6    | N/A  | N/A  | 8  |
| Three  | 9    | 34   | 25   | 14 |
| Four   | 32   | 58   | 33   | 50 |
| Five   | 22   | 63   | 41   | 56 |

Table 8 data compared the percent of African-American students reading at proficient or above to the overall percentage of proficiency of the school. The data show that the percent of African-American students reading at proficient or above is lower than the overall percent at each school, regardless of demographics.

Table 8: Comparison of Percent of Reading Proficiency or Above of African-American Students and Overall School's Proficiency or Above Percent for 2004-2005 FCAT Administration

| School | Percent of African-Americans Proficient or Above | School's Percent Proficiency or Above | Difference in Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| One | 7 | 14 | 7 |
| Two | 6 | 8 | 2 |
| Three | 9 | 14 | 5 |
| Four | 32 | 50 | 18 |
| Five | 22 | 56 | 34 |

Table 9 compared the percent of white students reading at proficient or above to the overall percentage of proficiency of the school. The data shows that percent of white students scoring at proficient or above on FCAT reading is higher that the general population of each of the studied schools.

Table 9: Comparison of Percent of Reading Proficiency or Above of White Students and Overall School's Proficiency or Above Percent for 2004-2005 FCAT Administration

| School | Percent of Whites Proficient or Above | School's Percent Proficiency or Above | Difference in Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| One | 22 | 14 | 8 |
| Two | N/A | 8 | |
| Three | 34 | 14 | 20 |
| Four | 58 | 50 | 8 |
| Five | 63 | 56 | 7 |

Research Question 3

What was the relationship between African-American students' 2004-2005 reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test percent at proficient (level 3 and above) and the school poverty rate in all public high schools in Orange County?

The purpose of this question was to factor socio-economic elements into the reading achievement of high school students. The hypothesis is that there is a direct correlation between the poverty rate of a school and the reading achievement of the students. In this case, the assumption would be that the higher the percent of poverty, the lower the percent of African-American students testing at or above proficient (level 3 or above) in reading. The percent of poverty within each school was determined based on the percent of students that qualified for the government sponsored free and/or reduced lunch program.

A Spearman's rho nonparametric correlation was conducted of the 16 public high schools in Orange County Public School System. The percent of poverty was compared with the percent of African-American students scoring at proficient or above on the reading portion of the FCAT utilizing a Spearman's rho nonparametric correlation. The results of this test were found to be statistically significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) with a correlation coefficient of -.591 (significant 2 tailed= .016). The results are outlined in Table 10. Data indicated there was an indirect correlation between poverty percent in a school and achievement of the students. For this study, the higher the percent of free and/or reduced lunch participants, the lower the achievement in reading for African-American students.

Table 10: Spearman rho Nonparametric Correlation of all High Schools in Orange County Public Schools

|  |  |  | POVERTY | PROFICIENT |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spearman's rho | POVERTY | Correlation Coefficient | 1 | -0.591* |
|  |  | Sig. (2-tailed) |  | 0.016 |
|  |  | N | 16 | 16 |
|  | PROFICIENT | Correlation Coefficient | -0.591* | 1 |
|  |  | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.016 |  |
|  |  | N | 16 | 16 |

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 11 outlines the information on the percent of African Americans students that were eligible for free and/or reduced lunched and the percent of students reading at or above proficient on the FCAT. Two reports from the Florida Department of Education were used to obtain this information. The poverty percent was retrieved from the Florida School Grades report and the percent of proficient African-American students was retrieved from the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) report. Both reports are located at www.schoolgrades.fldoe.org.

Table 11: Reading at or Above Proficient (African-American Students) Compared to Poverty Rate 2004-2005 School Year

| School | Percent of African-Americans Proficient or Above | Percent of Free and/or Reduced Lunch Program Participants |
|---|---|---|
| One | 7 % | 54% |
| Two | 6 % | 66% |
| Three | 9 % | 56% |
| Four | 32% | 18% |
| Five | 22% | 24% |

A Spearman's rho nonparametric correlation was also conducted on the five selected schools. The two variables were percent reading at proficient or above and poverty rate. The relationship was determined to be significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) with a correlation coefficient of -.900 (significant 2 tailed =.037). This means the higher the percent of free and/or reduced lunch participants at a given school, the lower the achievement of African-American students. The printout of the results are in Table 12.

Table 12: Spearman rho Nonparametric Correlation of the Five Selected High Schools in Orange County Public Schools

|  |  |  | POVERTY | PROFICIENT |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spearman's rho | POVERTY | Correlation Coefficient | 1 | -.900* |
|  |  | Sig. (2-tailed) |  | 0.037 |
|  |  | N | 5 | 5 |
|  | PROFICIENT | Correlation Coefficient | -.900* | 1 |
|  |  | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.037 |  |
|  |  | N | 5 | 5 |

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

## Research Question 4

To what extent did these characteristics; poverty rate, teacher certification, teachers' advanced degrees, and class size have a relationship to student gains in reading in the 2004 to 2005 FCAT administration?

The purpose of question four was to identify elements within each of the schools where gains were made that may influence student achievement. Based on the analysis of the data in question one, only two of the high schools made gains on the reading portion of the Florida

Comprehensive Assessment Test. Those two schools were School Two and School Four.

Therefore, the characteristics of these two high schools were further examined. The

characteristics were divided into two categories; elements of the school (poverty rate, stability

rate, graduation rate, and minority percentage) and elements of the faculty (percentage of highly

qualified teachers, average number of years as a teacher, percentage of teachers with advanced

degrees, and student/teacher ratio).

However, in order to determine if these characteristics indeed played a significant part in

the achievement of African-American students, both schools where achievement was noted and

where achievement was not noted appear in Tables 13 – 16. This information was obtained from

the Great Schools website located at www.greatschools.com and the Florida Department of

Education – Florida School Indicators report at http://data.fldoe.org/fsir/default.cfm.

Table 13: Elements of the Schools Without Gains in Reading at Proficient Level or Above

| School | Poverty Percent | Stability Rate Percent | Graduation Rate Percent | Overall Minority Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| One | 54 | 88 | 55 | 85 |
| Three | 56 | 85 | 64 | 96 |
| Five | 24 | 93 | 93 | 39 |

Table 14: Elements of the Schools With Gains in Reading at Proficient Level or Above

| School | Poverty Percent | Stability Rate Percent | Graduation Rate Percent | Overall Minority Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Two | 66 | 88 | 47 | 99 |
| Four | 18 | 93 | 89 | 50 |

Table 15: Elements of the Faculty in Schools Without Gains in Reading at Proficient Level or Above

| School | Percent of Highly Qualified Instructors | Years of Teaching Experience | Percent of Teachers with Advanced Degrees | Student/Teacher Ratio |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| One | 100 | 12 | 31 | 20:1 |
| Four | 100 | 13 | 36 | 19:1 |
| Five | 100 | 14 | 32 | 17:1 |

Table 16: Elements of the Faculty in Schools With Gains in Reading at Proficient Level or Above

| School | Percent of Highly Qualified Instructors | Years of Teaching Experience | Percent of Teachers with Advanced Degrees | Student/Teacher Ratio |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Two | 100 | 15 | 35 | 1:16 |
| Four | 100 | 9 | 33 | 1:20 |

An analysis of the data was conducted for each of the eight individual essential characteristics of the schools. Under the category of elements of the school, the average poverty rate of the schools which made gains was slightly lower (42%) than the schools that did not make gains (44%); likewise, the schools made gains had a slightly higher stability of students (90%) as compared to (88.6%) in the schools which did not have gains. The category of graduation rate, the schools where no gains were observed had a slightly higher average graduation rate (70.6%) compared to those which made gains (68%). The overall percent of minority subgroups in the schools that made gains was also higher (74.5%) compared to the average overall minority percentage of the schools that did not make gains (73.3%).

An analysis of the descriptive data under the category of elements of the faculty was also examined. All of the schools reported that 100 percent of their teachers were highly qualified as defined under the provisions and definition of highly qualified teachers. There was some difference in the average years of the teaching experience. In the two schools where there were gains, the average amount of experience was 9 years as contrasted to 12 years in the schools where there were no gains. Likewise, the average number of teachers with advanced degrees was 33 percent in the schools where there were no gains; while in the schools that made gains, the average number of teachers with advanced degrees was 34 percent. There is a slight difference in the average student/teacher ratio (18.66% as compared to 18.00%). The schools that made gains had the lower student/teacher ratio. This information appears in the Table 17.

Table 17: Mean Characteristics of Schools That Made Gains in Percent of Students Reading At or Above Proficient and Those that Did Not Make Gains 2004-2005

| Characteristics | Gains Made 2004-2005 | Did Not Make Gains 2004-2005 |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Percent Poverty | 42 | 45 |
| Percent Stability | 90 | 89 |
| Percent Graduation | 68 | 71 |
| Percent Minority | 75 | 73 |
| Percent of Highly Qualified Teacher | 100 | 100 |
| Average Years of Teaching Experience | 12 | 13 |
| Percent of Teachers with Advanced Degree | 34 | 33 |
| Student/Teacher Ratio | 18 | 19 |

The initial result of the descriptive data does not reveal one element that appears to be a clear indication that would contribute to the achievement of African-American students. All of the indications of the schools that made gains and the schools that did not make gains are only

slightly different. However, even though only a slight difference in the average characteristics is

apparent, it is important to note that there does seem to be a pattern with the schools that made

gains from the school that did not have gains. In order to further address if there is in fact a

difference, the elements of the each school is revisited in Table 18. All of these factors are

examined more closely in Chapter 5.

Table 18: Characteristics of Schools That Made Gains in Percent of Students Reading At or
Above Proficient and Those that Did Not Make Gains 2004-2005

| Characteristics | Made Gains | | Did Not Make Gains | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Two | Four | One | Three | Five |
| Percent Poverty | 66 | 18 | 54 | 56 | 24 |
| Percent Stability | 88 | 93 | 88 | 85 | 93 |
| Percent Graduation | 47 | 89 | 55 | 64 | 93 |
| Percent Minority | 99 | 50 | 85 | 96 | 39 |
| Percent of Highly Qualified Teacher | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Average Years of Teaching Experience | 15 | 9 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| Percent of Teachers with Advanced Degree | 35 | 33 | 31 | 36 | 32 |
| Student/Teacher Ratio | 16 | 20 | 20 | 19 | 17 |

Interviews

School Four and Five had the greatest change in the percent difference of proficient or

above African-American students in reading. Therefore, the Principal of School Four and School

Five were contacted for interviews. Each interview consisted of eight questions (Appendix C)

taken from the research on Balanced Leadership (Waters, J. T., Marzano, R. J., & McNulty, B.

A., 2003) that has been linked to increase in student achievement. A synthesis of each question

from the two principals follows.

However, it is important to note that each principal elected a different method of completing the interview process. The principal of School Four completed a telephone interview. The benefit of this interview was the interviewer was able to ask for points of clarification and explanation. The interview was recorded and a complete transcript of the interview is in Appendix E.

The principal of School Five completed a written interview. The questions were emailed to him and he completed the questions and sent them back via email. Due to this type of interview, the responses to the questions are not as detailed nor did the interview allow for clarifications or explanations of the response. The interview for principal five is also available in Appendix F.

Table 19: To What Extent Do You Foster Shared Beliefs and a Sense of Community and Cooperation?

| Principal School Four | Principal School Five |
|---|---|
| High, modified professional learning community format | A clear vision mission and a set of core beliefs must be articulated to staff members, students, parents, community, and other parallel organizations. … it was purposeful, strategic. |

Table 20: What is Your Knowledge about the Current Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Practices?

| Principal School Four | Principal School Five |
|---|---|
| High, they are always changing so it is imperative that I attend meetings and get briefed by my API | The idea of professional learning community and some text and research that I had done. My reform effort surrounded the smaller learning community model and the idea that students need to feel engaged, they need to feel represented, connected. Every child on the campus had to have an adult, an organization, a sport that represented their group - allow you to have a voice. I had a council where each of the kid's representatives would meet with me once a quarter. We then talked about the culture and climate of the school. We decided to move towards common assessment, planning. |

Table 21: How Does a Teacher Get Involved with the Decision-Making Bodies at Your School?

| Principal School Four | Principal School Five |
|---|---|
| They can be a part of committees that are involved in the decision-making. Also, they can participate in professional learning community activities. | Faculty Advisory Council, Literacy Council, and the Curriculum Council. These groups worked tirelessly to develop sets of goal, strategies, and ideas around the smaller learning community model. |

Table 22: What Type of Recognition and Celebration Have You Had for Achievement and Non-Achievement?

| | Principal School Four | Principal School Five |
|---|---|---|
| Student Recognition | Nine weeks basis - incentives are in place to encourage excellence. | On-going across all levels: student of the week, month, etc. and annually at a gala |
| Teacher and Staff Recognition | Recognized at faculty meetings | |
| Non-Achievement Recognition | Don't recognize for non-achievement | Students were recognized for all things they were doing not just 4.0 students. |

Table 23: How Willing Are You to Change or Review Procedures that Have Proven Less Than Effective?

| Principal School Four | Principal School Five |
| --- | --- |
| We change all the time. | I was willing to do that all the time. I think that's what good leaders do. …changing the entire paradox. |

Table 24: Do You See Yourself as a Flexible Person?

| Principal School Four | Principal School Five |
| --- | --- |
| Very, but I do have convictions. | Flexibility is really being challenged. …foster an environment where teachers would challenge me, challenge each other -within an established protocol. There were times when I would get say "that's it, there was no debate. I'm the leader, the principal. |

Table 25: How Do You Keep a Pulse on What Is Really Happening on Campus and Potential Problems?

| Principal School Four | Principal School Five |
| --- | --- |
| I am very hands-on. I believe in communicating on all levels. | With kids my biggest emphasis was about relationships. My students knew that I am the principal. The teachers on the other hand to be honest with you, I tell them "I don't come to work to make friends. I meet with my curriculum leaders every week. |

Table 26: Tell Me About the Staff Development that Takes Place on Your Campus. How is the Staff Trained? How Do You Keep Current with Theories and Best Practices?

| Principal School Four | Principal School Five |
|---|---|
| Strength - conduct staff development in a variety of ways: on campus, off campus, electronically, locally, and nationally. We are currently doing DSDW meetings they are well received by staff. | I took part in staff development. I also lead my own staff development with my teachers. |

<u>Summary</u>

Chapter Four provided a demographic profile of each school for the relevant school years and data analysis relevant to the four questions addressed in this study. Accompanying tables and figures represented the results. An interview summary with the principal of each school with the highest and lowest achievement of African-American students was also included. The conclusions, as well as recommendations for further research, are discussed in Chapter Five.

# CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Introduction

Chapter 5 provides the conclusions of the study, discusses how the data presented in Chapter 4 relates to each of the four research questions as well as an overview of the interview with the principals, and present evidence. Recommendations, implications for practice, and topics for further research are also included in this section.

## Restatement of the Problem

This study was conducted to determine the difference, if any, in the academic achievement of African-American students as compared to their white American counterparts. It is important to provide data that shows traits of success in the achievement of African-American students in a formal educational setting. Identifying these key components, different demographic settings, and different academic initiatives would be beneficial to educational organizations in maintaining an appropriate educational focus and in influencing reforms in traditional high schools. Therefore, the underlying goal of the study was to determine if there is an achievement gap between African-American and white American high school students; and if so, what were the contributing factors in schools.

## Summary and Discussion of the Findings

Four research questions were used to guide this study. The following section discusses the results of the data analysis for each of these research questions.

Research Question 1

What was the gain in African-American students on the reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, from the 2003-2004 administration to the 2004-2005 administration in five Orange County public high schools? Gain is measured by the percent change in students reaching proficiency (level 3 and above).

Based on the data, two of the five high schools made some gains in the percent change in students reading at proficient or above from one year to the next. However, none of the gains were significant enough to meet the criteria for the school to make AYP. Two of the schools did qualify for AYP based on the "Safe Harbor" component of adequate yearly progress (AYP). The Safe Harbor rule states that if any subgroup defined under AYP does not meet the proficiency target, the percentage of students in that group who are below the proficiency target in reading should be reduced by at least 10 percent.

It was also important to note that none of the schools met the AYP requirements in the subgroup of "Black." In order to meet the standards of AYP, 37 percent of the population in each of the subgroup needed to read at or above grade level. None of the five high schools met this requirement.

In fact, the high school with the greatest level of gains was School Four with an increase of six percent; although overall, only 32 percent of their African-American students were proficient (scoring at or above grade level) in reading. School Four received a "provisional" passing of AYP. This indicated that the school did not meet AYP, but received a school grade of A or B. Seventy percent of the criteria were satisfied under the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

The other school with some gains was School Two. The data indicated that one percent of the African-American students increased their reading level. Even with this growth, however,

only six percent of the African-American students scored at or above proficient reading. School Two met 60 percent of the criteria under the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

The remaining three schools did not show any improvement in the reading proficiency of African-American students. The number of the non-proficient students increased in each of the schools from the 2003-2004 school year to the next year. Under the provisions of the No Child Left Behind legislation, on the specifications of Adequate Yearly Progress, each of the schools was cited for underachievement of African-American students.

## Research Question 2

What was the difference between African-American students' 2004-2005 reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test percentage at proficient (level 3 and above) and white American students in five public high schools in Orange County?

The data on the difference between African-American students as compared to their white counterparts was very alarming. In all five schools, the gap in reading achievement ranged from 15 percent to 40 percent. This equates to white students outperforming their African America counterparts at a rate of 1:3 up to 1:2. The achievement gap between the African-American students and the overall population of the school was not any better. The range in the difference in achievement was from 2 percent to 34 percent. African-American students across the board were achieving at a lower level. The data supported that there was an achievement gap in the reading proficiency between African-American students and their white American counterparts in the five Orange County public high schools.

## Research Question 3

What was the relationship between African-American students' 2004-2005 reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test percent at proficient (level 3 and above) and the school poverty rate in all public high schools in Orange County?

Two different Spearman's rho nonparametric correlations were conducted on the variables of the percentage of African-American students who were reading proficiently and the poverty rate of the school. The first correlation was conducted on the 16 public high schools in the Orange County Public School System and the second correlation was limited to the five selected schools. Both of the correlations proved to be significant at the .05 level. The first correlation coefficient was -.591 (significant 2 tailed =.016) and the second correlation coefficient was -.900 (significant 2 tailed =. 037). The data implied that as the poverty percentage within a school increases, the rate of achievement in African-American students decreases.

Research Question 4

To what extent did these characteristics; poverty rate, teacher certification, teachers' advanced degrees, and class size have a relationship to student gains in reading in the 2004 to 2005 FCAT administration?

The characteristics of high schools where African-American students made gains on the reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test were divided into two categories. The first was elements of the school that included; poverty rate, stability rate, graduation rate and minority percentage.  The second was elements of the faculty that included; percentage of highly qualified teachers, number of years as a teacher, percentage of teachers with advanced degrees, and student/teacher ratio.

In general, it was noted that the schools where gains were made, overall had slightly lower poverty rates and greater student stability. All of their teachers were highly qualified, with a higher average of degrees beyond that of the bachelor's degree. Another element was that the average class size was slightly lower. If these characteristics were looked at separately the

difference may not seem important. However, the combination of these characteristics appears to contribute to the gains in reading of the students in the schools. These characteristics would be a definite area to investigate further.

Interviews

In order to investigate the influence of leadership on student achievement, Principals Four and Five were contacted for interviews. School Four and Five had the greatest difference in the percentage of proficient African-American students in reading. School Four increased the percentage of proficient African-American students in reading. School Five increased the percentage of African-American students not proficient in reading. The interview consisted of eight questions taken from the research on Balanced Leadership (Waters, J. T., Marzano, R. J., & McNulty, B. A., 2003) that had been linked to increase in student achievement.

It is important to reiterate that each principal elected a different method of completing the interview process. The principal of school four completed a telephone interview. The benefit of this interview was the interviewer was able to ask for points of clarification and explanation. The principal of school five completed a written interview. The questions were emailed to the principal. Once the questions were completed, they were returned via email. Due to this type of interview, the response to the questions were not as detailed nor did the interview allow for clarifications or explanations of the response. Despite the difference in the method of the interview, there appeared to be some differences in the approach of leadership between the two principals. For reference the interview questions are listed in Appendix E.

It was important to note that there were some differences in the approach in leadership noted between the two principals. For example, the extent of fostering a shared belief and a sense

of community and cooperation, the responses were extremely different. The principal of school four noted the importance of developing a clear vision and mission based on a core set of belief. Those ideas were then shared with all stakeholders and this articulation had to be purposeful and strategic. The principal of school five referred to the use of a modified professional learning community. It is not clear as to what extent the development of this belief was fostered or shared. The principal only stated that the belief was a community format.

Another question addressed the personal knowledge of the leader in regards to curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices. Both principals stated their strong belief that the practices were ever changing and it was important to keep current. However, it was their approach of obtaining the knowledge that differed. The principal of school number five relied on the Assistant Principal of Instruction for updates. He also noted that he would attend meetings on possible changes. Again, the principal of school four also felt that being current on best practices was important. He spoke of research and information he had personally conducted and based on that research fostered the reform effort implemented at the school. The reform effort was based on some research from Richard Dufour and other professional research on developing a smaller learning community. The principal noted the importance of every student having a personal connection and voice on campus. These researches and practices led to the development of the culture of the school that ultimately transcended into the development of common assessment and planning. Principal four also developed a Literacy Council and Curriculum Council to allow greater faculty input into reform efforts. The principal also pointed out the importance of being involved with the professional development of the staff and conducted and led workshops.  His final statement dealt with the establishment of the leader. The principal of school number four

noted that everyone on campus realized he was the principal and leader of the school and that even though he allowed for input the final decision was ultimately his.

Two final points of clarification, the principals completed the interview via different methods. The principal of school five answered the interview questions and return them to the researcher with no personal conversation. This approach allowed for no qualifiers or explanations. The principal of school four had a live telephone interview. This method of interviewing allowed for points of qualifications and explanations. The principal of school five did offer to have the researcher contact him if additional information was needed.

Last point of clarification dealt with the personal profile of the principals, the two educational leaders. This important component would assist in the understanding of the principals' views and differences in their approach to leadership. Principal Four was young and fast tracked into administration. He served as an elementary principal for less than three years. He then was given a newer, upper middle class high school located in a diverse suburban community. He served as principal of School Four for less than five years and left the district to accept a promotion out of state. He is married and has children.

On the other hand, Principal Five was middle aged, white, and a seasoned administrator. He also started as an elementary principal and moved to his current high school where he also attended as a student. His parents and grandparents had connections to the school and he was well known in the community prior to serving as principal. He has served as the Principal of School Five for over six years. He is a husband and father of two teen-age children, a son and a daughter. He started his doctorial studies in 2005.

Conclusions

This study investigated schools where African-American students made gains in reading and where they did not make gains. The essential components of the schools and the teachers in each of the classification of schools were examined. Additionally, a review of literature explained recent legislation affecting the achievement of African-American students and the current state of gains of African-American students as compared to their white counterparts. Based on the review of literature, as well as the data collected from the five high schools, three conclusions were made.

First, under the provision and penalties attached to the No Child Left Behind legislation, there was a noticeable gap in achievement between African-American students and their white American counterparts in each of the examined schools over a two year time period.

In schools with a greater percentage of white students, African-American students, overall, performed at a higher level. The achievement gap was narrower and the percent at proficient and above was higher for all students.

Second, in schools with a lower percentage of students on free and/or reduced lunch, the percent of students reading proficient or above was higher and the achievement gap was less between African-American students and their white counterparts. Furthermore, the data indicated that as the percent of students on free and reduced lunch in a school increases, the reading proficient and above rate for African-American students was lower. This finding would hold consistent that socio-economic status is correlated with achievement. Therefore, many districts are expected to switch to economic integration plan as a legal way to seek diversity (Glather and Finder, 2007). This is also supported by the 2006 United State Supreme Court decision restricting the use of race-based school assignment plans.

Finally, in schools with a wide array of diversity, students overall have higher achievement scores. Based on the data in the study, the school with the highest proficient rate and above in reading, was the school with the more diverse population of students. In 2005-2006, about 60 percent or more of the population in at least one grade were of a single racial or ethnic group in the San Francisco area (Glather and Finder, 2007). This measure was used to determine that these schools were still segregated.

## Implications for Practice

For public high schools that do not have significant success with educating African-American students, the following are suggestions for practice. One of the elements that indicated success in the education of African-American students was the element of overall diversity rate within a school setting. No one specific group of students should represent more than 50 percent of the total population of the school.

Also, the percentage of students on free and/or reduced lunch, which was defined in this study as poverty rate, had a strong correlation to the achievement of African-American students. Based on the literature review and the data from this study, the lower the poverty rate, the higher the achievement levels for both white and African-American students.

## Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the conclusions of this study, the following are recommendations for future research. First, the effect that the element of student voice has on achievement in the schools is certainly a factor to be considered and researched. The feeling of the students themselves and what contributes to their success or lack of success at the schools would be an area of much interest. Therefore, it would be recommended to research the achievement level of students who

have a feeling of connectiveness and empowerness at their school as oppose to students who do not feel connected to their school.

This research was limited to school based information about the teachers that can be located from the Florida School Indicator Reports and the Great School website. Therefore, key pieces of information about the individual teacher and the method and variety of instruction were not available. The level of academic expectation from the teachers was also not determined or measured. The other piece of information about the teachers was the aspect of the diversity of the teaching staff. Therefore, it would be recommended to extend the scope of this research to include interviews with instructional staff and/or surveys with the faculty on student expectations, instructional practices, and how these factors contribute to student success.

The role of the instructional leader, the principal, had not been explored until the early 2000's. The conclusion of this research was synthesized in the Framework (Waters, J. T., Marzano, R. J., & McNulty, B. A., 2003). The Framework arranges the 21 responsibilities of effective leaders into three key components: Focus of Leadership, Building purposeful community and Magnitude of change. This research only addressed general questions based on the Frameworks. Therefore, it would be recommended that the concept of the leader's personality, gender, race, educational background, personal preferences, and other personality traits be explored and the effect of these traits on students achievement. Furthermore, it would be recommended that the stages of growth and professional development of the instructional leader be studied.  Much research has been conducted on the development and training of teachers (Scherer, 2000) but not much research exist on the stages of development of the principal and how to create a sense of urgency within a school.

As a final recommendation, it would be wise to examine the nation's commitment to the spirit of the Brown decision. Congresswoman Corrine Brown (Washington, DC) made the following statement in a press release on Friday, June 29, 2007:

> I am wholeheartedly disappointed by today's Supreme Court ruling. Violating the intent of *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court today audaciously decided, on a 5-4 vote, that school assignment plans cannot take students' race into account. I strongly believe, however, that the goal of racial desegregation is something that remains extremely important to the well being of our nation's schools and to our country as a whole. This ruling is yet another obstacle to the educational success of minority students. I categorically believe that it is in the best interest of both secondary schools, as well as institutions of higher education, to promote diversity in education. Indeed, in the words of former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Conner, 'effective participation by members of all racial and ethnic groups in the civic life of our nation is essential if the dream of one nation, indivisible, is to be realized (pg.41).'

## Summary

In the landmark 1954 decision Brown v. Board of Education, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously outlawed segregation and declared that racially separate schools are inherently unequal. In January 2004, Orfield and Lee published, "Brown at 50: King's Dream or Plessy's Nightmare?" The study, out of The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, examined the fifty years of law cases and student achievement data to determine if the students in the United States are living the dream that Dr. Martin Luther King spoke of in his famous speech, "I have a Dream" or if the public schools are in a state of nightmare. In another speech, "Desegregation and the Future" by Dr. Martin Luther King in December 1956 at the National Committee for Rural School, he spoke of two possible outcomes of desegregation. One was the dream of every child no matter of the race, creed, or gender being educated together and the other dream was of schools with primarily one group of minorities with high poverty rate and the level of academic achievement lower than the national level.

Based on the review of the data presented in this study and in national studies on schools achieving against the odds, it is clear that both the dream is alive and the nightmare exists. Three of the schools in this study have a minority rate over 80% and a high poverty rate of over 50%. Two of the schools have facilities that are over twenty years standing. The Public School System has actively recruited highly qualified teachers to teach at these schools. The district has offered monetary incentives to actively recruit teachers. The curricula has been reformed and revamped. Yet, the schools are not successful.

In 2002, Christopher Edley Jr. spoke before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and the Workforce Oversight Hearing on the Implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act, he states:

> I believe, is that for the first time the academic achievement of the major racial and ethnic groups, socio-economically disadvantaged students, English language learners, and children with disabilities, will be a the core of whether our school are judged to be successful. No longer can schools with sky-rocking dropout rate or racially identifiable pockets of academic stagnation and failure earn a passing grade. There is much in the NCLB about which one might be concerned or even fearful… (pg. 3).

Yet in 2008, many public schools in both the south and north are segregated by poverty and ethnicity and living Plessy's nightmare. After decades of school desegregation efforts, during which the gap between blacks and whites closed substantially, progress has stalled. In 2008, the greater diversity of school population and the rapid growth of the Hispanic population and other ethnic groups have reshaped the problem with a more complex set of issues. The leaders of the nation and the public schools have much to be concerned over and even fearful. The problem exists and something must be done. However, the simplest answer of desegregating the public schools, reaching the promise of Brown, and achieving unitary status for all students

seems to elude the leaders of this great nation. Some students are living King's dream but many

others are living Plessy's nightmare.

APPENDIX A: INITIAL RESEARCH REQUEST APPROVAL

University of **Central Florida**

Office of Research & Commercialization

April 11, 2007

Athena A. Adams, Assistant Principal
Freedom High School
2500 Taft-Vineland Road
Orlando, FL 32837

Dear Ms. Adams:

With reference to your protocol #07-4198 entitled, "The Academic Achievement of African-American Students in Orange County Public High Schools," I am enclosing for your records the approved, expedited document of the UCFIRB Form you had submitted to our office. **This study was approved on 4/10/2007. The expiration date for this study will be 4/9/2008.** Should there be a need to extend this study, a Continuing Review form must be submitted to the IRB Office for review by the Chairman or full IRB at least one month prior to the expiration date. This is the responsibility of the investigator.

Please be advised that this approval is given for one year. Should there be any addendums or administrative changes to the already approved protocol, they must also be submitted to the Board through use of the Addendum/Modification Request form. Changes should not be initiated until written IRB approval is received. Adverse events should be reported to the IRB as they occur.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at 407-823-2901.

Please accept our best wishes for the success of your endeavors.

Cordially,

*Joanne Muratori*

Joanne Muratori
IRB Coordinator
(FWA00000351 Exp. 5/13/07, IRB00001138)

Copies: IRB File
        Rosemarye Taylor, Ph.D.

JM:jm

# *Informed Consent*

April 15, 2007

Dear Fellow Educator:

I am a doctorial student at the University of Central Florida. As part of my research, I am conducting an interview; the purpose is to review the achievement of African-American students with Orange County. I have determined that your school's achievement was significantly different than other Orange County Schools. Therefore, I am asking you to participate in this interview to examine traits of effective educational leaders.

 Interviewees will be asked to participate in an interview lasting no longer than 45 minutes. The schedule of questions is enclosed with this letter. You will not have to answer any question you do not wish to answer. Your interview will be conducted by phone or at your office after I have received a copy of this signed consent form from you by U.S. mail. With your permission, I would like to audiotape this interview. Only I will have access to the tape, which I will personally transcribe, removing any identifiers during transcription. The tape will be erased after transcription is complete. Your identity will be kept confidential and will not be revealed in the final manuscript. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate.
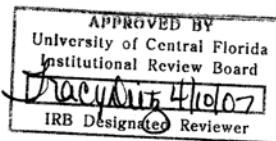
There are no anticipated risks, compensation or other direct benefits to you as a participant in this interview. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate and may discontinue your participation in the interview at any time without consequence.

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact me at (407) 816-5614 or (407) 886-0119. My faculty supervisor, Dr. Rose Taylor, may be contacted at (407) 823-7788 or by email at _rtaylor@mail.ucf.edu. Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Questions or concerns about research participants' rights may be directed to the Institutional Review Board Office, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246. The telephone numbers are (407) 823-2901 and (407) 882-2276.

Please sign and return this copy of the letter in the enclosed envelope. A second copy is provided for your records. By signing this letter, you give me permission to report your responses anonymously in the final manuscript to be submitted to my faculty supervisor as part of my study.
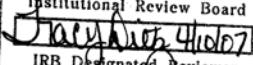
Sincerely,

Athena A. Adams

____ I have read the procedure described above for the Student Achievement assignment.

_____I voluntarily agree to participate in the interview.

____ I agree to be audio taped during the interview.

____ I do not agree to be audio taped during the interview.

_____/_____

Participant                                                       Date

_____/_____

Principal Investigator                                        Date

**Company Name Here**

# Memo

**To:** Potential Principal

**From:** Athena Adams

**CC:** Rose Taylor

**Date:** April 10, 2007

**Re:** Request for Interview

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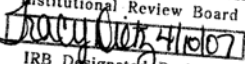**The email will read:**

**Good Morning-**

Recently I spoke with you about a research project I was conducting on the academic achievement of African American students in Orange County. I have come across some interesting findings. According to my results, your students scored significantly different than other schools in Orange County.

I would like to discuss the findings with you about your school and possible interview you about your leadership style. Leadership styles have been found to affect student achievement.

I have attached an informed consent form and a list of interview questions. I will call your secretary in the next day or so to set-up a date I can meet with you.

Thanks in advance for your assistance in this matter.

**Athena**

1

APPENDIX B: ORANGE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL INITIAL RESEARCH REQUEST
APPROVAL

| Submit this form and a copy of your proposal to:<br>*Accountability, Research, and Assessment*<br>P.O. Box 271<br>Orlando, FL 32802-0271 | **Orange County Public Schools**<br><br>**RESEARCH REQUEST FORM** | Your research proposal should include: Project Title; Purpose and Research Problem; Instruments; Procedures and Proposed Data Analysis |
|---|---|---|

Requester's Name  Athena A. Adams                                      August 2006

Address:  Home 115 Jake Court Ocoee, FL. 34761_____           Phone 407 886 0119_____

         Business  OCPS – Freedom High School_____           Phone  407 816 5600 ext. 5614_____

Project Director or Advisor Dr. Rose Taylor_____        Phone 407-823-1469

Address__P. O. Box 161250        College of Education        University of Central Florida

| Degree Sought:<br>(check one) | ☐ Associate<br>** Doctorate | ☐ Bachelor's<br>☐ None | ☐ Master's | ☐ Specialist |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Project Title: THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS IN ORANGE COUNTY PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS

_____

### ESTIMATED INVOLVEMENT

| PERSONNEL/CENTERS | NUMBER | AMOUNT OF TIME (DAYS, HOURS, ETC.) | SPECIFY/DESCRIBE GRADES, SCHOOLS, SPECIAL NEEDS, ETC. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Students | N/A | | |
| Teachers | N/A | | |
| Administrators | three | One hour per administrator | |
| Schools/Centers | five | | Jones, Oak Ridge, Evans. Olympia, Winter Park |
| Others (specify) | | | |

Specify possible benefits to students/school system: This research will identify essential characteristics/ elements that promote and/or lead to successful academic achievement in a large high school._____

### ASSURANCE

Using the proposed procedures and instrument, I hereby agree to conduct research in accordance with the policies of the Orange County Public Schools. Deviations from the approved procedures shall be cleared through the Senior Director of Accountability, Research, and Assessment. Reports and materials shall be supplied as specified.

Requester's Signature___*Athena Adams*_____

Approval Granted:        ☒ Yes        ☐ No                          Date: *9-6-06*_____

Signature of the Senior Director
for Accountability, Research, and Assessment___*Lee Baldwin*_____

NOTE TO REQUESTER:  When seeking approval at the school level, a copy of this form, signed by the Senior Director, Accountability, Research, and Assessment, should be shown to the school principal.

Reference School Board Policy GCS, p. 249

FORM ID #GB0103/23-1/1FY   REV 1/04

APPENDIX C: MODIFIED QUESTIONS FROM BALANCED LEADERSHIP

**<u>Subject:</u>** The Academic Achievement of African-American Students in Orange County Public Schools Athena Adams (Rosemarye Taylor, Ph.D., Supervisor) New

## <u>Interview Questions:</u>

1.   To what extent do you foster shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation?

2.   What is your knowledgeable about the current curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices?

3.   How does a teacher get involved with the decision-making bodies at your school?

4.   This year, what type of recognition and celebration have you had for achievement and non-achievement?

5.   How willing are you to change or review procedures that have proven less than effective?

6.   Do you see yourself as a flexible person?

7.   How do you keep a pulse on what it really happening on campus - potential problems?

8.   Tell me about the staff development that takes place on your campus. How is the staff trained? How do you keep current with theories and best practices?

APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT LETTER OF CONSENT

## Informed Consent

September, 2007

Dear Fellow Educator:

I am a doctorial student at the University of Central Florida. As part of my research, I am conducting an interview; the purpose is to review the achievement of African-American students with Orange County. I have determined that your school's achievement was significantly different than other Orange County Schools. Therefore, I am asking you to participate in this interview to examine traits of effective educational leaders.

Interviewees will be asked to participate in an interview lasting no longer than 45 minutes. The schedule of questions is enclosed with this letter. You will not have to answer any question you do not wish to answer. Your interview will be conducted by phone or at your office after I have received a copy of this signed consent form from you by U.S. mail. With your permission, I would like to audiotape this interview. Only I will have access to the tape, which I will personally transcribe, removing any identifiers during transcription. The tape will be erased after transcription is complete. Your identity will be kept confidential and will not be revealed in the final manuscript. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate.

There are no anticipated risks, compensation, or other direct benefits to you as a participant in this interview. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate and may discontinue your participation in the interview at any time without consequence.

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact me at (407) 816-5664 or (407) 886-0119. My faculty supervisor, Dr. Rose Taylor, may be contacted at (407) 823-7788 or by email at _rtaylor@mail.ucf.edu. Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Questions or concerns about research participants' rights may be directed to the Institutional Review Board Office, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246. The telephone numbers are (407) 823-2901 and (407) 882-2276.

Please sign and return this copy of the letter in the enclosed envelope. A second copy is provided for your records. By signing this letter, you give me permission to report your responses anonymously in the final manuscript to be submitted to my faculty supervisor as part of my study.

Sincerely,
Athena A. Adams


_____I have read the procedure described above for the Student Achievement assignment.

_____I voluntarily agree to participate in the interview.
_____I agree to be audio taped during the interview.
_____I do not agree to be audio taped during the interview.


_____/_____
Participant                                                    Date

_____/_____
Principal Investigator                                  Date

APPENDIX E: TRANSCRIPT OF THE INTERVIEW

**Interview: Principal Four**

**1. To what extent do you foster shared beliefs in a sense of community and cooperation?**

In particular a urban setting a clear vision mission and a set of core beliefs must be articulated to staff members, students, parents, community and other parallel organizations that could potentially support you in your endeavor.  A key, the success I had as a principal at Olympia around the idea of really meeting the needs of my African American youth is that it was purposeful, strategic.  I knew that the gap existed and I wasn't going to pretend that it didn't exist.  It was too significant; it was too apparent and could not be ignored.

**2. What is your knowledge about the current curriculum, instruction and assessment practices?**

I fostered the idea of professional learning community established by Rick Defore and most of it came through some text and research that I had done from a book that he and Rebecca Defore wrote.  Another part of my reform effort at Olympia surrounded the smaller learning community model and the idea that students need to feel engaged, they need to feel represented, connected.  One of my big movements there was called getting connected.  Every child on the campus had to have an adult, an organization, a sport that represented their group.  I didn't care how small, how complicated.  For example we had time set aside once a week for children and students during the school week, during advisory and had things like poetry clubs, writing clubs for rap songs and country songs.  I literally found a niche for all.  If five kids that were like you and you had an interest or thought you could organize yourselves and allow you to have a voice.  Then I had a council where each of the kid's representatives would meet with me once a quarter. We then talked about the culture and climate of the school.

**3. How does a teacher get involved with the decision making body at your school?**

Most traditional comprehensive high schools you have your faculty advisory council which to be honest with you is an opportunity for teachers to share their concerns about parking, the fact that they work too hard or don't get paid enough.  We have several councils that I developed called the Literacy Council and the Curriculum Council.  These groups worked tirelessly to develop sets of goal, strategies, and ideas around the smaller learning community model.  I'm going to weed one part of this response going back to your previous one about curriculum and how we did things.  These two things interconnect. We decided to move towards common assessment, planning.  What I found is that it brought your weaker teachers to a much higher standard and it was a little bit more sense of collaboration and ownership so that if you have a star algebra two teacher and two that was kind of newer or weren't as good you were able thru common assessment to find weaknesses and identify how you might be able to work on closing the gap.

Breaking Rights Two was used as a frame work for dismantling what was happening at Olympia and rebuilding it over the course of three years

**4. What type of recognition and celebrations did you do for your students who made achievement?**

That was one of the things I am most proud of.  At the end of the year we had a huge celebration. When I got to Olympia, you had to have a 4.0 to get any recognition which was too out of reach and the groups that were being acknowledged were Caucasian or Asian upper middle-class kids.  We decided to broaden that. Achievement meant different things to us.  If you were a star band player than we needed to acknowledge that if your GPA was 2.0 or 4.0.  We decided to broaden that.  We had teachers get involved.  We had criteria written.  We called it a gala.  Kids dressed up at the end of the year.  It was such a hugs success.  The following year we did a 9-11 gala and a senior one alone just for them to really celebrate the success of the kids.  That was one way we did it.  We also had a student of the day, student of the week and student of the month that was highlighted on the TV program Titan TV.

**5. How did you recognize non-achieving students and what kinds of things did you put in place for them?**

We had several things during advisory they had to attend mentoring groups. The most popular teachers and administrators (the kids felt connected to them) not an old stuffy teacher. I tried to find the younger, hipper teachers the kids could relate to. Each had five students they mentored. There was a group of twenty the first year. Every other week, they would bring them in, they would recognize their efforts, call the parents. Sometimes they had to get on them a little bit. You know you're slacking, detention last week. Like a pseudo parent. I tried to address that with the kids.

**6. How willing were you to review of change a process or procedure that wasn't working as effectively as you thought it should have?**

I was willing to do that all the time. I thing that's what good leaders do. One of the most important tactics that I used in moving my minority students through more rigorous courses was changing the entire paragon of how we let kids get into honors and Advanced Placement classes. I dismantled the process of having the teacher's permission to take the class. I got rid of that. What I did was use objective PSAT data through College Board AP potential and very strategically showed, selected, mostly encouraged kids to take more rigorous courses. We brought the parents in and showed them where their kids could potentially be moving to the next level and more importantly, this is the part where people miss, is I doubled classes. For example, if you are a student who may not be your traditional AP literature student, I would have you take a course that was tied to the AP literature that supported you. So you would have to make a choice. I may have to cut one elective to take this AP parallel course, but I'm going to take an AP class and instead of one hour a day I actually get to go there two hours a day. That's really where we began to see the Latino and African American involvement in AP not increase.

**7. What parallel course? Was it the same teacher, teaching both courses?**

It was in our pilot program. The first year I got three teachers that did parallel with AP sites because we started small and then the following year I ran into some scheduling difficulties but eight out of ten times it was the same teacher teaching both courses and essentially what they did, they got a chance to take a little bit longer to work through and progress through some of the complex writing procedures. For example, critical thinking issues, and again its all about access and equity. I think that's the main focus.

**8. Do you see yourself as a flexible person?**

I would say that flexibility is really being challenged. I tried to foster an environment where teachers would challenge me, challenge each other. The established protocol. I love that and I encourage that. I call it public sparring. There were also times when I would get up and say "that's it, the decision has been made, and there is no debate. I'm the leader, the principal taking the lumps on this if it doesn't work, I own it. But there were plenty of times where I set back and we had some rules of engagement. They were allowed to ? and comfort certain things there was a place for that. I meet with my curriculum leaders every week and it was time consuming and it would beat you up a little bit, but if that's the environment you want you got to work hard.

**9. So how did you keep a pulse on what was happening on campus, potential problems before they would erupt, with both kids and teachers?**

With kids my biggest emphasis was about relationships. My students knew that I am the principal. The joke on campus was I'd pat you on the back, but that same hand also would take a pen and kick you out of school if I needed to. They knew I was the principal. It was never an issue of trying to be friends with the kids. It was a very clear message that I was fair, firm and friendly. The kids would come to me. On one occasion a child told me about someone who was going to bring a gun on campus. Sure enough, he get off the bus, the police officer and I were there waiting and he handed over a loaded 9mm

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gun.  Now normally would anybody tell a principal that? Probably not.  But if you have a safe

environment where you know you can tell and people aren't going to throw you out, not fear being a narc,

or whatever the term kid's use, that's important.

The teachers on the other hand to be honest with you, I tell them "I don't come to work to make

friends.  My first year there about 27% of the teachers left.  A couple was fired and a couple couldn't

work for me.  I was fine with that.  I recruited and gathered people who were like minded and willing to

do good things for kids and wanted to take Olympia to the next level.  So you will actually see that my

first year there our academic achievement dropped.  The second year it increased and the third year it

increased even higher.  The reason for the dip is I was making people do what they didn't want to do.

**10. What type of staff development did you have on campus and the training you did for your**

**faculty and staff?**

Our faculty and staff development was probably among the most innovative not only in Orange

County but in the State of Florida.  We did something called differentiated staff Development.  I

essentially had groups of 8-10 people per group decide on their own with their Assistant Principal being

able to chime in, where their defientancy were.  These groups of 8-10 professionals got together

developed staff development, became expert in certain fields and then came back periodically and

developed the rest of the staff at the end of the year.  We had a huge presentation, a Science Fair where

everybody who had done action research that year talked about what they learned, the strategies

implemented in their classrooms and the data they got back from the action research.  The Professional

Development people, Linda Dove and Nora Gleditch was part of that celebration because they wanted to

see what we had done.  You may want to ask them to chime in on what that was about.

**11. How did you personally keep current on theories and best practices and research that are out**

**there?**

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On my own you can't tell people to do this and not be involved in it yourself.  So I literally not only took part in staff development, a group of my own did the same thing.  We became experts in what we call getting connected.  We studied the importance and developed implementation plans on student involvement on campus.  I also lead my own staff development with my teachers on use of data in the classroom.  Not just data, i.e. you got a level 3 on the FCAT.  I'm talking about how you take a common assessment, find defiencies in the teaching, text- book, and the curriculum and then fill the gaps.  Even to this day in my role now as a supervisor of 25 schools you know that what I do.

**Interview Principal Five:**

**Interview Questions:**

1.   To what extent do you foster shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation?
High, we work in a modified professional learning community format.

2.   What is your knowledgeable about the current curriculum, instruction, and assessment
practices? High, they are always changing so it is imperative that I attend meetings and
get briefed by my API.

3.   How does a teacher get involved with the decision-making bodies at your school?  They
can be a part of committees that are involved in the decision-making. Also, they can
participate in professional learning community activities.

4.   This year - what type of recognition and celebration have you had for achievement? and
recognition of non-achievement?  We celebrate student accomplishments on a 9 weeks
basis.  We also have incentives in place to encourage excellence.  Teachers and staff at
recognized at faculty meetings. We don't recognize for non-achievement.  We encourage
achievement.

5.  How willing are you to change or review procedures that have proven less than effective? We change all the time.

6.  Do you see yourself as a flexible person? Very, but I do have convictions.

7.  How do you keep a pulse on what it really happening on campus - potential problems? I am very hands-on. Also, I believe in communicating on all levels.

8.  Tell me about the staff development that takes place on your campus. How is the staff trained? How do you keep current with theories and best practices? This is strength area for our school. We conduct staff development in a variety of ways. We have trainings on campus, off campus, electronically, locally and nationally. We are currently doing DSDW meetings they are well received by staff. I can send a complete overview if needed.

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