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# Perceptions of teachers in their first year of school restructuring: Failure to make adequate yearly progress

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Perceptions of Teachers in their First Year of School Restructuring:  
Failure to Make Adequate Yearly Progress

by

Sharon Moser

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Department of Childhood Education and Literacy Studies  
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## DEDICATION

First, I dedicate this dissertation to my family. Jamie and Jimmy; Thank you for the love and support you gave to me throughout your growing-up years as you watched me become a teacher and a researcher. Your willingness to share me with those who helped me along the path to a doctoral degree is honored and appreciated more than you will ever know. Mom and Dad; I wish you were still here to see me complete this journey. I love and miss you both, and I hope I have made you proud. Sandra, Bill, and your families; thank you for supporting me, babysitting my kids, and encouraging me even when you thought I had lost my mind when I entered this program. Finally to John; your belief in my ability to complete this program never wavered. Thank you for your love and support.

I also dedicate this dissertation to the school teachers of Star Elementary School, as well as all teachers facing the frustrations associated with school reform. I salute your dedication to your students and am privileged to call you my colleagues.

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PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS IN THEIR FIRST YEAR OF SCHOOL  
RESTRUCTURING: FAILURE TO MAKE ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS

SHARON MOSER

ABSTRACT

The 2007-2008 school year marked the first year Florida's Title I schools that did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for five consecutive years entered into restructuring as mandated by the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001. My study examines the perceptions of teacher entering into their first year of school restructuring due to failure to achieve AYP. Four research questions guided my inquiry: What are the perceptions of teachers regarding their school's failure to make Adequate Yearly Progress? What are the understandings of teachers regarding the restructuring process?, What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the restructuring process?, and In what ways have their perceptions of the restructuring process changed their reading instruction?

The purpose of this study is to gain insight into teachers' perceptions of AYP and its restructuring consequences. I applied grounded theory, ethnography as a research tool, and critical discourse analysis as a research tool to this organizational case study. Twelve teachers from Star Elementary School, a rural Title I elementary school in

Central Florida, served as participants. I collected data using field notes, semi-structured interviews, and surveys.

My analysis of the data revealed while teachers placed blame on students, parents, and policy makers, they also looked inwardly to their own shortfalls and contributions to AYP failure. Teachers understood the specific consequences related to AYP failure and demonstrated an understanding of data analysis of their student state test scores. Teachers did not demonstrate an understanding that NCLB (2001) allows for teachers to be part of the decision-making process regarding curriculum and instruction at their school. Teachers also reported decreased authority and autonomy due to Star's failure to make AYP.

My research supports the Restructuring Inverse Impact Theory: consequences of NCLB's (2001) reform mandates intended to enhance student achievement may negatively impact that achievement due to the undermining of teacher efficacy.

## CHAPTER ONE: RATIONALE AND CONTEXT FOR THE STUDY

I am a teacher. In my teaching life I have experienced many moments of success. Some came in the daily moments of well-constructed lessons or the longed for “light bulb” flashes of student understanding. Some were achieved over long periods of time in the pursuit of an advanced degree or receipt of an award. Looking back over my teaching career I have experienced many successes based on hard work and perseverance toward specific goals

Along with those moments of success, inevitably, came moments of failure. I have been blessed in that I have had to deal with little failure in my life. The first episode of failure in my professional life was the most profound and came in my fourth year of teaching. I was displaced from my school because of unit reassignments. I was devastated. I attended that school when I was a child and was thrilled to gain a position there when I earned my teaching degree. But the feeling of failure did not arise from being displaced. It came from being hired at the “other” school in my community.

The “other” school was the new elementary school. The continuing battle over what children would attend what school became so hostile it was decided by the school district all kindergarten through grade three students would attend School Old (from which I was displaced), and all students grade four through six would attend School New,

my new school. To make matters even more complex, School New had a Black principal. Many parents in my rural southern community did not like or accept the leadership of a Black principal over their White children, especially when she took away the option for parents to choose their children's teachers. School New was hated by many parents even though the majority of its staff came from School Old. Several of the teachers at School Old, in order to wish me well, gave me a bag of Oreos and a bottle of Afro Sheen when they sent me on my way. I already felt anxious about the move to School New. I had heard people say, "That school is a joke." Now I felt like part of the joke.

With great trepidation I began my new teaching assignment. As fate would have it, moving to School New became the turning point in my career and the beginning of many professional successes. My new principal, a very smart woman and accomplished teacher, led me into the world of teacher leadership. She trusted me enough to place me on key committees in my school and district. She supported me throughout my Masters Degree program and celebrated with me when I achieved National Board Certification. I stayed with her until she retired. While I tried to remain in touch with my former colleagues at School Old, the relationships, for the most part, waned. A curricular decision by School New distanced the relationships to a greater degree.

The philosophy of the two schools differed in regards to reading instruction. While School Old maintained the traditional approach of all students reading in grade level texts, School New adopted a school-wide reading program in which students were placed in their instructional levels for reading. Each classroom teacher had two reading



groups: one on grade level and one below grade level. End-of-year individual reading inventories (IRIs) identified each student's reading level. Since all of School Old's students came to School New to start third grade, a team from School New, and I was part of that team, went to School Old each year to administer IRIs to their second grade students. This caused a whole new furor. Once students' IRIs were complete, School Old's teachers would review the grade level determinations for their exiting second graders. In some cases, there were discrepancies between the teachers' determinations of how well their students read and IRI outcomes. Many of School Old's teachers talked to me following IRI administration. If IRIs determined students were reading at lower levels than their teachers perceived, the teachers received the results with a combination of surprise, distrust, and feeling judged by "outsiders." Parents were infuriated if their children scored below grade level and were to be placed in the associated below grade level text. Interestingly, I do not remember one instance of parents being angry at any teacher at School Old in respect to a child scoring below expectations. Parents' anger was turned on School New who, they already knew, was led by an incompetent Black principal and staffed by mostly incompetent teachers. Obviously the reading team was equally incompetent since their children's reading had been judged to be below grade level.

I walked that tight rope for 10 years. I found myself in the unique position of being one of the few natives of my community who taught at School New. In a sense this gave me, and a few other teachers, a gatekeeper status between the community and my school, and the gate swung both ways. Most parents liked me, and I was one of the fifth

grade teachers on the “I hope my kid is in your class” list. Apparently by the time their children entered fifth grade they forgot I was one of the reading team that messed up their child’s IRI. Except for one instance, parents never complained to administration about me nor were hostile parent conferences held. My principal understood my acceptance by the community and used it to her advantage. Enforcement of the “You can’t choose your child’s teacher” option was suspended for particular parents who worked well with her and whom she wanted to keep happy.

All the while, School New was never accepted by my community even after earning school grades of ‘A’ year after year. I always felt on the defensive when discussing School New. Parents often asked me why I stayed at School New when positions opened at School Old or why I did not transfer to School Perfect located five miles north of my town. I believed the curricular choices at my school to be of sound pedagogy and perceived the staff to be dedicated educators and talented instructors. I also had a good relationship with my principal, so there was little incentive for me to change schools. To be honest, I knew I was on the principal’s “favored teachers list.” She trusted me and, frankly, left me alone to do my job. I appreciated that and did my job well. How could I make parents understand that School New was a good school with a dedicated staff? My defense of School New fell mostly on deaf ears.

Then the bottom fell out. A new requirement called Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) was implemented. None of us at School New (except my principal of course) knew much about it or thought much of it. We were doing just fine, making an ‘A’ every year, and showing reductions in achievement discrepancies for minority, English

Language learners, students with disabilities, and students living in poverty gaps as well. But when our scores were posted in the newspaper, there was an asterisk by our name. Below the chart in the key it stated, “did not make Adequate Yearly Progress.” To make matters worse, letters were sent home to parents informing them of our “failure” and advised them they could petition to move their children to a “high achieving” school since School New no longer qualified for that distinction. School Old also failed to make AYP, but its AYP status hinged on School New’s test scores because they had no students in FCAT tested grades. By that time, grade five had moved from School New to the middle school and grade three moved in to take its place. Of course, School Old made it clear that failure to make AYP was not its fault. Its second graders did just fine before going to School New. My community sat back and smugly noted, “We knew it all along.” Failure reared its ugly head once again. I admit to being guilty of some of that same smugness when defending School New because we were an ‘A’ school. Now the ‘A’ did not have as much impact as it previously did.

What the community did not know then, and probably does not know now, is that under my principal’s leadership School New achieved AYP for total students in reading and math, for all White, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged students in reading and math, and for English language learners in reading for the 2004-05 school year: her last year as principal. Black students achieved proficiency in reading and math in 2003-04, but did not count the next year due to low numbers. Minority subgroups, the groups who traditionally do not meet achievement proficiency, flourished under her leadership. Additionally, the percentage of students meeting high standards in reading, math, and

writing dropped (9%, -5%, and -5% respectively) as have the percentage of students making learning gains in reading and math (-10% and -13%) and the lowest 25<sup>th</sup> percentile of students making learning gains in reading (-7%), since she retired (Florida Department of Education [FLDOE], 2008d).

I am no longer directly in the world of AYP. I moved from my community to a new community when my youngest child graduated from high school. I was hired at a high achieving elementary school and taught there for three years before taking an educational leave to complete my doctoral program. Consequently, my only direct contact with “failing” schools came as a graduate assistant because I supervised interns and visited schools dealing with the stigma of failing to make AYP. However, my former colleagues at School New live in that world every day. I listen to their stories of frustration and negotiations with failure as they navigate the bureaucracy of school reform.

It is in this climate of perceived failure that thousands of teachers in Florida enter their classrooms every day. Title I schools that failed to achieve AYP for five years are now in the process of restructuring. For elementary teachers, each March looms as the next benchmark of failure or the dreamed-of possibility of success as their students in grades three through five take the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT). To make the achievement of success even more difficult, the required percentage of student proficiency necessary to make AYP increases each year. Test data is disaggregated to the level where teachers know how many white and minority students, students living in poverty, LEP students, and/or ESE students must score at proficiency levels for their

schools to make AYP. Assessments in kindergarten and first grade identify future students at-risk for third grade deficits. In-school intervention programs, as well as after-school tutoring programs, are in place to boost test scores. In the middle of it all, teachers are blamed for not doing their jobs well and scoffed at for “teaching to the test.” How do these teachers perceive what is happening to them, their students, and their schools during restructuring? What are teachers’ understandings of the process for achieving AYP? What has been the impact of state and district interventions on instruction in their classrooms? This study attempts to answer these questions.

### Background

Currently, Title I schools are the target schools for restructuring under NCLB (2001) (Florida Department of Education [FLDOE], 2007b). This section addresses the impetus for school reform that culminated in legislation requiring schools to show accountability through test scores.

### *Title I*

The history of Title I can be traced to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 (Yell & Drasgow, 2005). As part of President Lyndon B. Johnson’s War on Poverty, the ESEA was signed into law, appropriating federal money to states to improve the educational opportunities of disadvantaged children (Cross, 2004). Title I, the part of ESEA directly related to school children living in poverty and the federal funds intended to support those children, was the largest section of the law. A formula based on schools’ levels of poverty determined whether schools would be eligible for

federal money to assist with the educational achievement of those students (Yell & Drasgow, 2005). In 1994, the ESEA was reauthorized as the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA). IASA not only allowed the federal government to allocate funding to schools serving economically disadvantaged students, but also ignited standards-based reform at the state and local levels. The use of performance standards for all students, not just those served by Title I, was included in the reauthorization of Title I legislation as part of the IASA (Schwartz, Yen, & Schaffer, 2001).

### *The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)*

In 1983, the publication of *A Nation at Risk* led to recommendations for schools to adopt higher and measurable standards for student achievement (Yell & Drasgow, 2005). This report, compiled by the Commission on Excellence in Education during the Reagan administration, asserted that America's students did not achieve as well as their peers from other countries. In 1989, President George H. W. Bush met with the governors of all 50 states in the first National Education Summit. This summit resulted in the call for national strategies to address issues regarding public education (Cross, 2004). America 2000, legislation calling for six specific education goals, was signed into law. This legislation gained further fruition in President William Clinton's Goals 2000: Educate America Act which created the National Education Standards and Improvement Council. However, the Council was fraught with opposition in Congress due to its authority to approve or reject the academic standards put forth by individual states and was eventually disbanded (Yell & Drasgow, 2005).

In 2001, President George W. Bush announced that the ESEA would be reauthorized as the No Child Left Behind Act and would be the top priority of his administration. The most significant change was the institution of a time line for schools to meet specific academic criteria in reading and math in order to effectively close the achievement gaps related to race, ethnicity, language, and socioeconomic status (Cross, 2004).

In 2002, President Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (2001), marking an increase in the role the federal government played in education. Along with increased funding (9% of every education dollar), NCLB (2001) increased the educational requirements of states, school districts and public schools (Bloomfield & Cooper, 2003). Among these mandates were the requirements for highly qualified teachers in every classroom, the use of research-based instruction, the development of assessment tools that would enable teachers and administrators to make data-driven decisions about instruction, and the development of methods for holding schools accountable for student achievement (Yell & Drasgow, 2005). As a result, all students are now tested in grades three through eleven to determine if they make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in reading and math (Bloomfield & Cooper, 2003).

#### *Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)*

Under ESEA (1965), each state set its own goals for academic proficiency resulting in a wide range of minimum standards and classification of schools in need of improvement (Olson & Robelen, 2002). Originally, there was no deadline for meeting state proficiency standards. Now, NCLB (2001) requires each state to determine the

levels of academic achievement that constitute AYP and report the progress of its students toward that goal through the use of annual statewide assessments (Springer, 2008; Weiner, 2004; Yell & Drasgow, 2005). By the end of school year 2013-2014, all schools are required to meet 100% proficiency in reading and math for all students as well as subgroups of students including race, students living in poverty, students with disabilities, and students with limited English language proficiency.

To establish AYP targets, each state defined a baseline for measuring the percentage of students who met or exceeded state proficiency goals in both reading and math, then determined how to measure adequate academic achievement (Porter, Linn, & Trimble, 2006). States then chose a specific trajectory to move from that baseline toward the 100% proficiency goal, the minimum number of students required for reporting a subgroup, and whether or not confidence intervals would be used when analyzing and reporting test data (Porter, Linn, & Trimble, 2006). Title I schools that fail to make AYP for five years enter into restructuring (FLDOE, 2007b). Therefore, restructuring becomes the dreaded consequence.

### *Restructuring*

Under NCLB (2001), school restructuring may constitute a) reopening the school as a public charter school, b) replacing most or all of its staff, c) entering into a contract with a private entity to operate a school, d) turning the operation of the school over to a state educational agency, and/or e) making any other changes that make fundamental reforms that hold promise of enabling the school to make AYP.



In Florida, school restructuring requires schools to make fundamental changes to improve academic achievement in order to make AYP as defined by Florida’s accountability system (FLDOE, 2007b). Once schools have been identified as in need of restructuring, schools must a) ensure its students have the option to transfer to another public school that has not been identified as in need of restructuring, b) ensure that supplemental educational services are available to eligible students, and (c) prepare a plan to implement changes in governance for the school. Parents must be notified of the school’s status and have the opportunity to participate in the development of the restructuring plan (FLDOE, 2007b).

The level of restructuring required in Florida’s schools is different depending on each school’s grade and the percentage of AYP indicators missed (FLDOE, 2007b). Schools failing to achieve AYP are assigned a tier level, with Tier I schools requiring the least intervention while Tier VII require the most. The tiers initially developed for Florida schools are explained in the table below (FLDOE, 2007b):

Table 1

*Criteria for Tier Placement*

Tier	School Grade	% Indicators Attained
I	A or B	At least 90
II	A or B	80-89
III	C or C and improved and maintained at least one grade level	At least 70
IV	C or C and has not improved one grade level or has not maintained improvement	Fewer than 70
V	D	Failed to meet state standards regarding AYP
VI	F and received no more than one grade of F in a four-year period	Failed to meet state standards regarding AYP
VII	F and have received more than one F in a four-year period	Failed to meet state standards regarding AYP

This tier system has been revised under Florida's new differentiated accountability model which is discussed in Chapter Two.

During the 2007-08 school year 2,514 schools (76%) in Florida did not achieve AYP, representing a 10% increase in Florida schools failing to make AYP when compared to 2006-07 scores (FLDOE, 2008b). Of these, 937 Title I schools (69 % of all Florida Title I schools) did not make AYP have been identified as Schools In Need of Improvement (SINI).

### Research Questions

The 2007-08 school year marked the first year Title I schools in Florida failing to achieve AYP for five years entered into restructuring. I wondered if there was any difference in those schools now than there had been during my tenure. I decided to talk to teachers about their experiences. I conducted informal interviews with teachers at restaurants, churches, bars, friends' homes and schools.

What did teachers tell me about working in a "failing" school? In my conversations with teachers who work in schools in restructuring I heard a variety of stories and comments. Some teachers shared stories of frustration at the fact that one test score could determine how well students in their schools showed progress. Others told me that their work environment became strained due to pressures to improve test scores. Many discussed how more requirements regarding instructional practices led them to work additional non-contractual hours to get their jobs done. At the other extreme, when I asked one teacher about restructuring at her school she said, "What's restructuring?"

These comments intrigued me. My conversations with these teachers were neither structured nor did they provide any data on what assumptions could be made. The only way to get the real story was to spend time in a school during its restructuring. These experiences and my desire to learn more led me to this study.

Due to my previous experiences as a former Title I school teacher, my continued contact with colleagues from that school now in restructuring, and my doctoral studies focusing on reading instruction, I wanted to study how teachers navigate the reform process and learn how restructuring affects teachers' reading instruction. My conversations with teachers and research into Florida's accountability system led to the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding their school's failure to make Adequate Yearly Progress?
2. What are the understandings of teachers regarding the restructuring process?
3. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the restructuring process?
4. In what ways have their perceptions of the restructuring process changed their reading instruction?

To answer these questions, I first had to find out more about my former school district. The following section provides information regarding demographics, the current AYP status of the district's schools, and an overview of the district's reading plan.

### *District Demographics*

Bell County is a large, rural county in central Florida and is the eighth-largest school district in the state. Currently, more than 90,000 students attend Bell County schools, and of those 46,000 are elementary school children (FLDOE, 2008d). There are 85 elementary schools in Bell County, 50 of which are Title I schools (Bell District Website, 2008). Sixty-three languages representing 151 countries are spoken in the district.

2008 district data revealed the following subgroup percentages of Bell County students:

Table 2

*Bell County Student Demographics*

Subgroup	Percent
White	52.2%
Black	23%
Hispanic	21.7%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.4%
Other	1.2%
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	.20%
Economically Disadvantaged	58%

Bell County Schools employs over 6,000 teachers and is the largest employer in the county with almost 12,000 employees. The Florida Department of Education (2007) reported the following demographics for Bell County elementary teachers:

Table 3

*Bell County Teacher Demographics*

Subgroup	Percent
White	83.8%
Black	10.2%
Hispanic	5.4%
Asian/Pacific Islander	<1%
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	<1%

*AYP in Bell County*

According to the 2007-08 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) District Level Report (FLDOE, 2008d) Bell County did not make AYP for the 2007-08 school year. The district met 74% of the necessary criteria for making AYP with failure to meet state goals in a) reading proficiency of all students, b) reading and math proficiency of Black students, c) reading proficiency of Hispanic students, d) reading and math proficiency of economically disadvantaged students, e) reading and math proficiency of English language learners, and f) reading and math proficiency of students with disabilities. This compares to Florida’s state level score of 77% of proficiency criteria met. In Bell County, 63 elementary schools failed to achieve AYP (43 Title I schools) during the 2007-08 school year.

*Bell County Reading Plan*

The *Bell County Schools Strategic Plan* (2005) requires all schools to implement a balanced reading program at every grade level. *Bell County’s K-12 Research-Based Reading Plan* (2008a) is

designed to improve students' outcomes by addressing the essential components of effective reading instruction. Additionally, the district and school staff will support the use of scientifically, researched-based reading instruction by providing quality professional development in the essential components and the use of data analysis to drive instruction (p. 5).

All core, supplemental, and intervention reading materials must be scientifically research-based as delineated in NCLB (2001), an uninterrupted 90 minute reading block in which whole and flexible group instruction occurs must be present, and additional reading instructional time must be provided for students identified as in need of immediate intensive intervention. Reading coaches receive and provide training in the five essential components of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension as delineated in NCLB (2001) and data analysis of assessments (screening, progress monitoring, diagnostic, and outcome). Implementation of the K-12 reading plan is monitored for fidelity at both the district and school levels. In Bell County, program fidelity is monitored by site visitations of district personnel.

District intervention measures are implemented in schools not making academic improvement in reading as determined by FCAT scores, school grade, and AYP status. The level of intervention is, "... determined by, but not limited to, observations, progress monitoring, instructional review, and data analysis" (*Bell County School Strategic Plan*, 2005, p. 5). Specific district interventions are discussed in Chapter Three.

## Chapter Summary

This chapter provided the rationale and background for my study of teachers' perceptions of the restructuring process due to failure to achieve AYP for five years. My personal experiences, relationships with teachers in the restructuring process, and background in reading instruction provided the impetus for me to undertake this research. Chapter Two provides review of the literature necessary to fully understand how schools arrived at their current AYP status and the steps they must take to be deemed high achieving.

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Overview

Chapter One discussed my rationale for undertaking this study. In order to explain why and how schools are identified as in need of improvement and may enter into the restructuring process, an understanding of what NCLB (2001) legislation requires concerning student achievement is necessary. Chapter Two provides an overview of NCLB (2001) requirements in regard to accountability, determination of Adequate Yearly Progress, and Safe Harbor and Growth Model provisions in determining Adequate Yearly Progress.

The determination of how Adequate Yearly Progress is achieved differs from state to state due to specific design decisions. A discussion of how design decisions can affect achievement of Adequate Yearly Progress is included. Since data for this study were collected in a Florida school in restructuring, Florida's accountability system was analyzed. Florida's new provision for determining the level of restructuring necessary based on specific school need, Differentiated Accountability, was also discussed.

Adequate Yearly Progress in reading is necessary for schools to be considered high achieving. Reading First policy and its implications for reading instruction, as well as Just Read Florida!'s requirements for Florida schools, are detailed. NCLB's (2001) requirements for highly qualified teachers are also addressed.



The chapter closes with a review of the literature regarding support for NCLB (2001) in meeting the needs of our nation's struggling students as well as criticism of how Adequate Yearly Progress is determined and its impact on "failing" schools.

### *Assessment and Accountability*

The call for assessment and accountability in education is not a new phenomenon (Cross, 2004). Increased student enrollment in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, low literacy rates of soldiers in World War I, and the launch of Sputnik in 1957 lead to increased federal government interest in education. Desegregation and the establishment of Title I in the 1960s led to the emergence of education as a national priority and led to the establishment of the Department of Education as a cabinet-level position in the 1970s.

The 1980s were influenced by reports that determined students in the United States were not achieving academically at the same rate as their international peers (Cross, 2004). In 1983, the publication of *A Nation at Risk* led to recommendations for schools to adopt higher and measurable standards for student achievement (Yell & Drasgow, 2005), but measurement-focused assessment policies resulted in an overemphasis on basic skills and excluded certain populations of students from testing (Buly & Valencia, 2002).

In the 1990s, education initiatives focused on the development of high standards for all students and the development of assessment tools to determine if students were meeting those standards (Goetz & Duffy, 2003). It was determined that students could achieve at a higher level, and the adults in charge of their learning would be held

accountable (Cross, 2004). Title I of the *Improving America's Schools Act (IASA, 1994)* required the development of high standards for all students in reading and math at each grade level, the tracking of student performance, and the identification of low-performing schools. Subsequently, schools and school districts were held accountable for the achievement of their students.

NCLB (2001) placed assessment and accountability as the “key mechanism” for the improvement of student achievement (Ryan, 2002, p. 453) and further expanded state testing requirements (Goetz & Duffy, 2003). Part A Section 1111(b)(2)(B) of NCLB (2001) requires states to adopt challenging academic standards that specify what children should know and be able to do, contain “rigorous and coherent content”, and encourage the teaching of advanced skills. The section also requires the reporting of three achievement levels (basic, proficient, and advanced) that determine how well students master the content of the standards. States must also identify how they will establish and maintain a state-wide accountability system that ensures all students make AYP toward the mastery of content standards.

Accountability within NCLB (2001) is intended to ensure that all students receive a quality education, especially those attending schools identified as in need of improvement (Porter, Linn & Trimble, 2006). To do this, all states are required to identify and measure students' academic achievement by developing standards and, subsequently, measure student progress in reading and math (Yell & Drasgow, 2005). NCLB (2001) requires by school year 2013-2014, 100% of schools meet student proficiency standards (Olson & Robelen, 2002; Porter, Linn, & Trimble, 2006; Weiner &

Hall, 2000). Schools are accountable to report scores for students who have been enrolled for at least one full school year and those subgroups determined large enough to indicate statistically significant data. Schools may also combine scores from multiple grades and average scores for up to three years. It is expected that schools have increased about one-half the necessary distance by school year 2008-2009 for schools to achieve 100% proficiency by 2014 (Peterson, 2007). In this way, districts and schools are held accountable for the achievement of all students (Yell & Drasgow, 2005).

### *Determining AYP*

AYP constitutes the minimum proficiency level of improvement in reading and math that all public schools must achieve each year (Yell & Drasgow, 2005). States must set annual targets for proficiency in order for schools to demonstrate AYP starting with the school year 2001-2002 baseline test scores (Olson & Robelen, 2002). All subgroups, including those who are economically disadvantaged, belong to major racial and ethnic subgroups, have been identified with disabilities, and/or have limited English proficiency must meet proficiency targets. Failure for *one subgroup* to meet the target results in failure to make AYP (Olson & Robelen, 2002; Porter, Linn & Trimble, 2006; Weiner & Hall, 2004). Each state decides what constitutes each year's proficiency target as well as the minimum number of students required to populate a subgroup in order for it to count toward AYP (Olson & Robelen, 2002).

NCLB (2001) requires states to show an increase in proficiency scores two years after the implementation of the law and every three years after that (Porter, Linn & Trimble, 2006). NCLB (2001) allows states to vary a) the trajectories set toward moving

toward proficiency, b) the minimum number of students in a subgroup, and c) whether or not confidence intervals will be used to determine if proficiency targets were met (Porter, Linn & Trimble, 2006). States established an initial AYP target for measuring the percentage of students meeting proficiency goals, with separate goals determined for reading and math (Porter, Linn & Trimble 2006). Initial targets were determined by calculating the performance scores in reading and math at the 20<sup>th</sup> percentile in each state (Weiner & Hall, 2004). Subsequently, initial targets vary from state to state.

Title I schools failing to make AYP proficiency goals for two consecutive years are identified as in need of improvement and must create a school improvement plan within which 10% of Title I funds will be spent on professional development for teachers (Porter, Linn, & Trimble, 2006; Weiner & Hall, 2004). These schools must notify parents of schools' status so parents, in turn, may choose to send their children to alternate, high performing schools (Olson & Robelen, 2002). Districts are required to use part of their Title I funds to pay any transportation costs associated with moving students to high performing schools (Olson & Robelen, 2002). Schools missing proficiency goals for three years must also provide supplemental academic services for its students from low income families. Schools missing proficiency goals for four years are considered in corrective action and select specific measures to improve achievement. After five years of failure to achieve AYP, schools develop a restructuring plan that is implemented in the sixth year of missing proficiency goals (Porter, Linn & Trimble 2006). The table below illustrates consequences for each year that AYP is not achieved.

Table 4

*Consequences for Not Achieving AYP (NCLB, 2001)*

Years	Consequences
2	<p>Create school improvement plan.</p> <p>Allocate 10% of funds for professional development.</p> <p>Notify parents of school choice option and pay transportation costs for students to attend a choice school.</p>
3	<p>All of the above</p> <p>Schools must provide supplemental academic services to students from low-income families.</p>
4	<p>All of the above</p> <p>Schools move into corrective action and select specific strategies to improve achievement.</p>
5	<p>All of the above</p> <p>Schools develop a restructuring plan.</p> <p>LEAs must choose one of the following corrective actions: replace staff, implement new curriculum, reduce management authority at school site, appoint an outside expert, extend the school year, or restructure the internal organization of the school</p>
6	<p>All of the above</p> <p>Schools enter into restructuring.</p> <p>LEAs must choose one of the following alternative governance arrangements: reopen the school as a charter school, replace all or most of the staff, contract with a private management company, turn the operation of the school to the state, any other major restructuring arrangement that makes fundamental reforms to improve student achievement.</p>

Before NCLB (2001), schools could be deemed high performing based on overall achievement levels without consideration of disaggregated data by targeted subgroups (Weiner & Hall, 2004). Now, the test score of *one student* can determine whether or not a school achieves AYP, and a single student can fall into more than one subgroup (Olson, 2002; Weiner & Hall, 2004). In 2002, more than 8,600 Title I schools failed to make AYP targets for two or more years (Olson & Robelen, 2002). In 2008, nearly 30,000 of all public schools in the United States failed to achieve AYP, representing a 13% increase over the 2006-07 school year (Hoff, 2008).

### *Safe Harbor*

Part A Section 1111(b)(2)(I) of NCLB (2001) allows for the achievement of AYP if aggregated groups meet state objectives but one or more subgroups does not. The Safe Harbor provision is designed to help schools starting below initial AYP proficiency targets (Weiner & Hall, 2004) achieve AYP if subgroups show measurable gains. These schools can achieve AYP if they “reduce the percentage of students not at the proficient level by 10% from the previous year, even if the performance level is below the state goal” (Weiner & Hall, 2004, p. 15).

Without the Safe Harbor provision, schools with initial proficiency goals below initial state targets would have little chance of ever making AYP due to the increased proficiency requirements required to do so. However, the Safe Harbor provision in a sense forestalls the inevitable failure of these schools due to the 100% proficiency requirement in school year 2014. This reduction in non-proficiency levels constitutes Safe Harbor.

### *Growth Models*

Another measure used to level the playing field for schools starting below initial AYP proficiency targets is growth models. In 2005, the growth model pilot program was instituted which allowed for the tracking of individual student progress over time to determine if students were on track toward proficiency even if currently falling below proficiency standards (Peterson, 2007; Weiss, 2008; Welner, 2008). Seven states, including Florida, participated in the pilot program (Weiss, 2008). Ultimately, students

must meet fixed proficiency targets. For example, a third grade student fell below the proficiency target score on the end of the year test. S/he has both the fourth and fifth grade to reach proficiency goals for fifth grade. If the student is on track, according to gains on state assessments, that student counts toward achieving AYP even if his/her score is still below proficiency level. If at the end of fifth grade the student does not meet proficiency levels, s/he no longer counts toward achieving AYP (Weiss, 2008).

### *AYP in Different States*

As stated above, states have different starting points for calculating AYP and are allowed flexibility in how they determine AYP targets from year to year. For example, in 2002, the initial targets for Iowa were 64% for math and 65% for reading, while the initial targets for Missouri were 8.3% in math and 18.4% for reading (Porter, Linn & Trimble, 2006).

The number of schools reported as failing to achieve AYP varies widely from state to state. In 2002, Michigan reported 1,512 schools in need of improvement, the most in the United States, with California and Ohio in second and third place reporting 1,009 and 760 respectively (Olson & Robelen, 2002). Conversely, Arkansas and Wyoming reported all schools meeting AYP requirements. One reason for the variance across states rests in the degree in proficiency standards determined by design decisions adopted by each state. In 2007, 43% of Massachusetts' students failed to make AYP because Massachusetts has one of the highest proficiency standards in the country, compared to Tennessee where only 7% of students failed to make AYP. Tennessee has one of the lowest proficiency standards in the country (Peterson, 2007).

Porter, et al (2006) studied the variances of AYP design decisions among different states and the impact of those variances on meeting AYP. They compared states' proficiency trajectories, subgroup numbers, and use of confidence intervals to determine if design differences impacted achievement of AYP.

Forty-three out of fifty states use either a straight line with plateau trajectory or a back-loaded trajectory. The straight line with plateau trajectory moves in a straight line but with equally placed stair steps at the required three year marks. The back-loaded trajectory includes small initial step increases then larger steps toward the end, thus delaying larger increases until the years closer to 2014. NCLB (2001) allows states to specify the minimum number of students required in a subgroup before its data is used toward calculating AYP. The number required for reporting subgroups ranges from five to 100, with 40 and 30 representing the highest modes. The larger the minimum number of students required in a subgroup, the fewer subgroups required to be included in AYP calculations. In regards to confidence intervals, eleven states chose not to use confidence intervals. Of those states using confidence intervals, 14 chose 95% (3 One-Tailed) and 16 chose 99% (2 One-Tailed). The larger the confidence interval, the more likely a school will meet AYP proficiency requirements. The combination of design choices results in substantial variances in AYP approaches from state to state.

The researchers applied a combination of the different design models to Kentucky schools' 2003 and 2004 test scores. Kentucky reported 90% and 94% of its schools meeting AYP in 2003 and 2004 respectively. By manipulating trajectories, minimum number of students required for disaggregated subgroup accountability, and confidence



intervals, they found a variety of outcomes for Kentucky's schools in regards to achieving AYP. Changing the minimum number of students per subgroup to 30 from 60 dropped AYP proficiency to 84% and 89%, respectively. Dropping confidence intervals dropped AYP proficiency to 61% and 72%, respectively. Using the most stringent model of 30 per subgroup, no confidence interval, and a straight-line trajectory would have resulted in AYP proficiency results for 2003 at 31% and 2004 at 44%.

For many states, the use of less-challenging design decisions still resulted in an increase in failure to make AYP (Hoff, 2008). California reported a 14% increase in schools failing to make AYP in 2008. Vermont's numbers tripled, up from 12% in 2007 to 37% in 2008.

#### *AYP in Florida*

Beginning in January of 2003, all states were required to submit accountability plans to the U. S. Department of Education with revisions submitted annually (NCLB, 2001). The following is an overview of Florida's accountability system as reported in *State of Florida: Consolidated State Application Accountability Workbook for State Grants under Title IX, Part C, Section 9302 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Public Law 107-110)* (revised June, 2008b).

Florida's accountability system produces school grades within its A+ school grading program. Each year student progress is measured by the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) (FLDOE. 2008). According to FLDOE (2008b)

The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) measures student performance on selected benchmarks in reading, math, writing, and science that are defined by the Florida Sunshine State Standards (SSS). Developed by Florida educators, the SSS outline *challenging content* students are supposed to know and be able to do. All public schools are expected to teach students the content found in the SSS (p. 1).

FCAT test items differ between the content area tested and the grade-level associated tests (FLDOE, 2008b). The following table displays the types of questions appearing on reading, mathematics, writing, and science tests at each grade level:

Table 5

*FCAT Item Type by Subject and Grade Level (FLDOE, 2008b, p. 17)*

Grade	Reading	Writing	Mathematics	Science
3	MC		MC	
4	MC, SR, ER	WP, MC	MC	
5	MC		MC, GR, SR, ER	MC, SR, ER
6	MC		MC, GR	
7	MC		MC, GR	
8	MC, SR, ER	WP, MC	MC, GR, SR, ER	MC, GR, SR, ER
9	MC		MC, GR	
10	MC, SR, ER	WP, MC	MC, GR, SR, ER	
11				MC, GR, SR, ER

MC=multiple choice SR=short response ER=extended response GR=gridded response WR=writing prompt/essay

Multiple choice items are found in reading, mathematics, science and writing. Students choose the correct answer from either three (only in the writing test) or four possible choices and bubble their answers in a test booklet or answer sheet. Multiple

choice answers are worth one raw score point. Gridded response items are found in mathematics and science tests. Students solve problems or answer questions requiring a numerical response and mark their answers on response grids. Gridded response questions are worth one raw score point. Short and extended response items are found in reading, mathematics, and science tests. Students respond to items in their own words or show solutions to problems. Short response questions are worth one or two raw score points. Extended response questions are worth one, two, three, or four raw score points (FLDOE, 2008b).

Students are tested in grades three through eleven, and achievement on FCAT is determined through the assignment of a test score. Test scores are categorized into five achievement levels. Students' scores that place them in levels three through five for that grade level are determined to be proficient (level 3) or above proficient (levels 4-5). Student scores in reading, writing, and math are used to determine school grades (A-F).

Aggregated and disaggregated scores as well as individual student scores are used to determine AYP. Schools failing to meet AYP proficiency targets in the same content area for two consecutive years are designated as a School In Need of Improvement (SINI). A school that meets state targets for reading and math in all subgroups, tests at least 95% of its students, and shows an increase in other indicators of at least 1% achieves AYP. Schools must meet the state's 90% proficiency mark for writing to meet AYP, and no school may be designated as making AYP if scoring a "D" or "F." The safe harbor provision is also used to determine subgroup proficiency (FLDOE, 2008e).

In all, Florida has 39 components to its AYP model: 36 components by subgroup and three other indicators (graduation rate if applicable, writing proficiency, and the requirement for scoring A, B, or C in the school grading system). In 2008, nearly 70% of Florida schools were identified as high-performing through its A+ school grading program, yet only 24% of Florida schools achieved AYP (FLDOE, 2008b).

In 2007, Florida initiated its growth model pilot program. The model is explained as follows:

The growth model is a new AYP calculation where each student within a subgroup with at least two years of assessment data will be included in the denominator for the growth calculation. The numerator will include any student in the subgroup who is proficient or 'on-track to be proficient' in three years. A school or district will meet AYP for that subgroup if the percentage of students who are proficient or 'on-track to be proficient' using this calculation meets or exceeds the current state annual measurable objectives (51 percent in reading and 56 percent in mathematics in 2006-07) (FLDOE, 2008c, p. 24).

Assessment in Florida links FCAT developmental scale scores (DSS) to FCAT test scores in order to track student progress over time. Using a four-year plan, a student who failed to achieve proficiency levels on the FCAT can be determined to be making AYP. By using a DSS, a student's progress can be measured by taking his/her current score, comparing it to the desired DSS in four years, and determining the amount of increase in DSS for each tested year is necessary to reach proficiency. If the student

meets or exceeds the required DSS benchmark over the next three years that student makes AYP each year.

Starting points for Florida AYP calculations were taken from 2001-02 FCAT scores (FLDOE, 2008e). The starting point for reading was set at 31% and math at 38%. A straight-line trajectory starting with scores from the 2003-04 school year is used requiring a seven percentage point increase in reading and a six percentage point increase in math each year. For accountability purposes, the minimum number of students in each cell is 30. Scores are counted for students attending one full school year (second week of October through the second week of February). Students test scores are reported using confidence intervals based on the “standard error of measurement” (p. 48).

### *Restructuring*

Title I schools failing to make AYP for five consecutive years enter into restructuring. Based on test scores for the 2007-08 school year, 3,559 schools (4% of all schools and twice as many for the 2006-07 school year) in the United States were designated as in restructuring (Hoff, 2007).

The earliest experiences in the United States in regards to school restructuring are found in Michigan. Michigan began its accountability plan earlier than other states and began their restructuring processes in the 2004-05 school year. Eighty-five percent of its schools in restructuring achieved AYP with 20% of those schools maintaining AYP for two years (Education Digest, 2006).

California saw a 150% increase in the number of schools in restructuring since the 2005-06. The Center on Education Policy (2007) reported 11% of all California public schools in restructuring following the 2006-07 school year. During the same school year, only 5% of schools currently in restructuring raised their test scores enough to exit restructuring. “Several hundred” (p. 1) have been in restructuring for six or more years. The CEP report also noted that California schools have gone beyond federal requirements to boost achievement, but many schools report non-academic factors compromised their efforts.

### *Differentiated Accountability*

*Building on Results: A Blueprint for Strengthening The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* (2007) called for a differentiated accountability system to distinguish between schools with different needs in meeting AYP (FLDOE, 2008c). Differentiated accountability allows states to “vary the intensity and type of interventions” necessary to help schools meet AYP requirements (FLDOE, 2008c, p. 1). A state’s differentiated accountability model must a) continue to determine which schools are in need of improvement according to AYP data, b) categorize schools accordingly, c) state its systems of interventions, and d) define the interventions for its lowest performing schools (those in restructuring). Florida is one of six states that received permission to develop its own differentiated accountability model (FLDOE, 2008c).

In Florida, the differentiated accountability model is designed to identify schools in greatest need of improvement and supply a more “nuanced system of support and interventions” (FLDOE, 2008c, p. i). Its objectives are designed to a) provide more

assistance for schools at or in restructuring, b) provide targeted support for schools not yet in restructuring but identified as in need of improvement, and c) provide support for school previously in restructuring but have exited due to improvement. Title I Schools In Need of Improvement (SINI) are separated into two groups: those planning for restructuring and those already in restructuring. The two groups are differentiated based on a combination of school grade and AYP criteria met. Of the 273 identified as Category II schools, 24 were identified as in critical need of support and intervention. The classifications of SINIs are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

*Differentiated Accountability School Categories*

2006-07 SINIs	Category I (As, Bs, & Cs and Ungraded with at Least 80% Criteria Met	Category II (Schools with Less Than 80% Criteria Met, and All Ds & Fs) <sup>a</sup>
SINI-Prevent (Years 1-3) General Strategies and Interventions	416 Focus planning on missed elements of AYP.	85 Implement comprehensive school improvement planning.
SINI-Correct (Years 4+) General Strategies and Interventions	248 Focus reorganization of missed elements of AYP.	188 (164+24) Reorganize the school.
SINI Intervene (Most Critical) General Strategies and Interventions		24 Restructure/Close the school.

<sup>a</sup>Categorical headings are taken directly from FLDOE documents. Variances are not from my summarization of the information.

For each classification, specific support services and interventions, including benchmarks to measure progress and consequences for non-compliance, are defined.

## Reading Instruction and Achievement

Sec 1201(4) of NCLB (2001) outlines the purposes of Subpart I of Part B - Student Reading Skills Improvement Grants. The purposes of this subpart are a) to provide assistance in establishing reading programs for kindergarten through grade three that are based on scientifically-based reading research, b) provide assistance in preparing teachers through professional development in reading instruction, c) provide assistance in selecting or developing reading instructional materials and assessments, d) provide assistance to teachers in implementing instruction in the essential components of reading, and (e) strengthen coordination among schools, early literacy programs, and family literacy programs. This assistance is provided through the establishment of Reading First.

### *Reading Instruction and Reading First*

As a result of data regarding poor reading achievement of American children in general and minority and disadvantaged children specifically, Reading First was created as the “academic cornerstone of NCLB” (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2007). Reading First was designed to ensure states and school districts received the resources necessary to deliver quality, research-based reading instruction to all students through implementation of the National Reading Panel’s recommendations. In addition to the instructional component of Reading First, monetary assistance is available to schools in order to meet Reading First objectives.



Reading First, authorized under Title I, Part B of NCLB (2001), was established to ensure that states, and their local school districts, would receive assistance to implement research-based reading programs for students in grades kindergarten through three and improve teachers' skills in using reading research-based practices and provide assistance to schools that have low reading test scores and high poverty rates (Edmodston, 2004; International Reading Association [IRA], 2000). Additionally, \$900 million per year was allocated in order for states to receive competitive grant money so they can provide training to teachers and identify students at risk for reading failure (McLester, 2002).

Under Reading First guidelines, all teaching methods and materials must be based upon scientifically-based reading research (McLester, 2002; USDOE, 2007). Following the recommendations of the National Reading Panel (2000), all children must be explicitly taught the five essential components of reading:

1. Phonemic Awareness: the ability to hear and manipulate phonemes
2. Phonics: the ability to understand and detect predictable patterns and relationships between phonemes and graphemes
3. Vocabulary Development: the ability to store and retrieve the meanings and pronunciations of words
4. Reading Fluency: the ability to read text quickly, accurately, and with proper expression

5. Reading Comprehension: the ability to understand and communicate what has been read.

All programs that incorporate instruction in the five essential components of reading must meet the criteria of scientifically-based reading research. To meet this criteria, all materials and strategies related to the development and instruction of reading as well as the identification of reading difficulties must be based on research that a) employed systematic experimental methods, b) included rigorous data analysis to test a hypothesis, c) included multiple measurements and observations, and d) was accepted by a peer-reviewed journal approved by independent experts in the field (USDOE, 2002).

*Reading Achievement in Florida*

Table 7 displays subgroup percentages and grade level proficiency in reading of Florida’s students (FLDOE, 2008b):

Table 7

*Subgroups of Florida Students Meeting Grade Level Proficiency in Reading, 2007*

Subgroup	Percentage of all Florida students	Percentage At or Above Grade Level in Reading FCAT, 2008 Grades 3-10
White	46.71%	71%
Black	23.15%	41%
Hispanic	24.24%	54%
Students with Disabilities	14.7%	30%
English Language Learners	11.8%	27%

Table 8 presents the increase in percentages of student at or above grade level in grades three, four, and five.

Table 8

*Improvement in FCAT Percentages Scoring At or Above Grade Level in Reading*

Grade Level	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
3	57	60	63	66	67	75	69	72
4	53	55	60	70	71	66	68	70
5	52	53	58	59	66	67	72	67

Florida reports the following progress in closing the achievement gap for students in minority groups (FLDOE, 2008b):

1. The percentages between white and African-American students scoring on grade level in reading have narrowed from 2001 to 2007 by four percentage points.
2. The percentages between white and Hispanic students scoring on grade level in reading have narrowed from 2001 to 2007 by six percentage points.
3. In 2007, Florida's performance on the NAEP ranked as one of the top four states in closing achievement gaps between white and both African-American and Hispanic students.

*Just Read Florida!*

Just Read Florida! was initiated under *Executive Order 01-260* (2001) by Governor Jeb Bush in response to the academic achievement demands of NCLB (2001). Designated as a comprehensive reading initiative designed to ensure all children become successful readers, Just Read Florida! was instituted in conjunction with the Florida Department of Education and the Florida Board of Education to coordinate with Reading First to make recommendations regarding effective reading materials and instruction for Florida schools.

Each school district is required to write a Comprehensive Research-Based Reading Plan in order to receive funds available through the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) which was instituted in 2006 to make reading a priority in Florida and ensure that reading is funded annually as part of the public school funding formula (FLDOE, 2008a). To receive funding, each district's plan must ensure a) the initiative is guided and supported by district and school leadership, b) decision making is driven by data analysis, c) targeted professional development for teachers as determined by analysis of student performance data, d) measurable student achievement goals are established, and e) research-based materials and strategies match student needs. Districts must provide reading/literacy coaches to schools that have the greatest need based on student achievement data and administrator/faculty expertise in reading instruction. The specifics for classroom reading instruction were addressed in Chapter One.

## Teachers

Reading teachers have a direct impact on student reading achievement and motivation (IRA, 2000). Congress recognized the need for highly qualified teachers in Title I schools and included provisions for the identification of such teachers in NCLB (2001) (Yell & Drasgow, 2005).

### *Highly Qualified Teachers*

Section 1119(a)(1) and (2) of NCLB (2001) require that all teachers hired after the enactment of the law be highly qualified, and that all teachers teaching core academic subjects in Title I schools are highly qualified no later than the end of school year 2005-06. Section 9109(23)(A) defines a highly qualified teacher as one who a) holds full state certification or passed the State teacher licensing examination and has a license to teach in the State or b) is a teacher new to the profession who holds at least a bachelor's degree and has passed the States' test to show subject knowledge and teaching skills in basic elementary school curriculum.

Elementary school teachers must hold a Bachelor's Degree, be fully certified, and pass the required state licensing test that demonstrates subject knowledge in reading/language arts, writing, math, and "other areas of the basic elementary curriculum" (Yell & Drasgow, 2005, p. 46). States are required to monitor all current teachers to ensure they meet the highly qualified requirements (Yell & Drasgow, 2005). They must also submit plans to the U. S. Department of Education documenting annual increases of teachers who are highly qualified (100% required by the end of the 2005-06

school year) and demonstrate that teachers are receiving high quality professional development grounded in scientifically-based reading research.

### *Professional Development*

Supporting teacher learning is critical to the success of educational reform (Gabriele & Joram, 2007). Title I schools identified as in need of improvement must use 10% of their Title I funds to provide professional development for their teachers. Sec. 9019(34)(A) of NCLB (2001) defines professional development as activities that a) improve and increase teachers' knowledge of academic subjects, b) are integral parts of school/district improvement plans, c) provide skills so teachers can help students meet challenging academic standards, d) improve classroom management skills, e) lead to a positive and lasting impact on student learning, f) are not one-day or short-term workshops, g) support the hiring and training of highly qualified teachers, and h) advance teacher understanding of effective instructional strategies, i), are aligned with state standards and curricula tied to those standards, j) are developed with participation from teachers, principals, parents, and administrators of schools, k) give teachers of ELL students the knowledge and skills to teach that population of students, l) provide training in technology that improves teaching and learning in core academic subjects, m) are regularly evaluated for effectiveness, n) provide training in instruction of students with special needs, o) provide instruction in the use of data and assessment that inform classroom instruction, and p) provide instruction in ways for teachers, school personnel, and administrators to more effectively work with parents.

In addition, Title I funds may be used to deliver professional development that a) involves forming partnerships with institutions of higher education, b) create programs for paraprofessionals currently working with Title I teachers to complete requirements for teacher licensure, and c) provide follow-up training for teachers who completed professional development as authorized under NCLB (2001).

### *Efficacy*

For NCLB (2001) to have its desired effect, teachers must believe a) in “the efficacy of NCLB as mandated policy” (Hawkins, 2009, p. 65), and b) the development and implementation of plans to promote increased student achievement across all disaggregated groups will lead to attainable goals (Evans, 2009).

Teachers with high levels of self efficacy are more willing to “adopt new pedagogical practices” (Gabriele & Joram, 2007, p. 61). Levels of teacher self-efficacy are directly related to student achievement and motivation, teacher effectiveness, classroom management skills, value of educational innovations, and teacher stress (Evans, 2009; Fives, Hamman, & Olivarez, 2006; Gabriele & Joram, 2007; Hawkins, 2009; Hoy, Hoy, & Kurz, 2008). Bandura, (1997) defines teacher collective sense of efficacy as the ability of a group to believe that the collective power of the group will lead to increase student achievement through the groups willingness to set challenging goals and expend the effort to meet those goals. He identified four sources of self efficacy beliefs: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological cues. The teacher’s interpretation of his/her performance is critical and is more important than the performance itself in the development of self-efficacy. When

teachers believe they can affect student learning they are willing to set higher goals for their students and work harder to achieve those goals (Hoy, Hoy, & Kurz, 2008).

Efficacy is affected by school environment, community expectations, student population, and personal expectations (Evans, 2009). The time differential in adopting new practices and seeing the desired effects may not give teachers the necessary reinforcement to promote efficacy resulting in the discontinuation of new practices, so teacher efficacy may erode when previously successful practices are replaced with reform-mandated practices (Gabriele & Joram, 2007). Additionally, school status has a direct impact on teachers' beliefs in policy mandates as well as their collective sense of efficacy in achieving the goals of that policy (Evans, 2009), and teachers who work in low-performing, high-minority, poor schools tend to have low levels of self efficacy (Evans, 2009). Within certain school organizations, teachers do not feel efficacious in their abilities to close achievement gaps and do not relate well with, and often do not feel responsible for, the problems associated with the education of children of color and/or disadvantaged children.

Regardless of the mandates of federal, state or district policy, a highly qualified, high-performing, efficacious teacher is central to the academic success of his or her students. The intent of NCLB (2001) was to provide the backing of the federal government, both legally and financially, to ensure teachers can attain the goal of adequate yearly progress for all students. The benefits of NCLB (2001) are discussed below.



## Benefits of No Child Left Behind (2001)

NCLB (2001) impacted education as never before with its mandates to improve reading achievement and ensure a high-quality education for all students, especially those living in poverty and attending low-performing schools. The implementation of Reading First brought a new focus to reading instruction and federal dollars to fund that focus.

### *Implementation of Reading First*

After the authorization of the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001, Reading First became the clearinghouse for reading policy and billions of dollars in education funding in the United States. Data released by the U. S. Department of Education highlights the improvements in reading achievement by students due to Reading First's endeavors.

Data released by the USDOE indicate Reading First schools reported a 16% increase in reading fluency proficiency standards among first graders, a 14% gain for second graders, and a 15% gain for third graders between 2004 and 2006 (USDOE, 2007). West Virginia Reading First schools reported 100% of its LEAs made at least five percentage point gains in reading fluency in grades one through three, as did Alaska's Reading First schools in grades two and three, since the program's inception through 2007 (USDOE, 2008). Additionally, first and third graders in Reading First schools meeting or exceeding fluency proficiency on Reading First outcome measures increased 14% and 7% respectively (USDOE, 2007).

In Reading First schools (USDOE, 2008) nearly every grade and subgroup of students made increases in comprehension proficiency. 44 out of 50 (88%) State Educational Agencies (SEAs) reported increases in comprehension proficiency of their first grade students. In second and third grades, 39 of 50 (78%) and 27 of 35 (77%) SEAs reported improvement respectively. For English Language Learners in first, second, and third grade, 28 of 37 (76%), 25 of 37 (68%), and 17 of 25 (68%) SEAs reported increases in comprehension proficiency respectively. For Students with Disabilities, 34 of 44 (72%), 30 of 48 (63%), and 25 of 32 (78%) SEAs reported increases in comprehension proficiency for their respective first, second, and third grade students. Secretary Margaret Spellings applauded Reading First efforts in helping to “crack the code” in reading in order to increase student achievement (USDOE, 2008).

The *Reading First Impact Study: Interim Report* (2008) focused on 17 school districts across 12 states for the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 school years to determine if Reading First had impacts on student reading comprehension and teachers’ use of scientifically based reading research practices. The Study found that teachers in Reading First schools increased instructional time in the five major components of reading. Schools receiving Reading First grants later in the funding process (in the year 2004) showed significant impacts on the time first and second grade teachers spent on instruction in the five components of reading as well as first and second grade reading comprehension scores.

### *Heightened Awareness of the Needs of Low-Achieving Students*

Along with a mandate for improved reading instruction for students NCLB (2001) required that all students, especially minority students, those living in poverty and students with disabilities achieve at the same levels as their historically successful peers. Before NCLB (2001) many schools were considered high performing, yet large percentages of specific populations such as poor and minority students did not meet proficiency goals or make adequate progress toward those goals (Smith, 2005). To ensure equitable instruction to all populations of students, NCLB (2001) requires that 100% of students reach proficiency goals in reading and math by the year 2014.

NCLB (2001) resulted in a growth of \$2.23 billion in federal school spending. The federal government is involved in the daily operations of schools as never before, is committed to the achievement of all students, and requires all states to set standards and report how well all students are achieving in the areas of reading and math (Bloomfield & Cooper, 2003; McCarthy, 2008). For the first time, states are required to create assessments that are compatible to state educational standards and implement a system for recording and reporting student progress, including data disaggregated by ethnicity, socioeconomic status and disabilities. NCLB (2001) also includes the private sector into public education in that national testing companies are providing criterion referenced tests tied to specific state standards and tutoring support to needy children.

While the benefits of NCLB (2001) have been touted by many, others criticize the law for setting unrealistic goals, treating low-income schools inequitably, enabling a disparity in the reporting process and placing blame for poor student achievement on

educators. This debate has forestalled the reauthorization of NCLB (2001) and led to a \$600 billion cut in Reading First funding (Manzo, 2008). From congress to classrooms NCLB (2001) is the topic of much discussion.

### Criticism of Determining AYP

The intent of determining AYP was to establish what constitutes adequate student achievement and whether or not schools are accomplishing this goal (Peterson & West, 2006). Many argue that NCLB (2001) has done little to improve achievement (Granger, 2008; Lewis, 2007b), especially the achievement of high school students (Balfanze, Legters, West, & Webber, 2007; Peterson, 2007), and criticisms of NCLB (2001) and the ways in which AYP is determined are widely documented. The following section discusses what many researchers consider to be flaws not only in determining AYP, but in the concept that AYP can accurately be measured at all.

### *Unrealistic Goals*

Critics of NCLB (2001), in regards to AYP requirements, argue that that schools are destined to fail due to the unrealistic pace schools must set to meet the required 100% proficiency goals for reading and math by 2014 (Hoff, 2008). While small annual increases are feasible (Schwartz, 2001), expecting 100 percent proficiency is unrealistic, even by global standards. Singapore, the highest scoring nation on the NAEP math test, only reported a 73% proficiency rate (Peterson, 2007). The expected gains required for United States schools, especially those identified as in need of improvement, are higher than any achievement record in the United States or seen in other countries (Hoff, 2008).

While the Safe Harbor provision helps protect these schools from the inherent failure of meeting NCLB (2001) standards, that protection is short term due to the 100% proficiency requirement by 2014.

### *Inequity in Determining AYP*

School population impacts AYP. Historically, schools with high-performing student populations (white, non-poverty students) make AYP (Peterson, 2007; Schwartz, 2001). Yet schools with initially low performing students, even when those students make gains exceeding schools that achieved AYP, are still deemed failing (Balfanze, Legters, West, & Webber, 2007). Krieg & Storer (2002) analyzed the test scores of all third, sixth, and ninth grade students attending Washington state schools from the 2001-2002 school year to determine if outcomes on standardized tests were indicative of the school's student characteristics or administrative policy decisions. They found that differences in schools achieving or failing to achieve AYP were associated with student characteristics rather than policy choices.

NCLB (2001) focuses only on impacts on student achievement within classrooms and disregards students' experiences outside of the classroom (Shannon, 2007). Berliner (2006) argues that outside-of-school experiences, especially for children living in poverty, have a direct effect on classroom experiences for a variety of reasons: a) poverty in the United States is greater and of longer duration than other rich nations, b) poverty is associated with below-level academic achievement, especially in urban areas, c) academic performance is more greatly impacted by social than by genetic influences, d) impoverished youth suffer from more medical afflictions than their middle-class peers

which has a direct impact on school achievement, and e) small reductions in family poverty lead to positive increases in school behavior and higher academic achievement.

Berliner explains that the poorest children in the United States come to school with little or no school-like experiences for their first five years of life. Even after starting school, these children only spend one-fifth of their waking lives in school while the other four-fifths are spent in their neighborhoods and with families. Poor families are ill equipped to help their children meet the demands of classrooms that require them to assimilate into the school community, behave appropriately in the school setting, get along with their peers, *and* achieve academically. Berliner concludes that "...all educational efforts that focus on classrooms and schools, as does NCLB (2001), could be reversed by family, could be negated by neighborhoods, and might well be subverted or minimized by what happens to school children outside of school" (p. 951).

#### *Disparity in Reporting AYP*

The federal role in education is determined by states resulting in 50 testing systems, sets of standards, accountability systems, and determinations of AYP (Peterson, 2007; Shannon, 2007). As discussed earlier in this chapter, states use a variety of decision designs for determining AYP, so a student deemed proficient in one state may not be found proficient in another (Peterson, 2007). Additionally, states and their schools are held to NCLB's (2001) accountability model even though they started at different achievement levels (Shannon, 2007).

While proficiency in reading and math is essential for America's students, many argue that the improvements of individual children, not subgroups, tell the story of effectiveness in schools (Hall, 2007; Peterson, 2007). Florida is one of the few states that can track individual student achievement but only if its students are continuously enrolled in Florida schools (Peterson & West, 2006). Choi, Seltzer, Hermann, & Yamashiro (2007) found that measuring individual student gains resulted in different determination of proficiency achievement than the AYP subgroup model. In some cases, schools deemed meeting AYP targets showed large gains for above-average students but below-average students making little progress. Conversely, some schools making AYP showed below-average students making adequate gains but above-average students showing very small gains. The differences in reporting individual student scores versus subgroup scores when added to the different accountability models used by different states allows for innumerable ways to determine whether or not schools are actually making academic progress.

Florida, considered a model of education policy reform, has not shown a significant rise in NAEP scores since the authorization of NCLB (2001) (Shannon, 2007). Peterson & West (2006) found when comparing pairs of schools in Florida, one making AYP and the other not, 30 percent of the time students in the school making AYP did not make learning gains as large as the students in the "failing" schools. Florida's growth model calculations have also come under scrutiny. In 2007, Education Week reported that "about 14 percent of Florida schools making AYP did so because of the growth model" (Weiss, 2008). It was later determined that Florida's projection model was

inaccurate. Florida projected a linear progression of 200 DSS points on the state assessment indicated growth on track toward proficiency levels. However, Florida's scale scores indicated that students identified as "on target" typically made smaller learning gains during their school progression. Subsequently, many students were identified as on target to reach proficiency when in actuality they were not (Weiss, 2008).

### *Educator Responsibility*

*No Child Left Behind* has positioned teachers as part of the problem with failure to achieve AYP (Shannon, 2007). Section 1116(8)(B)(iii) of NCLB (2001) identifies one alternate governance arrangement for schools in restructuring as "replacing all or most of the school staff (which may include the principal) who are relevant to the failure to make adequate yearly progress." Proponents of NCLB (2001) argue that if teacher quality was higher, students would be learning more and reaching greater proficiency levels in reading and math (Rothstein, 2008). If teachers challenge this assumption they appear to be willing to "leave their children behind" (Shannon, 2007, p. 6).

According to Berliner (2005) there is no evidence that teachers were not highly qualified before NCLB (2001). Evidence of student learning is one measure of quality, but according to NCLB (2001) teachers can be deemed highly qualified before they ever set foot in a classroom. Observational evaluation of teacher quality is time and money intensive, and current methods of testing teacher quality do little to identify how teachers actually perform in the classroom.



NCLB (2001) has also resulted in negative consequences for “teachers’ relationships with their students, their classroom practice, and their professional well being” (Granger, 2008, p. 208). In order to spend more time in reading and math, teachers reduced the amount of instructional time allotted for science and social studies (Rothstein, 2008). “Educational triage” (Boother-Jennings, 2006, p. 757) occurs as teachers spend a disproportionate amount of time on “bubble kids”; students who are close to proficiency goals (Boother-Jennings, 2006; Rothstein, 2008, p. 15; Springer, 2008). In this way, Boother-Jennings (2006) suggests that the incentive to make AYP turns teachers’ attention away from the students who need them the most.

Because of the focus on students at risk for reading failure, high-achieving students are not given equal educational time. Finn & Patrilli (2008) reported three-fifths of teachers surveyed reported low achievers as their top priority, where only 25% placed high achieving students in that category. Additionally, 85% of teachers surveyed reported struggling students get one-on-one attention everyday, where only 5% reported giving advanced students the same opportunity. Lewis (2007a) reported high-achieving, low income students are neglected by NCLB (2001) because they are “pitted against” (p. 73) their low-income peers for resources provided through NCLB (2001). NCLB’s (2001) pass/fail accountability system allows high-achieving students to do little or nothing to meet proficiency levels (Peterson, 2007). These outcomes are at odds with the demand following the launch of Sputnik for our “best and brightest” students to achieve to their highest potential.

The Thomas B. Fordham Institute released *High Achieving Students in the Era of NCLB* (2008) to compare the achievement of low and high achieving students as reported by NAEP. The study determined a) while low achieving students made gains, high achieving students' scores remained stagnant, b) this pattern was associated with the introduction of educational accountability systems (before and after NCLB (2001)), c) teachers are more likely to identify the achievement of struggling students as a priority over their high-achieving peers, d) low achieving students receive more attention from teachers, e) teachers believe all students deserve equal attention, and f) low-income, black, and Hispanic high achievers (8<sup>th</sup> grade) were more likely to be taught by experienced teachers than low achievers in the same subgroups.

The report did not determine a causal link between NCLB (2001) and these findings, only that their findings were associated with the onset of NCLB (2001) or those of state accountability systems.

#### *Impact on Literacy Instruction*

Since the establishment of Reading First, billions of federal dollars have been awarded in the form of Reading First grants to assist schools in implementing instruction in the essential components of reading. Reading First completed its sixth year of implementation in the 2007-2008 school year. An executive summary published by the United States Department of Education (2006) found that teachers in Reading First schools increased instructional time in the five major components of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. However, the study found

no statistically significant difference in student reading achievement in Reading First schools when compared to non-Reading First schools. Critics of Reading First provide a variety of reasons for this outcome including:

1. The National Reading Panel deemed phonemic awareness instruction beneficial for reading disabled second through sixth graders. The Panel determined explicit phonics instruction did not have a significant effect on low achieving second through sixth graders, yet phonics instruction is required by Reading First as an effective strategy for older, struggling readers (Allington, 2004).
2. The highest levels of comprehension are found in students who read quickly and accurately, process phrases rather than individual words, and read with prosody (Klauda and Guthrie 2008; Rasinski, 2006). Reading First's focus on speed and accuracy required to show gains in fluency assessments has lead teachers to focus on those two components of fluency at the expense of prosody (Rasinski, 2006).
3. For struggling readers to be successful, there must be teaching of reading, not only in the reading block but across all content areas in a connected fashion throughout the day (Pressley, Gaskins, Solic, & Collins, 2006). Likewise, vocabulary instruction must be taught across the curriculum and in multiple contexts, especially for struggling readers and students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Beck & McKeown, 2007). The Center of Education Policy (2007) found in order to increase instructional time in reading, 44% of school districts

studied cut instructional time in other content areas such as science and social studies.

4. The Reading First 90 minute reading block only allows for matching instructional materials to instructional reading levels during small group instruction (“90 Minute Reading Block”, 2008), yet students’ comprehension performance is maximized when reading instructional level texts (Allington, 2004; Torgesen, 2000). Continuous placement in frustration level texts leads to student frustration and failure (Triplet, 2004), and these students are not granted the same opportunities as their more able peers to read and comprehend texts independently.

Under the current education policy view, student literacy achievement can be improved with the implementation of challenging standards and accountability systems. This led to the teaching of discrete skills in decoding and comprehension, product versus process in writing instruction, and “superficial changes” (p. 220) in selection of materials and grouping of students (Buly & Valencia, 2002). Additionally, high-stakes assessments are used to make “wholesale” decisions about instructional approaches to reading (Allington, 2004; Buly & Valencia, 2002, p. 219) and the solution to all students’ reading achievement failures are to be found in similar instructional interventions. Classroom practice for beginning readers has been redesigned with a focus on phonics, yet assessment of students focuses on comprehension. Teachers are now faced with policy demands that conflict with pedagogical practice.

## Chapter Summary

Chapter Two provided a review of the literature that informed this study. An overview of NCLB (2001) requirements in regard to accountability, determinations of how Adequate Yearly Progress is achieved, and a discussion of how states' design decisions can affect achievement of Adequate Yearly Progress were included. Florida's accountability system, as well as Florida's new provision for determining the level of restructuring necessary based on specific school need, Differentiated Accountability, was discussed. Reading First policy and its implications for reading instruction, as well as Just Read Florida!'s requirements for Florida schools, were detailed. NCLB's (2001) requirements for highly qualified teachers were also addressed.

The chapter closed with a review of the literature regarding the benefits associated with NCLB (2001), criticism of how Adequate Yearly Progress is determined and its impact on teachers and students.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

The 2007-2008 school year marked the first year Florida's Title I schools that did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for five consecutive years entered into restructuring. Subsequently, there is little research regarding the experiences of teachers during the restructuring process. Chapter Three provides an explanation of how schools achieve AYP, the research questions to be answered, the theoretical framework for the research, and the study's design. Through open-ended surveys, semi-structured interviews, and field notes of teacher observations I obtained insight into teachers' perceptions and understandings of the restructuring process.

### Introduction

Since the authorization of the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001, schools report yearly test data to determine whether or not AYP was achieved. For elementary schools, these data are derived from third, fourth, and fifth grade test scores in reading and math. If schools do not achieve the annual predetermined percentages for proficiencies in reading and math, they do not achieve AYP. Every year the proficiency percentage levels that constitute AYP increase in order to meet the goal of 100% proficiency in reading and math by the year 2014.

The 2007-2008 school year marked the first year for implementation of restructuring in Florida under NCLB (2001) requirements so research in this area is sparse. This study provides an initial understanding of one Florida school's teachers'

perceptions of the restructuring process. Within the context of their teaching lives, teachers' insights regarding their experiences, both positive and negative, are shared.

My initial research questions were:

1. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding their school's failure to make Adequate Yearly Progress?
2. What are the understandings of teachers regarding the restructuring process?
3. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the restructuring process?
4. In what ways have their perceptions of the restructuring process changed their reading instruction?

### Research Design

The purpose of this study is to gain insight into teachers' perceptions of AYP and its restructuring consequences. In order to more thoughtfully study their responses, a qualitative approach to this research was productive. The qualitative researcher studies social settings and the people within those social settings (Berg, 2007). By using qualitative data sources, I studied the words and actions of teachers during their daily routines and after our conversations.

Due to my personal experiences relative to the participants of the study, I adopted a "Being With" (Patton, 2002) stance as a qualitative researcher. This stance recognizes and capitalizes upon the similar experience and knowledge that a researcher brings to a study. This experience and knowledge, while related to participants' experiences, was

also recognized as different from it and provided the opportunity for me to listen and observe, with some distance, while sharing the research experience with participants.

### *Case Studies of Organizations*

A case study approach attempts to gather information about a person, social setting, or organization (cases) in order to systematically investigate and describe such participants (Berg, 2007). The organization and analysis of the cases result in a product, or case study (Patton, 2002). Case studies are recognized as valuable in informing practice because they provide in-depth and detailed information that, "...illuminate the complexities and relationship of one instance of a phenomenon" (Rossman, 1993, p. 3).

Case studies of organizations require the systematic collection of data about a particular organization and provide the researcher with enough information to gain insight into the members of that organization (Berg, 2007). In this model, what "is happening and deemed important" within the boundaries of the organization being studied defines the study rather than the content of the study being defined by a researcher's hypothesis (Stake, 1978, p.7). Design of this type of case study requires research questions, a theoretical framework, identification of units of analysis, linking of data to the theory, and criteria for interpreting the findings (Berg, 2007). This design matched my research interest since the organization (an elementary school) provided units of study (teachers) who could answer my research questions within my theoretical framework.



## Theoretical Framework

### *Grounded Theory*

The purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions of teachers in one Title I school who are currently in restructuring due to failing to achieve Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for five years. Since the 2008-2009 school year was only the second year of restructuring for Florida's Title I schools, there was little prevailing theory regarding the perceptions of teachers undergoing the restructuring process. In order to allow a theory to evolve, I applied grounded theory to this study.

Grounded theory focuses on inquiry that allows for theory to develop from the data that are collected (Patton, 2002). In contrast to hypothesis testing, grounded theory is hypothesis making (Glaser, 2004). Additionally, grounded theory produces theory that is testable and "likely to be valid" because data are questioned throughout the process of its generation (Berg, 2007, p. 286). Theory emerges as the researcher codes responses and analyzes data. The goal of the researcher is to remain open to the emergence of patterns, not to organize data into preconceived categories (Glaser, 2004).

Applying grounded theory to this study enabled me to perceive the lived experiences of, and thereby access data from, teachers in the school-restructuring process. Grounded theory also provided a vehicle for applying rigor to the qualitative research process and a method for analyzing raw data from interviews and field notes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Researchers have applied grounded theory to research in educator perceptions of education policy and career cultures within the teaching profession (Jones, 2001; Lamkin, 2006; Rippon, 2005). Rippon (2005) studied educators to determine key features of different career cultures in education and how the cultures can be used to enhance the attractiveness of teaching as a career. Likewise, Lamkin (2006) used a grounded theory approach to study challenges faced by rural superintendents in regards to district policy decisions. In both studies, analysis of interview data provided the identification of themes and patterns from which theory of educator perceptions regarding policy influences emerged. For the purpose of my study, grounded theory provided the methodology to produce an emergent theory of teachers' perceptions of AYP consequences by analyzing their conversations and interactions with others.

### *Ethnography as a Research Context*

In qualitative studies, the issue of trustworthiness in evaluation (Rallis, Rossman, & Gajda (2007) must be addressed. Trustworthiness is attributed both to the competence in conducting research and the ethical relationships between the researcher, participants, stakeholders, and peers. An ethnographic method provides the researcher the opportunity to build trust with participants. In this way, ethnography becomes the vehicle for "...moral reasoning that is dialogic, conducted interactively between the evaluator and participants with the purpose of addressing ambiguities and creating shared understandings" (p. 408). The search for verisimilitude (Patton, 2002) guides the researcher to find and report truth from the research field.

Ethnography provides insight into the culture of a particular social group through systematic observations and conversational interviews (Berg, 2007 ;Florio-Ruane & McVee, 2000; Patton, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The ethnographer attempts to capture that culture through immersion within it, often as a participant observer, and to understand and describe it (Berg, 2007; Patton, 2002). Conversely, the ethnographer must understand when entering into the social context to be studied s/he becomes part of that social context, should appreciate it, but not attempt to correct it (Berg, 2007).

Ethnography is used as a research tool in studying schools and educational processes (Guthrie & Hall, 1984; Preissle & Grant, 1998). Classrooms are settings where participants develop a common culture influenced by curriculum, achievement, language, and observable practices (Florio-Ruane & McVee, 2000). A classroom, as a setting for literacy learning, is an “ecology that is cultural, social, historical, and psychological” (p. 156). Additionally, cultural elements in classroom contexts originating out of school are brought into each classroom, “blurring the boundaries of school and society” (Preissle & Grant, 1998, p. 5).

Ethnography of education policy allows for the study of participants’ decision-making processes during interpretation and implementation of policy (Hamann & Lane, 2004; Troman, Jeffrey, & Raggl, 2007). Hamann and Lane (2004) adopted an ethnographical stance to study the development of education policy in Maine and Puerto Rico related to federal requirements in NCLB (2001). They focused on the roles of state education agencies as intermediaries of federal policy, the “practice of power” (p. 429) associated with these agencies, the interaction of these agencies with local education

agencies (LEA) during the process of policy implementation, how the increased role of federal policy challenged the state's role as the authority in educational policy and practice, how policy was reshaped at the state level, the impact of state and federal politics on policy formation, and the increased discretion given to states in implementing federal education policy.

Troman, Jeffrey, & Raggl (2007) conducted ethnographic research in six English primary schools to study the effects on teacher performance of a new policy initiative calling for more creativity to be coupled with the data-driven performance policy mandates currently in place. Through analysis of interviews, life-histories, and school documentation, the researchers studied how changing policy initiatives impacted classroom performance and educator attitudes toward both policies. By using ethnography as a research tool, the researchers of each study discovered how the cultures of different school systems differentially influenced the implementation of policy. As the ethnographer of my study, I intended to discover the impact of restructuring policy on one Title I schools' teachers' understandings and perceptions of the process.

Ethnographic methods provide a researcher with the opportunity to witness study participants in real time. By being in midst of what s/he is studying, the researcher has an emic view (Berg, 2007) as an insider in the research setting. However, the presence of the researcher can "taint" (p. 177) how participants conduct themselves when an outsider is observing them. For this study, the first one to two weeks of time spent with the staff was as a volunteer/visitor before I placed myself in their classrooms as a researcher/observer to smooth the transition from outsider to insider.

### *Critical Discourse Analysis as a Research Tool*

Critical discourse analysis concerns the location and use of power in the language of social practice in a given context (Rogers et. al., 2005). Human language is not just one language, but a variety of social languages whose rules come from specific social settings, and within the contexts of these social settings members interact through tacitly shared discourses (Gee, 2001). Gee (1999) defines discourse in two ways. Discourse (“big D”) refers to both language and cultural behavior within specific social settings, where discourse (“little d”) constitutes the broader uses with and between specialized Discourses. Both types of discourse are found within situated identities: the identities of individuals within specific social settings, and within the use of social languages. Conversations (“big C”) are the emergent themes that result from different social languages and Discourses with a bounded social group over a period of time.

Meanings of words vary across different contexts within and across different discourses (Gee, 199). In the discourse of educational accountability, language takes on situated meanings as it does in other cultural models. The terms “proficiency,” “standards,” “achievement,” and “restructuring” as well as the phrase “adequate yearly progress” have very specific meanings for educators as those terms relate to NCLB (2001), but their meanings may be different for non-educators. My mom asked me to tell her about my dissertation topic, and I explained I was studying teacher perceptions regarding Adequate Yearly Progress and school restructuring. She had no idea what I was saying. She certainly knows the word “restructuring” and what adequate progress of something might be in a year, but the terms as educators use them are not part of her

cultural model. Even as I tried to explain it to her, she did not have the background provided by my cultural model to understand it. I think she was sorry she asked.

As illustrated above, words and terms have situated meanings. For this study, these terms must be elaborated first to reflect what teachers understand them to mean. Then teachers situated use and meanings for terms can be compared with documents that introduce the terms. Only then was I able to communicate each situated meaning and contrast them so that outside readers gain an appreciation of their in-context uses.

Researchers use critical discourse analysis to understand how people make meaning in particular contexts (Rogers, et. al., 2005). In this case, education, learning in classrooms is shaped by Discourse, curricular practices, and the influences of stakeholders outside of the classroom (Gee & Green, 1998). By combining critical discourse analysis and ethnographic methodology, educational researchers study how educational Discourse impacts instructional practice and student learning (Gee & Green, 1998).

My study is an organizational case study of a Title I school in its first year of restructuring due to failure to achieve AYP. According to Fairclough (2005), discourse analysis is an important part of organizational studies. He defines organizations as a network of social practices, and analysis of organizational discourse should include all types of texts or social relationships. Within social structures there are three social properties as described below:

A distinction is drawn between the ‘real’, the ‘actual’, and the ‘empirical’: the ‘real’ is the domain of structures with their associated ‘causal powers’; the

‘actual’ is the domain of events and processes; and the ‘empirical’ is the part of the real and actual that is experienced by social actors (p. 922).

The ways in which causal powers affect events is a product of the interaction between different structures and causal powers held by both the properties of the structure as well as social agents within the structure. He further explains:

People with their capacities for agency are seen as socially produced, contingent and subject to change, yet real, possessing real causal powers which, in their tension with the causal powers of social structures and practices are a focus for analysis (p. 923).

Organizational structures, therefore, a) are hegemonic in that they are based in power relations between groups of people, b) may experience crisis due to internal or external pressures, c) develop their own strategies in response to crises, d) may be influenced by the discourses of other organizations, e) may undergo change due to the effects of response to crises, and f) may produce new discourses as an outcome. As a part of a network of other organizations, organizational structures are subject to external pressures that can lead to internal change.

Language has causal power (Fairclough, 2005). Within the context of this study, the language of NCLB (2001) exerted power on states, districts, schools, and teachers to change their practices in order to advance student achievement in the form of AYP. The language of states defined what constitutes AYP. The language of districts determined how their schools meet state goals. The language of school administrators created

expectations for classroom teachers. The language of teachers established how student achievement goals should be met in their individual classrooms. Within the larger organizational structure of United States schools is one Title I school that is the organization of interest for this study. The teachers of that school are the organizational members on whom accountability is measured by the causal powers within the larger organizational structure. Analysis of their Discourse, both as it matches or does not match the larger Discourses of AYP and restructuring, is critical to understanding how teachers perceive these expectations and operate upon their perceptions.

#### The Researcher

I am an elementary school teacher with 17 years of experience currently on educational leave from my district to complete this research study. During my career I taught at a Title I school that did not make AYP before moving to my last school assignment. I perceived the teachers at my previous Title I school to be talented and dedicated, and I am proud to have been part of the staff. I understand what it means to teach at a school that many perceive as a “failure” due to the stigma of repeatedly not making AYP. I also understand how disappointing it is to work hard, take hours of professional development, meet with parents, and see growth in students only to be told at the end of the year that the numbers just were not enough. My experience also reinforces what many teachers already know; numbers do not always tell the story. Because of these experiences I was concerned about the bias I necessarily bring to this study. Could I place myself into a familiar environment, monitor my teacher-self, establish my researcher-self, and reliably analyze other teachers’ words and actions?



Reading Glaser's (2004) work on grounded theory reinforced my concern about bias yet provided me with direction on how to mediate this dilemma. If I was to truly find out what teachers think and feel about their personal experiences, I could not allow my personal experiences to funnel their words into contrived categories. There would be no emergent theory, only justification of my own. Even though my experiences were related to the teachers in this study, they are not the same or may not even be shared. Yet, it is my personal experience in these situations that allowed me to understand what my participating teachers were sharing with me. In order to monitor my thoughts and reactions during data collection, and keep the issue of bias in mind, I maintained a researcher journal throughout the study. In this journal I deconstructed the experiences detailed in my early field notes and responded to my impressions during teacher interviews. The journal also provided a means to record my overall impressions and experiences of each school day: What did conversations at lunch entail? How did teachers interact with colleagues outside of their classrooms? What did I learn from non-instructional staff during my days at school? At the onset of the study, the journal was a valuable tool since I chose not to collect data immediately upon entrance into the school. As the study progressed, I journaled less due to the increased use of field notes where I recorded my reactions to each observation session.

### Reliability and Validity

There are no straight forward criteria for testing reliability in qualitative research. It is incumbent upon the researcher to do his or her best to "fairly represent the data" and communicate findings in the context of the purpose of the study (Patton, 2002). The

researcher must develop codes and categories that reflect patterns in the data (Patton, 2002). These categories must a) be consistent, b) be inclusive of all data, and c) be reproducible by another observer (Patton, 2002). These guidelines help establish reliability in qualitative inquiry.

By entering into a research setting, in this case a school in restructuring, I had to ask to what extent my presence influenced the data I obtained. Schneider (1999) labels the researcher's trust in his/her own valid representations of data as paranoid validity. Paranoid validity constitutes "the series of events and understandings" (p. 26) that forces the researcher to consider his/her effects on data while practically understanding that research is filtered through the researcher's lenses. The acknowledgement of these lenses allows the researcher to recognize how answers to research questions are impacted by the views and biases brought into the research context as well as the influences the researcher has upon the participants. It is in this context of acknowledgement and careful self-reflection I entered into this study. Additionally, the use of prolonged observations, member checks, peer debriefing, and my researcher journal contributed to the valid and reliable analysis of the data (Patton, 2002).

### Limitations and Generalizability

Since grounded theory is focused on generation of theory rather than testing theory, it is less focused on limitations and generalizability of a study (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). There is scientific value in gaining an understanding of a specific group (Berg, 2007). This is the second year Florida schools have entered restructuring and there are no

studies of this particular teacher population. This study intends to provide one school's story of the process as told by the teachers who work there.

### Participants

Twelve teachers from a Title I elementary school in a large, rural school district in Florida were the research partners for this study. Two participants were initially selected based upon recommendations by the reading coach and subsequent participants entered the study by responding to invitations delivered through email. The elementary school was selected based on the following criteria: a) the school is a Title I school, b) the school did not made AYP for the last five years, and c) failure to make AYP due to reading achievement was used as a minimal selection criterion for the particular school chosen. Selection of site and participants is further discussed in Chapter Four.

### Data Sources

Multiple data sources are necessary to provide researchers with more than one “line of sight” (Berg, 2007) during data collection. I employed field notes, semi-structured interview, and surveys to collect data for this study.

### *Field Notes*

Through direct observations the researcher can understand the context wherein the participants interact, obtain a first-hand experience by being part of the research setting, and observe objectively phenomena that the participants might not notice during their daily routines (Patton, 2002). These first-hand experiences are recorded as “complete, accurate, and detailed field notes” (Berg, 2007). I utilized field notes to record

observations of teachers within their physical classroom environments and during their routines throughout the school day.

Two-column, double entry field notes were used for collected observational data (Patton, 2002). In the right column I recorded detailed accounts of observations including quotations, behaviors, social interactions and activities. In the left column I recorded my personal reactions to the observation in the form of feelings, impressions, and questions that arose during the observation.

Rich description provides the setting for qualitative research (Patton, 2002), but it is impossible to record everything that is happening during an observation.

Ethnographers must focus on specific portions of their environments by “partitioning off the setting” (Berg, 2007, p. 192). For each classroom observation I first focused on describing the physical classroom environment. In addition to a narrative description, a rendering of the floor plan for each classroom was included. After detailing the classroom environment I focused on the teachers’ routines, instructional practices, and classroom conversations.

While it is desirable for the qualitative researcher to spend large quantities of time in observation, the nature of this study was prohibitive in this respect. In order to gain entry into an elementary classroom in the throes of restructuring, consideration had to be given to the culture of these schools concerning Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) administration. First, I determined my presence would not be welcomed during the preparation time leading up to the administration of FCAT. In fact, my supposition was validated in my own experience. I have found this time to be stressful on both

teachers and students, and the presence of an outsider who might cause disruption in instruction would not be appreciated, if allowed. Second, I wanted to collect data before FCAT results were reported. I did not want either the sense of relief at achieving AYP or any feelings of frustration or failure at not achieving AYP to interfere with the conversations I had with teachers. I desired for teachers not to know their school's fate as I collected data. For my research purposes I began collecting data the first week of April, 2009. This was the week after spring break (which immediately followed the conclusion of FCAT testing) and data were collected through the release of FCAT scores (the second week of June, 2009).

### *Semi-structured Interviews*

An interview can be seen as a “conversation with a purpose” (Berg, 2007, p. 89). Qualitative interviewing allows the researcher to reconstruct events for which s/he was not present (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). It is the researcher's responsibility to communicate to the interviewee exactly what s/he wants to know (Berg, 2007), so skill must be used in developing questions as well as techniques in eliciting responses from the interviewee (Patton, 2002).

Patton (2002) distinguishes six kinds of interview questions. Experience and behavior questions provide information regarding what the researcher would have seen if with the interviewee during specific time periods and settings. Opinion and value questions allow the interviewee to make judgments about experiences. Feeling and emotion questions differ from opinion/value questions in that the researcher is looking for emotional reactions to situations rather than value judgments. Knowledge questions give

the interviewer factual information about the interviewee's skill set. Sensory questions provide the interviewer a view from the perspective of the interviewee. Background questions provide specific characteristics of the person being interviewed. For this study I developed one question from each category for the interviews.

My initial interview questions/probes were:

1. Tell me about your background and teaching experience. (background)
2. Explain your school's status regarding Adequate Yearly Progress.  
(knowledge)
3. What is your opinion of the restructuring process? (opinion)
4. How has the restructuring process changed your reading instruction?  
(experience/behavior)
5. How do you view your colleagues' perceptions of this process? (sensory)
6. What emotional responses have you encountered during this process?  
(feeling/emotion)
7. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

My committee determined that a question regarding student reading achievement would be insightful, so an additional question was added to the interview protocol:

8. How has restructuring impacted reading achievement at your school?

Following my first two interviews I found the question regarding emotional responses to be awkward since teachers readily discussed their feelings regarding the restructuring process. I used this question as a probe in later interviews only if teachers did not discuss their feelings and emotions when answering the other questions.

I interviewed twelve teachers with each interview lasting between 30 to 90 minutes. A follow-up focus-group interview investigated emerging patterns and themes from initial interviews. The focus-group consisted of six of the twelve participants. The interviews were digitally recorded and stored on my computer and in back-up thumb drives. The interviews were transcribed within one week after each interview since timely transcription provides the researcher the opportunity to remember physical gestures by the interviewee and direction in preparing for the next interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Organization of the interview data is explained in the Data Analysis section of this chapter.

### *Surveys*

Researchers can obtain qualitative data from documents such as memoranda, diaries, letters, open-ended surveys, observations, visual data such as photography, poems, emails, and questionnaires (Patton, 2002). The survey for this study consisted of six questions on a Likert scale and an open-ended response section following each question. I formulated the survey questions based on my interview questions. By using similar statements and questions in both the survey and interviews I can compare responses from the staff as a whole to individual teachers.

I chose to use an open-ended survey for two reasons. First, the answers to the surveys provided me with data regarding the staff as a whole so I used the raw data to gain a sense of the perceptions of the staff. Second, the inclusion of an open-ended question provided me with an initial set of data to guide any revision of my interview questions.

My initial survey questions were as follows:

1. Restructuring has taught me about the curricular and instructional choices at my school.

Please make any additional comments in this space:

2. I have received professional development in reading instruction since entering into the restructuring process.

Please make any additional comments in this space:

3. The restructuring process has been a positive experience.

Please make any additional comments in this space:

4. My reading instruction has changed since entering into the restructuring process.

Please make any additional comments in this space:

5. I have collaborated with my colleagues regarding instruction during the restructuring process.



Please make any additional comments in this space:

As a pilot study, I administered the survey to a focus group of five teachers currently teaching in schools in the first year of restructuring. After I administered the survey, the teachers told me a question reflecting teachers' input into the decision-making process regarding reading instruction would be insightful. My committee also agreed a question regarding student achievement in reading would be informative. Therefore, I changed the first survey question as follows:

1. I have input into decisions regarding reading curriculum and instruction at my school.

I also added an additional question:

6. Student achievement in reading has increased due to curricular and instructional changes during the restructuring process.

### Procedure

In order to study participants' understandings and perceptions of the restructuring process at their school, I analyzed surveys, field notes and interviews to identify emergent themes. The method of analysis of each data type is discussed below.

### Data Analysis

Table 9 represents how data was analyzed and the relevance of the data to each research question:

Table 9

*Relevance of Data to Research Questions*

Data Type	Data Analysis	Question #1 understanding s of AYP status	Question #2 perceptions of restructuring	Question #3 understandings restructuring	Question #4 changes in reading instruction
Surveys	Descriptive and Comparative Statistics, Constant Comparative Analysis		X	X	X
Field Notes	Content Analysis	X		X	X
Interviews	Constant Comparative Analysis	X	X	X	X

All recordings, transcriptions, field notes, and surveys were stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home. Participants', school, and district names were substituted with pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. Participant responses to the open-ended surveys were analyzed for percentages of categorical responses. Interviews were transcribed and coded to determine emergent themes. Field notes were analyzed to determine emergent themes, provide descriptions of the school environment and culture, and used as a reflective source for my researcher journal.

*Interview Data Analysis*

Qualitative inquiry attempts to identify patterns in participants' responses (Patton, 2002). Qualitative data must be reduced and organized in order to find emergent patterns and themes, presented in an organized way, and allow for verification of conclusions (Berg, 2007). Constant comparative analysis is the careful examination of data that allows for the identification of patterns and themes (Berg, 2007; Patton, 2002). Meaningful units, such as words, phrases, and non-verbal communication were identified

from the interview recordings and transcripts and categorized into themes. I applied critical discourse analysis to elaborate what teachers understood the terms associated with AYP to mean. Then teachers' situated use and meanings for these terms was compared with documents that introduced the terms. I then communicated each situated meaning and contrasted them.

First, ease of accessibility was established by means of a filing system (Berg, 2007). I assigned all interview transcripts a pseudonym, then dated and placed in an electronic folder. Once I completed the interviews, I analyzed the transcripts line by line for meaningful units in interviewee responses. I identified lines of text as the first word at the left margin and the last word at the right margin. Line by line coding allowed for the "verification and saturation" (Glaser, 2004) of categories and a numerical system for identifying the location of meaningful units. Then I created an electronic spreadsheet for each research question. As I identified major themes and subthemes from surveys, field notes or interviews, I indexed them by establishing a code that identified the specific transcript from which the meaningful unit was found, the line number, and the text was entered into the analysis document by copying and pasting. Passages containing more than one subtheme were cross referenced to other subthemes. After major themes were identified, meaningful units were read again to ensure a systematic analysis of the data in identifying units of analysis as related to research questions. Peer evaluation (Berg, 2007) allowed for validity of the data. After themes were identified, a doctoral student reviewed the data to confirm the coding reflected the identified themes and established

inter-rater reliability. I reviewed her coding and determined whether, in cases of disagreement, I would leave the coding the same or change it to match her suggestion.

### *Survey Data Analysis*

Units of analysis for surveys included percentages of categorical responses and answers to open-ended responses. I displayed the percentage of each categorical response graphically by each survey question and the subsequent response on the Likert scale. As with analyzing interview data, constant comparative analysis was applied to open-ended responses in order to uncover themes and patterns.

Responses to survey data in percentages were organized for analysis in Table 10:

Table 10

#### *Responses to Staff Survey*

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I have input into decisions regarding reading curriculum and instruction in my school.				
I have received professional development in reading instruction since entering into the restructuring process.				
The restructuring process has been a positive experience.				
My reading instruction has changed since entering into the restructuring process.				
I have collaborated with my colleagues regarding instruction during the restructuring process.				
Student achievement in reading has increased due to curricular and instructional changes during the restructuring process.				

Survey data provided a first look at staff attitudes related to the restructuring process. Analysis of the surveys also provided the next step for data collection by providing an emerging theory (Glaser, 2004) and guided me towards any necessary changes in interview questions and probes. This allowed me to control the relevance of the data collected toward the direction of emergent theory.

### *Field Notes Data Analysis*

Content analysis is an "... empirically grounded method...that transcends traditional notions of symbols, contents, and intents...that enables researchers to plan, execute, communicate, reproduce, and critically evaluate their analyses" (Krippendorff, 2004, pp. xvii-xviii). Therefore, content analysis allows for the reduction of qualitative data as a sense-making strategy (Patton, 2002). Following the tenets of grounded theory, this analysis allows for the emergence of patterns and themes found in documents rather than the categorizing of information into pre-existing categories. Within my field notes I documented my observations of teachers during their school day. The field notes also provided a source for written descriptions of the school setting. Field notes allowed me to record my impressions during the observation time that I later reflected on in my researcher journal.

### Chapter Summary

The design of this study is intended to answer four questions related to teachers' perceptions and understandings of the restructuring process as defined by NCLB (2001) as well as the impact of restructuring on reading instruction. Those questions are:

1. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding their school's failure to make Adequate Yearly Progress?
2. What are the understandings of teachers regarding the restructuring process?
3. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the restructuring process?
4. In what ways have their perceptions of the restructuring process changed their reading instruction?

To answer these questions, the Discourse of teachers was analyzed to understand how they perceived the larger Discourse of school reform as legislated in NCLB (2001). The synthesis of data collected from surveys, observations, and interviews was graphically represented to present major themes in teachers' perceptions of what failure to make AYP means for their school. Additionally, data were represented to reveal major themes regarding teachers' perceptions and understandings of their restructuring experiences and how restructuring has impacted reading instruction in their classrooms.

This chapter provided an overview of the qualitative methods employed in my study. Grounded theory, ethnography, and critical discourse analysis provide the theoretical framework for this organizational case study. Site and participant selection were discussed. Open-ended surveys, field notes, and interviews data were collected and analyzed using content analysis, descriptive statistics, and constant comparative analysis. Generalizability, reliability, validity, and researcher bias were also discussed.

## CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS

How well do teachers understand changing education policy as it relates to their daily lives in their classrooms? Specifically, what are the real and perceived impacts of school restructuring on teachers as a consequence of not making Adequate Yearly Progress? For teachers at Star Elementary School, every year since the signing of NCLB (2001) has been a step along the path toward that consequence due to Star's inability to achieve AYP. To better understand this journey, I collected and analyzed data from surveys, field notes, documents and interviews in order to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding their school's failure to make Adequate Yearly Progress?
2. What are the understandings of teachers regarding the restructuring process?
3. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the restructuring process?
4. In what ways have their perceptions of the restructuring process changed their reading instruction?

### Introduction to Star Elementary School

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into teachers' perceptions of AYP and the consequences of restructuring. To do so, it was necessary to work with teachers currently in a restructuring school due to its failure to make AYP for at least five years. I requested permission to conduct research in Bell County: my county of residence and

employment. I chose Bell County because of my familiarity with district policy, my contacts with individuals at the district office and the proximity to my residence. However, gaining entry to conduct this research was not a simple matter. In addition to district regulations regarding conducting research in schools, the focus of my research provided its own issues resulting in some hesitancy from principals and close scrutiny by district supervisors.

I requested a proposal to conduct research from the Bell County School District Testing and Accountability Office in November, 2008. I reviewed information regarding school AYP status on the district website and wrote letters to four principals explaining my research interest and requesting interviews. None of the principals responded to my letters. I determined a personal approach was in order so I decided to go to each of the four schools and request an interview with the principals. The principal at Success Elementary School met with me in December and listened to my proposal. He was hesitant but was also a doctoral student working on his dissertation proposal in educational leadership. He finally agreed for his school to partner with me in the research project.

I completed the proposal to conduct research and submitted it for approval. Two weeks following my submission I received a telephone call from the Testing and Accountability Office of the district informing me that while the district was supportive of my research, I would have to partner with a different school due to Success Elementary School's heavy professional development commitments following FCAT administration. I asked who to contact to guide me in choosing a different partner school



and was given the names of the four district supervisors who were responsible for oversight of SINI schools. I emailed each of the supervisors and explained my research and the need to contact a school that would be available for my study. Two out of four supervisors responded to my email and each offered suggestions of schools in other supervisor's areas, or in schools that were not in restructuring due to reading. After several weeks of emailing, one of the supervisors gave me permission to contact Star Elementary School.

After my first unsuccessful experience in contacting principals by letter I decided to go directly to Star Elementary School and request an interview. Again, the principal was hesitant. After much discussion and assurances of district permission to conduct my study she agreed to allow her school to partner with me in my research after the conclusion of FCAT testing in March. I requested an opportunity to meet with teachers during their March faculty meeting in order to explain my research and administer a survey. She would not allow this, stating that the agenda was already full and she did not like to keep teachers late on faculty meeting days. She agreed to put me on the agenda for April. I then requested to enter the school as a volunteer in order to get to know the staff before I began any data collection. She agreed to this and told me to contact the guidance counselor after the testing period.

I contacted the district Testing and Accountability office during the last week of February, 2009, and notified them of the change of school site. One week later I received permission from the district to conduct research at Star Elementary School. Following a successful proposal defense at the University, I requested and received IRB approval to

conduct my study. FCAT testing began two weeks later. Following completion of the testing window, I contacted Star's guidance councilor, Mrs. Benny, and requested to volunteer at Star Elementary School. She responded with a warm welcome and made an appointment for the following Monday to meet with her.

I went to Star Elementary early Monday morning to meet with Mrs. Benny. After a short delay while she was working with her morning reading group, she took me on a tour of Star. She introduced me to several teachers, showed me the campus and took me back to her office for a short conversation. She asked me to explain my research and responded positively to the topic. She then gave me a list of several teachers who might be interested in having a volunteer in their classrooms. She encouraged me to go to their classrooms, observe and try to identify which students in those classrooms might need extra attention from a volunteer. I visited two third grade, two fourth grade, and one fifth grade classrooms. The teachers, who I had not briefed on who I was or why I was there, greeted me warmly and welcomed me to observe and take notes. After each observation I spoke briefly with the teacher and explained that I would be volunteering and doing research at Star. Each teacher encouraged me to come back to her classroom and welcomed me to Star.

Encouraged by the warm reception, I went back to Mrs. Benny's office. We talked for a few minutes about my experiences in classrooms then she directed me to the media center where they would be waiting on me to start my volunteer hours. I worked the rest of the afternoon in the media center, shelving books and straightening shelves. While in the media center I spoke with Mrs. Chandler, the reading coach, who offered to meet with

me to give me more information regarding reading curriculum and instruction at the school as well as the names of teachers who were looking for volunteers in their classrooms. I made an appointment with her for the Monday following Spring Break. As I left the school, I stopped by the office to get a teacher master schedule for later planning.

My first day at Star was over. Due to my teaching schedule, work on the state's Language Arts Standards Committee, and the district's Spring Break holiday I would not be back for two weeks. During the break I used the master schedule to create a tentative schedule for volunteering and observing in classrooms. I wanted to volunteer in classrooms so the teachers could get to know me before I asked to document observations in field notes during their reading instruction and conduct interviews. Since I would not be able to meet with staff to introduce myself as a researcher until four weeks after I began my research I felt it was important to insert myself slowly, let teachers get used to my presence in their classrooms, then ask them to allow me to observe and interview them.

I returned to Star on the Monday following Spring Break and set a schedule with Mrs. Benny to volunteer on Monday, Tuesday and Friday each week. These days were chosen because I supervised university interns on Wednesday and taught a university class on Thursday. Following the end of the spring semester (end of April) I would be at Star every day.

During one of my classroom visits on my first day at Star I observed a fourth grade classroom. As I was leaving, the teacher invited me to come to her classroom anytime, so I decided to go to her room and see if I could be of help. I did so, and she enthusiastically welcomed me into her classroom. She asked me to circulate around the room during her math review that lasted from the beginning of the school day at 7:45 until they went to their specials at 9:00. I continued this routine three days per week for the next four weeks at Star. I again went to the media center to help there.

I met with Mrs. Chandler, the reading coach, who proved to be a great source of information regarding curriculum and instruction at Star as well as helpful with linking me to teachers as a volunteer. We discussed Star's AYP status, and she gave me background information regarding changes at Star in response to its first year in restructuring. She suggested several teachers who might be interested in having a volunteer and offered to email them to let them know I would be contacting them. Some of these teachers were senior members of the staff and often had volunteers and interns in their classrooms while others were first or second year teachers who appreciated an extra set of hands with their students. Later in the day, while back in the media center, Mrs. Chandler told me she sent the emails. As luck would have it, one of the teachers on the list was also in the library and Mrs. Chandler introduced me to her. Mrs. Martin, a kindergarten teacher, graciously invited me to come to her classroom the next day to begin working with her.

Thus began the process for collecting data at Star. I emailed the teachers from Mrs. Chandler's list. All but one teacher responded positively and invited me to come to their

rooms. As I worked with these teachers I made new connections with other teachers and asked to come to their classrooms. After administration of the instructional staff survey (the survey is explained in Chapter Three) I began emailing different grade levels, reintroducing myself as a researcher and asking to visit and observe in their classrooms. The need to offer myself as a volunteer ebbed, but I found that I enjoyed working with teachers in this capacity. I worked with small groups of students in reading and math, worked one on one with the same students every day, was invited to teach a reading lesson, took over a math lesson when an unexpected parent conference arose, administered DIBELS to two kindergarten classes, and graded and filed papers. In this way I became a true participant observer at Star and was made to feel a part of the staff. This structure also provided many opportunities to talk informally with teachers and, following reflection upon them in my journal, gain a better understanding of how they perceived themselves, their students and their school during this first year in restructuring.

### Characteristics of Star Elementary School

A school is a community with its own culture, history and identity yet is part of the larger organization of education. To better view how Star's teachers understand and perceive school restructuring it is necessary to understand the school's unique characteristics.

Star Elementary School is a Title I neighborhood school located in a rural community in Central Florida. Star was built in 1962 and is 47 years old. The school houses grades Kindergarten through fifth, one ESE pre-Kindergarten unit, one general

education pre-Kindergarten unit and one ESE resource class. At the time of my study, 545 students attended Star Elementary school. Table 11 shows the grade-level breakdown of the school:

Table 11

*Star Elementary School Population by Grade-level*

Grade	Number of Students
Pre-Kindergarten	27
Kindergarten	82
First	83
Second	100
Third	101
Fourth	84
Fifth	68

(Bell County Schools, Star Elementary, General Information, 2009)

The mean annual family income for Star Elementary School is \$27,000 with a mean family home value of \$55,000. Currently, 91% of Star's students qualify for free or reduced lunch. The average number of students missing 21 days of school or more is 12.8% compared to Florida's rate of 6.8% and Bell County's rate of 7.2%. Current teacher to pupil ratio is 16.7:1. Table 12 show's Star's student demographics:

Table 12

*Star Elementary School Student Demographics (Star School Improvement Plan, 2009)*

Category	Percentage
Hispanic	48
Black	21
Caucasian	31
Free/Reduced Lunch	91
ESE	12
ELL	27

All teachers at Star Elementary School met the highly qualified teacher requirement as delineated in NCLB (2001). There were 30 regular classroom teachers

with an additional 21 teachers serving in other classroom or resource positions. Table 13 displays teacher assignment demographics for the 2008-2009 school year:

Table 13

*Star Elementary School Teacher Assignments, 2008-2009 (Star School Improvement Plan, 2009)*

Grade Level	Number of Teachers	Average Years Teaching
Kindergarten	5	0.6
First	5	5.8
Second	6	1.67
Third	6	10.83
Fourth	4	13.25
Fifth	4	19

Teacher turn-over was evident at Star. Out of 30 regular classroom teachers, 13 were new to Bell County with one or two years of teaching experience. According to Star's reading coach, there were few teachers who have taught at Star for five years or more. Table 14 shows longevity figures per grade level:

Table 14

*Teacher Longevity at Star Elementary School*

Grade Level	Number of Teachers	Number of Teachers at Star for Five or More Years
K	5	0
1	5	1
2	6	0
3	6	2
4	4	3
5	4	0

Star hired ten new teachers for the 2007-2008 school year and another thirteen new teachers for the 2008-2009 school year. Teacher attrition at Star is similar to teacher retention at low-performing schools during education reform (Kinsey, 2006; Margolis & Nagel, 2006; Ware & Kitsantas, 2007). Star's teacher population also mirrors a national

trend of high poverty schools' inability to retain experienced teachers (Birman, Boyle, LaFloch, Elledge, Holtzman, Song, Thomsen, Walters, & Yoong, 2008).

Mrs. Smith, Star's principal, is a thirteen year veteran educator currently completing her second year as principal at Star where she also served as the assistant principal. During her first year as principal, Star maintained a school grade of B and made learning gains in its ELL and students with disabilities populations in reading as well ELL students making learning gains in math. Mrs. Jones, the assistant principal, is completing her first year as an administrator at Star and brings two years of previous experience from another assistant principal position in Bell County. She has thirteen years of teaching experience as well as three years of service in the district's ESOL department (Star School Improvement Plan, 2008).

Star Elementary School never made Adequate Yearly Progress as measured under the criteria of NCLB (2001) and was designated as a School in Need of Improvement (SINI) 5 school (five years without AYP). As discussed in Chapter Two, schools achieve AYP by meeting state proficiency percentage requirements or making improvement that meets Safe Harbor guidelines (NCLB, 2001). According to 2008 FCAT results, Star failed to achieve AYP in both reading and math. Data analysis of 2008 FCAT results revealed the following needs assessment for student proficiency levels in reading and math:



Table 15

*Needs Assessment of From FCAT 2008 Test Data*

Subgroup	Reading or Math	Percent Proficient
Black	Reading	44
Economically Disadvantaged	Reading	56
Students with Disabilities	Reading	38
<hr/> <b>Made Learning Gains</b> <hr/>		
Lowest 25%	Reading	77
Lowest 25%	Math	65

In order to make AYP for the 2008-2009 school year, Star Elementary must achieve the following proficiency levels in math:

Table 16

*Necessary Math Proficiency Levels to Make AYP for the 2008-2009 School Year*

Grade Level(s)	Category	Target % Ach. 3 <
3-5	Black	53 (Safe Harbor)
3-5	Economically Dis.	63 (Safe Harbor)
3-5	Students w/Dis.	46 (Safe Harbor)
3	All	63
4	All	64
5	All	68
<hr/> <b>Learning Gains %</b> <hr/>		
3-5	Lowest Quartile	80 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Lowest quartile learning gains represent learning gains made by the lowest 25<sup>th</sup> percentile of students.

Star Elementary must also achieve the following proficiency levels in reading:

Table 17

*Necessary Reading Proficiency Levels to Achieve AYP for the 2008-2009 School Year*

Grade level(s)	Category	Target % Ach. 3>
3-5	All	61
3-5	Caucasian	63
3-5	Black	47
3-5	Economically Dis.	57
3	All	67
4	All	56
5	All	61
		Learning Gains%
3-5	Lowest Quartile	63 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Lowest quartile learning gains represent learning gains made by the lowest 25<sup>th</sup> percentile of students.

### Participants

Participants for the study were selected purposefully (Patton, 2002) in order to obtain “information-rich cases” (p. 230) for in-depth study. Since I was not allowed to meet with the staff at the onset of the study (survey administration did not take place until the April 30<sup>th</sup> faculty meeting) I had no formal recruiting opportunity when I first entered the school. Initial selection was facilitated by the reading coach and introductions to teachers Mrs. Benny made on my first day at Star. This group was composed of one kindergarten, one second, one fourth, and one fifth grade classroom teachers. Mrs. Chandler also recommended I contact two other kindergarten teachers who currently taught in the dual language program. Their students received instruction in English for one half of the day and instruction in Spanish during the other half of the day.

Following the survey administration I contacted all grade levels, except kindergarten because I already had three teacher participants from that group, by email to invite teachers to participate in the study. I received responses to my emails from two

first grade, one third grade, two fourth grade and one fifth grade teacher bringing the total number of participants to twelve classroom teachers. Table 18 provides an overview of participants:

Table 18

*Study Participants*

Grade Level	Years of Experience (including current year)	Years at Star
K	3	2
K	2	2
K	5	2
1	24	19
1	3	2
2	3	2
3	11	6
4	32	23
4	30	3
4	7	7
5	22	3
5	19	3

Participants ranged from two to thirty-two years in teaching experience with an average of 13.4 years. This compares to an average of 8.5 years of experience for all classroom teachers at Star.

### Classroom Visits

I observed teachers in eleven classrooms. The two first grade teachers worked together in a co-teaching model during the reading block, so I observed them together. All teachers were observed during their reading blocks, and I also observed the math blocks of four of the teachers. Classroom observation time ranged from two hours to 13.5 hours per classroom with the number of classroom observations ranging from two to eight. In all, I spent 148.25 hours over a period of 31 days at Star.

Following data collection it was time to find out what teachers knew about NCLB (2001) and its restructuring consequence, what their perceptions were regarding why Star Elementary never achieved AYP and how restructuring impacted reading instruction at their school. To do this, I asked four research questions to guide my inquiry. Each question is discussed in the following section.

### The Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into teachers' perceptions of AYP and its restructuring consequence. Four research questions guided my inquiry into Star's teachers' perceptions of AYP and its restructuring consequence at their school. In this section, each research questions is posed followed by an introduction to the topic of the question, a discussion of the data sources I used, how I analyzed the data, and what the data revealed.

*Research Question 1: What are the Perceptions of Teachers regarding their School's Failure to Achieve Adequate Yearly Progress?*

The public's perception of teachers' failure to properly address reading achievement has not changed since the 1970s due to the need for higher literacy skills in the job market, inequitable distribution of reading achievement across socio-economic levels and variability in learning rates across student subgroups (Roller, 2000). The teachers at Star Elementary School were sensitive to public perception. One teacher noted, "Star doesn't have such a wonderful reputation you know. It really doesn't" (Interview, April, 2009)

People are more likely to take credit for success than take the blame for failure (Weiner, 2000) and teachers are no exception. Teachers have a deep emotional attachment to their work due to their emotional involvement with other people, the influence of their work on their self-esteem and their heavy personal investment in the “values they believe their work represents” (Berg, 2007, p. 586).

Perception of failure is “influenced by many sources of evidence including past history or success or failure, social norms, or the performance of others, rules about the relations between causes” (Weiner, 2000, pp. 2-3). From an intrapersonal perspective, if a person failed at a task in the past, the repeated failure is more likely to be attributed to self than others. Conversely, if an individual perceives multiple causalities in failure, the individual is less likely to attribute failure to self than to others.

An interpersonal perspective concerning failure concerns the reactions of others as a result of that failure. If the cause of failure is perceived as controllable, those involved in the sequence of events generally look for the fixable cause and take appropriate actions. If the causal agent is perceived as uncontrollable, personal accountability is often removed from the failure (Weiner, 2000). In this sense, when teachers perceive they have no control of the educational achievement of their students, they are likely to shift accountability from themselves to outside, uncontrollable factors.

To determine what teachers’ perceived to be contributions toward AYP failure at Star Elementary School, I analyzed the transcripts from the teacher interviews I conducted at Star. First, I read each interview to find references to AYP failure at Star. Then I copied each teacher quote into an electronic spreadsheet organized by teacher

name and line(s) of text from the interview transcript. I also included a column to be used as a theme identifier during later analysis. After all transcripts were copied and organized, I analyzed the teachers' quotes to find patterns and themes in their responses. As patterns emerged I created categories at the bottom of the spreadsheet that related to the teachers' responses. I then coded the teacher's response to match the emergent category.

I worked back and forth between reading responses, determining a category and coding each response. Eventually larger themes emerged from the data allowing me to collapse smaller categories into larger ones. As I did this, I color-coded each response to match the smaller categories so I could easily see where each response fit into larger themes. For example, under the larger theme of student population were five categories: 1) Socio Economic Status, 2) behavior, 3) subgroups (including race and exceptionalities, 4) language and 5) motivation. Each of the five smaller categories had its own color code, so any response related to student population was color-coded to match its category for quick identification during later analysis. Coding procedures were duplicated by a colleague, a graduate assistant with whom I worked closely in the Childhood Education and Literacy Studies department, to establish inter-rater reliability which was initially 89%. After the two raters compared results, and resolved differences in interpretation, the inter-rater reliability was adjusted to 94%.

Teachers often blame children and families for academic failure (McGill-Franzen & Allington, 1993) and data analysis revealed this to be true at Star Elementary School. The population served by Star was the most cited reason for the school's failure to make

AYP, but teachers also discussed their own responsibilities in failure to achieve this goal. Additionally, teachers discussed district policy contributions to AYP failure. Each of these teacher perceptions is discussed below.

### *Students*

Teachers identified students as holding some of the responsibility for not achieving AYP. They acknowledged their students' limited educational opportunities and limited oral language skills as antecedents to their difficulties in academic achievement. Teachers also indicated student misbehavior and lack of motivation contributed to AYP failure.

*Limited educational opportunities.* "These are not dumb kids; it's a problem with exposure" (Interview, April, 2009)

As discussed earlier in Chapter Four, Star Elementary serves a student population that is 91% free/reduced lunch with a high absence and mobility rate. Teachers expressed sympathy mixed with frustration at the lack of educational opportunities with which their students come to school.

Many of Star's students have few literacy experiences before entering school which is indicative of lack of reading readiness in poor schools (Al Otaiba, et. al, 2008; Berliner, 2006; Kaminski & Good, 1996; Schilling, Carlisle, Scott & Zeng, 2007). One first grade teacher noted, "It's hard for us to push those kids who are very... at the bottom who start with zero words to get them to 15 (on the DIBELS assessment)" (Interview, May, 2009). Another first grade teacher, while discussing end of the year DIBELS and

SAT 10 test scores, pointed out that approximately one-half of Star's first grade was considered below level in reading and would require remediation in second grade. "So one-third to one-half of the second grade is going to get intensive remediation next year? It's not going to happen" (Interview, May, 2009). Her reference to intensive remediation "not going to happen" refers to the requirement that struggling students receive an additional 30 minutes of reading instruction in small, targeted groups with state-adopted supplemental reading materials. Delivering targeted supplemental instruction to one-third to one-half of each second grade classroom would be logistically difficult due to both lack of approved materials and large teacher-to-student groups.

I had a personal experience with a student related to his background experiences. During my volunteer time in a third grade classroom I worked with Benjamin, a quiet and polite student who struggled in all academic areas. One afternoon Benjamin's teacher asked me to work with him on a writing assignment concerning a trip to the post office. I sat with him at the back reading table and read through his plan and draft. His writing was difficult to read with run-on sentences, misspelled words and disconnected ideas. I asked Benjamin to talk to me about his ideas so we could revise the piece and make it more coherent. There was one small problem; Benjamin had never been to the post office. He knew stamps could be purchased at the post office but all of his experiences with "mail" were limited to home delivery.

*Limited oral language skills.* English Language Learners comprise 27% of Star's student population and teachers discussed the challenges second language learning brings to their school. NCLB (2001) mandates that second language learners participate in



testing following two years in public schools, and teachers discussed the difficulty in preparing these students for high-stakes testing before they had command of the English language. One kindergarten teacher talked about her ELL students and said, “They come to school, the first time they have been somewhere they have ever heard English, they had never, you know, whatever they heard is Sponge Bob, but that’s not English.” She went on to say, “They [teachers] don’t have behavior problems from these students, because the poor kids are sitting there afraid, you know, what is it I need to be doing, they are not acquiring anything, they are not able to express themselves and understand what is going on” (Interview, April, 2009).

Teachers discussed the limited vocabulary Star’s students bring with them to school. Over one-fourth of Star’s students are labeled ELL, but teachers insisted that second language learning was not limited to the Hispanic population. One teacher noted, “I’m not talking about Spanish-speaking people; I’m talking about kids. I have kids who don’t have the language because of the population served.” She went on to relate limited language with the teaching of reading. “But to talk to a child about main idea, setting character, using those words when they have no idea what is going on...I’m not only talking about Spanish speakers but English speakers” (Interview, April, 2009). Her frustration stemmed from her students’ lack of literacy experiences coupled with limited oral vocabulary abilities, making the teaching of literary elements to these students more difficult than to their more experienced and vocabulary-developed peers.

Star’s issues with students’ vocabulary and language deficits are not unique to this school. Students living in poverty and acquiring second languages often lag behind their

middle class, English proficient peers in reading achievement (Esche, Chang-Ross, Guha, Humphrey, Shields, Tiffany-Morales, Weschler & Woodcock, 2005). While Star's teachers were aware of their students' language deficits, these teachers were frustrated with how this intrinsic part of their student population impacts their students' achievement and their school's AYP status.

*Student misbehavior.* "Like they [parents] say this is a school of bullies. I'm not going to disagree but the teachers get blamed for it" (Interview, May, 2009).

Teachers expressed concerns about "outside influences" on their students that they maintained contributed to behavioral problems at Star. Gang activity and drugs are reportedly common in the neighborhood. While I was visiting in a fifth grade classroom the teacher referred to a health lesson from the previous week and pointed out one of her students who had shared his in-depth knowledge of marijuana and inhalants with the class. One teacher discussed her colleague's student who, while academically able, refused to apply himself so he would not be labeled a "smart kid" by his peers thereby "loosing face" in the neighborhood.

Teachers pointed to classroom behavior problems as an interruption of teaching and learning. A fourth grade teacher commented, "If a classroom is full of negative children then it's not being successful because you spend more time having to deal with behavior problems... because if you have good behavior in your classroom you're kids will learn more" (Interview, May, 2009). However, teachers were positive regarding new classroom management techniques they had implemented this year due to their new

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) model (PBS is discussed later in this chapter. The same fourth grade teacher said, “I think it’s been much better behavior-wise this year. And I think the majority of the kids learn more, I know in 4<sup>th</sup> grade we’ve gone further this year [taught more content with better results] since I’ve been here” (Interview, May, 2009). A fifth grade teacher elaborated, “I could say the major difference that I really could not do [different activities last year] because I had some at-risk students and some serious behavior problems....this group is a much better group” (Interview, May, 2009).

Star’s location in a low-income neighborhood was perceived as negatively impacting its AYP status due to local gang and drug involvement. Teachers also perceived classroom misbehavior, spawned by their students’ home environments, negatively impacting student achievement due to its distraction during instruction

*Lack of student motivation.* “Part of it is because of lack of motivation on the students. I don’t think it’s the fault of any of the teaching staff...I think they are doing the best they can with what they have” (Interview, April, 2009)

Every teacher discussed lack of motivation to learn as an impediment to student achievement in their classrooms, but each teacher’s responsibility to provide motivation for students was not unnoticed. Again, the implementation of the PBS model was referred to as an awareness-raiser for teachers in this respect. “I’m hoping next year we’ll be able to motivate the kids enough to move them, even if it’s just a little bit we will move them” (Interview, May, 2009), and “I think the classrooms that use motivation as a strategy to get the kids to move, sometimes you just have to bribe and really motivate to get them going. I think those are the classrooms that have had a more successful year”

(Interview, May, 2009) were comments I heard consistently from each teacher I interviewed. One teacher discussed her monetary investment in purchasing incentives for her students. “So I’m asking them to jump three grades at one time. So if you’re going to ask for that much, then you better have something, some kind of motivation behind it. So is it costing me? Definitely” (Interview, April, 2009).

All teachers discussed the direct impact of student motivation on academic success. The implementation of the PBS program was perceived by teachers to have a positive impact on the development of intrinsic motivation for academic and behavioral success. Some teachers still relied on the use of extrinsic motivators to reward students for desired outcomes.

### *Parents*

Parents were also identified as contributors to Star’s failure to achieve AYP. Again, while teachers were sympathetic regarding the socioeconomic status of their students’ families they admitted to frustration with lack of parental involvement. Additionally, teachers identified Star’s high mobility rate as an important issue due to lack of consistency in school attendance.

*Low socioeconomic households.* “Our school has no socio-economic wealth, so this causes us no end of difficulty with meeting an AYP target” (Interview, April, 2009).

Teachers discussed the problems associated with working in a high-poverty school, especially in the area of parent involvement. While Star offered monthly parent workshops attendance was considered low. During the April staff meeting teachers and

administration analyzed the results of their Title I parent survey. Teachers found that the lack of child care inhibited parents from attending the workshops as well as coming to parent conferences. Lack of computer and internet resources kept Star's parents from accessing district gradebook links enabling parents to check the academic progress of their students.

Steps to alleviate the child care issue were already in place at parent nights, and administration encouraged teachers to invite parents to bring children to conferences. Teachers discussed solutions to the lack of Internet availability and suggested opening the computer labs after school to enhance parent usage. They also agreed to coordinate due dates for projects with monthly parent nights so parents and students would have access to the computer labs each month. Teachers would also be available during this time since each grade level was represented by at least one teacher at each parent night event. Finally, administration and teachers developed a plan to contact local business to determine the likelihood of obtaining old computers for parent use.

Teachers attributed Star's low SES to issues with parents helping students at home. A fourth grade teacher said, "What's the point of me saying turn in your homework when no one brings in homework, only 1 kid?" (Interview, April, 2009). A kindergarten teacher followed up with, "They (curriculum planners) are depending too much on parents to provide that extra teaching, but the reality today in the U. S., the reality in this area is that we are not getting that support" (Interview, April, 2009).

Another issue related to SES was the lack of influence of “middle class” values. “We got no doctor kids at this school, no lawyer kids. I mean, if you mix it like that....we’ll have a core group with a better language, with better control” (Focus Group Interview, June, 2009). Another teacher reflected that with “higher class” peers, “The kids strive to be better. Like everybody is going to look at her and say, hey, these people come dressed up” (Focus Group Interview, June, 2009).

Teachers perceived lack of parent involvement to have a negative impact on the academic achievement of their students. While sympathetic to the needs of their schools’ families, teachers indicated that they have little control over what happens academically before and after the school day and were frustrated at the lack of academic support their students receive at home. Teachers discussed the impact of high percentages of low-income students on achievement and behavior and claimed the lack of higher income students at their school created a void in models of good comportment and study skills.

*High mobility rate.* “And then our kids are like a revolving door, in and out.”

Teachers claimed Star’s students’ educational opportunities were impacted by the school’s high mobility rate. “It’s just not fair,” said one teacher, “for some of these kids to be tested because they don’t have the background, or they bounce from school to school” (Interview, April, 2009). One kindergarten teacher discussed her group of four struggling students. Of the four, only one had been in her classroom all year, and another entered Star as her sixth school of the 2008-2009 year. Another teacher explained, “I know a lot of it could be because of seasonal work the parents have to go and the kids

have to go with you, but then we still take the hit when they come back” (Interview, June, 2009).

Star has one of the highest mobility rates in Bell County (Bell County Schools District Website, 2009). Schools that fail to make AYP tend to have high mobility rates (Smith, 2005) and high mobility rates impede program implementation deemed necessary to positively impact student achievement (Center for Education Policy, 2007). Star’s teachers are aware of the impact of mobility on student achievement and perceive its impact on their school’s AYP status as “unfair.”

### *Teachers*

While teachers discussed outside influences as causal agents in AYP failure, they did not remove themselves from the equation. Teachers were candid in discussing issues with motivation and morale as well as the impact of staff attrition on student achievement.

*Lack of teacher motivation.* “I think it’s not as much as the kids as it is the teachers with the motivation and feeling appreciated.”

Star’s teachers consistently defended their hard work and dedication to their students; however, they also discussed how the scrutiny imposed upon them due to not achieving AYP negatively impacted their attitudes, physical well-being, and performance. Several teachers talked about pressure from family and friends to leave Star and move to higher achieving schools. While these teachers resisted the temptation to move on, they did admit to feeling frustrated and unappreciated. Additionally,

teachers did not receive raises for either years of teaching experience or cost-of-living adjustments for the 2008-2009 school year, and Star's teachers had to face less than expected incomes and concern about the availability of employment the following year. One teacher elaborated, "I mean we all want to do good, but if you get a notice that you're not getting your raises, or if we've got to do cuts, then it's not like, OK, am I gonna put forth my personal best?" (Interview, June, 2009).

Putting forth their personal best was sometimes at odds with their physical and mental health. "It has not been good for me this year," said one teacher. "I've had physical ailments this year and a lot of it has been stress" (Interview, May, 2009). Dealing with stress was not a new phenomenon this year. One teacher said,

I've thought the last 3 years, OK, next year it's got to be...it won't be so stressful next year, it just can't be and then the next year there's something else. So that means, when you get stressed out enough it's going to show in what you do (Interview, May, 2009).

Teachers discussed stress related to implementation of new programs and as a result of not achieving AYP. They noted the stress placed on their administrators by the district and of higher stress levels on teachers in FCAT tested grades. They also discussed the impact of stress on their own physical well-being.

*Teacher attrition.* "We had 19 new teachers come in which is...makes a teacher feel like it is almost impossible with so many teachers leaving last year and so many new ones coming" (Interview, April, 2009).



Like many low-achieving, low-income schools (Kinsey, 2006; Margolis & Nagel, 2006; Ware & Kitsantas, 2007), Star Elementary School struggles to keep experienced teachers on its staff. As discussed earlier in Chapter Four, ten new teachers came to Star in 2007 and thirteen came in 2008. One fifth grade teacher, new to Star in 2007, discussed the struggle in learning the new curriculum and instructional requirements at Star:

This is still new to me because I come from an avid school district in [another state], we had some issues related to [Star], but I don't know if the requirements are different here than in [another state], but I don't recall having to go through all this, I don't recall that. But this is a little bit different and I am still learning, in the ongoing learning process for myself also (Interview, May, 2009).

Another teacher discussed the disadvantages of having new teachers on staff, especially in grades three through five due to FCAT testing:

I believe that a principal shouldn't put a new teacher in 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, or 5<sup>th</sup> grade because those grades determine AYP, however that's just my point of view. It's... it hasn't had an effect on me... we do have one new teacher on our team, she does come over a lot and she does ask questions a lot, but I don't mind. She's new to Florida curriculum, but she's not new to teaching. And she's been in [another state] so it's not like she's new to teaching, she's just new to Florida curriculum (Interview, April, 2009).

Lack of specific experience in teaching reading was also discussed as problematic. One veteran teacher said,

I took the ones (students) that struggle the most because I think somebody who has more experience...the least experienced teacher can't hurt a child who's able to read (laughs) whereas if you put the least experienced teacher with the ones who are struggling they may never learn to read (Interview, May, 2009).

Like many low-income schools, Star struggles with teacher attrition. Teachers with longevity at Star discussed the impact of attrition on their grade levels and with the quality of instruction. Teachers new to Star discussed the impact of learning new curriculum and the difficulty of teaching in a school in restructuring due to district and state requirements to improve student achievement.

#### *Policy*

*Lack of understanding of school culture.* “We assume that this white middle class values and approach to life apply everywhere and they don't.”

Star's teachers consistently discussed their dedication to teaching their students and the belief that their students can and will learn. However, the teachers perceived that their students come to school from backgrounds that are foreign to policy makers and therefore not understood. One teacher commented, “They don't look at the children or the population or anything else that's going on” (Interview, April, 2009). Another teacher said,

But in my opinion having computers (at school) is worthless. OK, having computers is for our kids... when you have a child who has been spoken at home...like the daddy reads the newspaper, he's used to stopping at the library, he's used to... I mean I have some kids walking down at Publix with their grocery lists and they are telling their daddy we need this, well hello, that is beautiful. But how many of our kids do that? The population here? No (Interview, April, 2009).

When discussing the home life of her students, the same kindergarten teacher expressed frustration at policy makers' perceptions of how teachers should teach parents how to work with their children at home. She said,

And there are living 10-12 people. I have been in many houses where there is one table and one chair attached to the kitchen, like you have no room, and they have to move if you are going to sit down there, it is like one at a time. And the rest they are eating outside, they are eating anywhere. You walk in and there is no living room. There is beds, beds and a TV or whatever. So you don't, you know, the thing about having a little place where the kid can sit down [to do homework]... (Interview, April, 2009).

Her statements stemmed from her previous experience as a legal advocate for migrant farm workers. This teacher, previously a lawyer, entered the teaching profession two years ago and discussed her passion for helping English-Language learners achieve academically. She was vocal about how difficult school enculturation is for these students.

Teachers were also concerned about the additional instructional time mandated to struggling students in an effort to raise test scores. A first grade teacher understood district concerns about future student drop-out due to difficulties with reading but perceived reading policy adding to that problem. She said,

I think that all of these little children that they take all day long and they tutor them because they need to get one more point, they have them in regular reading they have them in computer lab, they don't get PE, they don't get art, don't tell me that they're going to stay in school. They hate it, they hate school already in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, and that's it. So I think that's not right, I think that they need to look at each child...you can tell the difference between that one [a slower learner] and the one who is very bright, hasn't had the opportunity and doesn't have the vocabulary and they need to stay [in class], and they need to have their skills made up and they'll be fine. And I think the teacher should be the one to say that (Interview, May, 2009).

Another teacher, concerned with the increase in instructional time for struggling students negatively impacting instructional time given to other students, said, "...we focus mostly on the struggling students and mostly sometimes the other kids fall behind, especially that middle group, so that's what I feel." All of these concerns reflected teachers' understandings of meeting the academic needs of their students and their worries about the impact of policy on their students' affective needs. While difficulty with reading is one of the most common reasons for school drop-out (Al Otaiba et al, 2007), poverty also contributes to drop-out rates (Balfanze, 2007) so Star's students are

already at risk. Additionally, critics argue that NCLB (2001) led to less service for able students because they will pass academic assessments anyway (Sternberg, 2008). Star's teachers did not perceive their particular population to be understood or best served by some of the districts reading policy choices.

*Interference with instruction.* "Sometimes I think AYP gets in the way of what we really can do because we spend a lot of time trying to put a lot of effort into doing so many different things that you feel like you really haven't given everything that we could give."

Due to its failure to make AYP, Bell County School District schools were required to make dramatic shifts in their curricular and instructional design. In the 2008-2009 school year Star's teachers implemented a new writing program, a new vocabulary program, a full inclusion classroom in each grade level, a 30 minute pull-out time for their iii students, 30 minute cross grade level instructional reading level groups and the Positive Behavior Support model. Teachers spoke positively about the purpose of the changes but found the demands of implementing so many changes in one year daunting. One teacher expressed frustration with all of the changes:

It seems like every year there's always one new program that comes into the school that you have to learn, and you throw away something that was working for you in order to start something new, and most of the time when you start something new it is a better thing, it really is, but it...change is hard (Interview, April, 2009).

Her frustration was mirrored in a comment from her colleague:

How can you get the children to learn the one thing and then you turn around and change that over again every couple of months? You teach them all over again and maybe they will learn, grasp the new strategy and maybe they could have grasped it the old way (Interview, May, 2009).

Another teacher summed it up when she said, “I just think they give us so much to do because of the restructuring that it takes away from the actual teaching” (Interview, April, 2009).

While the instructional and curricular changes at Star were instituted in varying degrees in all schools in Bell County, Florida’s Differentiated Accountability Model (2008) directs districts to target schools that did not make AYP based on their specific needs and for the district to monitor fidelity of program implementation. Star’s teachers perceived each change as one more task in their already full instructional day to accomplish. They also perceived each change taking away from their instructional focus since planning time was taken away in order to allow for professional development of new programs.

*Complicated referral process for exceptional education services.* “They’ll fall behind. And they cannot blame the teacher for that. But just to get that kid help, it [referral process] takes so long, so complicated...”

The time and work required to refer students for Exceptional Student Education evaluation was a “hot-button” issue at Star. Bell County also implemented the Response

to Intervention (RTI) model (Bell County Schools, 2008b) for student academic and behavioral intervention during the 2004-2005 school year, and this was Star's first year working within the program (RTI is discussed later in Chapter Four). Yet another procedural change for Star's teachers, the RTI model was described as work-intensive and time-costly for teachers who thought their students needed additional academic services. A fourth grade teacher expressed frustration at her efforts, started last year, being slowed down by the new process:

It took me 2 years to get a Hispanic child...Mrs. K. and I knew he had a learning disability, we just knew, but it took 2 years for them...finally in 5th grade he gets identified, actually put into a program. I mean, and they were blaming it on the language. They need to listen I think a little more to teachers (Interview, June, 2009).

Star's teachers' frustration at the new referral process stemmed from mandates to improve student achievement, directives to target specific students with specific interventions, and requirements to monitor each student's progress over time to determine if the interventions were successful. Teachers perceive they are doing just that, but the RTI model requires more stringent progress monitoring than teachers accomplished in the past. Teachers wanted to help their students learn, and they wanted help with those with whom they have not been successful. They perceived they were not listened to and did not receive the help they need to successfully impact the academic achievement of their struggling readers.

### *Summary of Research Question 1*

Teachers at Star Elementary were not reticent in discussing their perceptions of their school's failure to achieve AYP. While teachers placed blame on students, parents, and policy makers, they also looked inwardly at their own shortfalls and contributions to AYP failure. But are their perceptions of AYP failure grounded in a firm understanding of what NCLB (2001) constitutes as achievement of AYP? The next research question helped me determine how well Star's teachers truly understood what it means to achieve AYP and what NCLB (2001) characterizes as the consequences of not reaching that goal.

### *Research Question 2: What are the Understandings of Teachers regarding the Restructuring Process?*

Accountability within NCLB (2001) is intended to ensure that all students receive a quality education, especially those attending schools identified as in need of improvement (Porter, Linn & Trimble, 2006). This call for accountability has positioned teachers as part of the problem with failure to achieve AYP (Shannon, 2007) and holds teachers, along with administrators, school districts, and state educational agencies, collectively responsible for student learning. If teachers, by law, are to be held accountable for student learning they must understand what the law states and the consequences of not meeting its mandates.

### *Teacher Understanding of Adequate Yearly Progress and Restructuring*

For reform to be successful educational organizations must "focus on increasing clarity and coherence at the conceptual level among teachers (Johnston, 2002, p. 220).



Conversely, teachers, especially at the preservice level, are taught to master the technical components of teaching but not how to critically analyze the “organizational and institutional context in which they work (Johnston, 2002, p. 224). Therefore, beginning teachers may enter the field without the larger perspective of how their teaching effects the organization of school outside their individual classrooms. Teacher understanding related to high-stakes testing is most often related to “bottom-line” results concerning how many students passed the test (Boother-Jennings, 2006, p. 758). While teachers quickly come to realize the importance of high-stakes testing, they often do not understand that school reform is a larger issue than simply raising test scores.

Teachers must understand reform for significant change to occur (Ryan & Joong, 2005; Spillane, 2005). A common criticism of reform often espoused by teachers is new reform contradicting past reform (Desimone, Smith & Phillips, 2007), so it is important that teachers develop a “common understanding” of planning related to change within the context of school reform (USDOE, 2006, p. 8). Spillane (2005) found that most Michigan math and science teachers did not have a fundamental understanding of the changes mandated by their state’s standards reform. “Sustained conversations” (p. 9) with colleagues and professional development related to key components of standards change led to teaching practices more closely related to the principals of standards instruction.

Do teachers at Star Elementary School understand the provisions of NCLB (2001) as it relates to AYP and restructuring? I interviewed twelve classroom teachers and asked them about their understandings of AYP and its restructuring consequence.

*Analysis of NCLB (2001) as Related to Adequate Yearly Progress and Restructuring*

In order to establish how well teachers understand AYP and its restructuring consequence as delineated in NCLB (2001), I used content analysis (Patton, 2002) to identify meaningful categories of content within NCLB (2001). Documents provide rich information about organizations and culture, and analysis of documents “is one aspect of the sense-making activities through which we reconstruct, sustain, contest, and change our senses of social reality” (Patton, 2002, p. 499). For this study, document analysis offered an opportunity to compare statements in organizational documents with the observations of individuals participating within the organization.

I identified Title I: Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged, Section 1001, and Part A (also under Title I), Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies, Sections 1111 through 1120A of NCLB (2001) as the primary sections of the law that pertained to AYP and its restructuring consequence. While AYP is discussed in other sections of the law, those sections are not germane to this study.

*Section 1001* contains the statement of purpose (see Appendix A) of Title I as it pertains to the academic achievement of disadvantaged children. Twelve indicators of accomplishment define how states, school districts, schools, and teachers are to provide all children “fair, equal, and significant opportunity to reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic standards and State academic assessments” (NCLB, Sec. 1001, 2001). I analyzed each indicator to represent the action by its verb, who would accomplish or receive the action, why the action was required, how the action was to be

accomplished, and the quality of the action to be accomplished. Table 19 represents these twelve indicators:

Table 19

*Indicators of Accomplishment from Statement of Purpose, Sec. 1001, NCLB (2001)*

Action to be taken	Who or What	How or Where	Why	What kind
Align	assessments, teacher training, materials and instructional curriculum	with state standards	to measure progress against expected student achievement	assessments, teacher training, materials and instructional curriculum-high quality
meet educational needs of	low-achieving, LEP, SWD, Indian, neglected, delinquent and young children	in highest poverty schools		children-in need of reading assistance
close achievement gap of	high/low performing, minority/non-minority, disadvantage/more advantaged children			
hold accountable	LEAs, schools		improve academic achievement;	
identify, turn around	low-performing schools		failed to provide a high-quality education	
provide alternatives, enable	students		receive high-quality education	
Distribute/target resources to	LEAs, schools		make a difference where needs are greatest	
Improve	accountability, teaching, learning	using state assessment systems	make sure that students meet state achievement and content standards, increase overall achievement	students-especially the challenged and disadvantaged
Provide greater decision-making authority and flexibility to	schools and teachers	in exchange for	greater responsibility for student performance	
Provide educational programs to	children	using school-wide programs or educational services	increase the amount and quality of instruct. time	

Table 19 (Continued)

Action to be taken	Who or What	How or Where	Why	What kind
Elevate	quality of instruction	providing opportunities for professional development to staff in participating schools		quality of instruction-significant professional development-substantial
coordinate services with	each other, other educational agencies, other educational services	provide services to youth, children and families		
afford opportunities to	parents	participate in the education of their children		opportunities-substantial and meaningful

As evidenced in the preceding table, SEAs, LEAs, schools, administrators and teachers are responsible for the achievement of all students, and NCLB (2001) requires these agencies and individuals to do so by meeting these twelve indicators of accomplishment. Given the broad statement of each indicator, it was necessary to analyze NCLB (2001) further to establish specifically how each indicator should be met. In other words, what does each indicator look like in practice?

Next, I analyzed Part A, Sections 1111-1120A (NCLB, 2001) to define specific tasks and behaviors that would meet the requirements of the twelve indicators of accomplishment and, according to Sec. 1001, lead to the academic achievement of all students, specifically disadvantaged students. I read each section and identified information pertaining to AYP, then organized the information into categories. I used an a priori coding scheme (Patton, 2002) based on Sections 1111-1120A to sort the information. The categories I identified were a) definition, b) required annual

improvement, c) calculating AYP, d) time requirements, e) academic assessments, f) consequences of not making AYP, g) reporting, h) rewards for making AYP, i) SEA (state educational authorities) responsibilities, and j) LEA (local educational authorities) responsibilities. To verify that these categories were appropriate generalizations of NCLB (2001) information I compared them to Yell & Drasgow's (2005) categorical information regarding *Title I* of NCLB (2001). This comparison is displayed in Table 20:

Table 20

<i>Comparison of Categories Obtained from Sections 1111-120A (NCLB, 2001)</i>	
Researcher	Yell & Drasgow (2005, pp.20-43)
Definition	Chapter Introduction
Required Annual Improvement	Accountability
Calculating AYP	Adequate Yearly Progress
Time Requirements	Accountability
Academic Assessments	Assessments
Consequences of Not Making AYP	What Happens When a School Fails to Make AYP
Reporting	Reporting Requirements
Rewards for Making AYP	What Happens When a School Makes AYP
SEA Responsibilities	What Happens When a State Fails to Make AYP Standards
LEA Responsibilities	What Happens When a District Fails to Make AYP

Comparison of the categories revealed a match between eight out of ten categories. Two of my categories, required annual improvement and time requirements, were collapsed into one category, accountability, in Yell & Drasgow (2005). Additionally, Yell & Drasgow (2005) included an additional category, standards, that I included as part of the state responsibilities category. Finally, the category related to

district responsibilities was not developed in Yell & Drasgow (2005) except for mention of consequences of a district failing to make AYP.

It was important to draw an alignment between the statement of purpose (Sec. 1001) and the categories identified in Secs. 1111-1120A to distinguish how the indicators of accomplishment looked in practice at the state and local levels. I merged the two analyses by identifying where each category represented in Part A matched the Statements of Purpose in *Sec. 1001* (NCLB, 2001). This is represented in Table 21:

Table 21

*Matching Statement of Purpose, Section 1001, with Sections 1111-1120A*

Section 1001: Statement of Purpose-Indicators or Accomplishment	Sections 1111-1120A: Categories
align assessments, teacher training, materials and instructional curriculum	required annual improvement academic assessments LEA, SEA responsibilities
meet educational needs of low-achieving, LEP, SWD, Indian, neglected, delinquent and young children	required annual improvement academic assessments rewards LEA responsibilities
close achievement gap between high/low performing, minority/non-minority, disadvantage/more advantaged children	required annual improvement academic assessments calculating AYP consequences reporting rewards LEA responsibilities

Table 21 (Continued)

Section 1001: Statement of Purpose-Indicators or Accomplishment	Sections 1111-1120A: Categories
hold accountable, identify, turn around LEAs, schools low-performing schools	required annual improvement academic assessments time requirements consequences/rewards LEA responsibilities
provide alternatives, enable students	consequences academic assessments reporting LEA responsibilities
distribute/target resources to LEAs, schools	consequences academic assessments LEA, SEA requirements
improve accountability, teaching, learning	required annual improvement academic assessments calculating AYP LEA responsibilities
provide greater decision-making authority and flexibility to schools and teachers	required annual improvement LEA responsibilities
provide educational programs to children	required annual improvement consequences LEA responsibilities
elevate quality of instruction	required annual improvement consequences LEA responsibilities
coordinate services with each other, other educational agencies, other educational services	required annual improvement consequences LEA responsibilities
afford opportunities to parents	consequences reporting LEA responsibilities

Due to the broad nature of each statement of purpose more than one category matched each statement and each category matched more than one statement. While performing this match, it became evident that successful accomplishment of each indicator in the Statement of Purpose (NCLB, 2001) is the responsibility of the LEA: the district, the school, or both. Two indicators, closing the achievement gap and holding

low-performing schools accountable, encompassed the greatest number of categories related to Sections 1111-1120A (NCLB, 2001).

One indicator, to provide greater decision-making authority and flexibility to schools and teachers, was difficult to match. I performed a search of “authority” in NCLB (2001) to find more information regarding how SEAs and LEAs were to allow for this provision. I again found the Statement of Purpose (Sec. 1000, NCLB, 2001) within the 175 matches to “authority.” I found instances where schools are given authority over funding, but none related to teachers having authority over anything. Section 1116(b)(7)(C)(iv)(III) (NCLB, 2001) does provide an LEA the authority to “significantly decrease management authority at the school level” as a result of failure to make AYP for four consecutive years, essentially decreasing authority at the local level, specifically the authority of administrators and teachers.

In *Designing Schoolwide Programs* (USDOE, 2006) the USDOE defines how the institution of schoolwide programs allows for schools to participate in the decision-making process to create a program that is unique to its needs. Under the schoolwide program, districts are to provide federal funds directly to these schools in order for schools to have maximum discretion in the use of those funds (Paige, 2004). How teachers are given authority resides at the school level, but teacher authority is moderated by those with authority over them. Ball (1990) explains this discourse as being “about what can be said and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority” (p. 17). While teachers are allowed to make certain decisions related to



instruction, those decisions are moderated by district and school-level authorities, essentially giving teachers boundaries within which they may operate.

*Analysis of Teacher Statements Regarding Understanding of Adequate Yearly Progress and its Restructuring Consequence*

Next, it was necessary to discern teachers' understanding of the restructuring consequences as they are related to AYP. Graddol, Cheshire, & Swann (1994) refer to the general memory of words and happenings as "semantic representation" (p. 215). I had no expectation of teachers telling me the details of the law verbatim, so I read each transcribed interview and identified semantic representations that related to each category of AYP understanding. I had to think carefully about the teachers' words because, at times, their responses related to one of the categories were stated as opinions rather than statements of understanding. As I identified teacher phrases and sentences that exhibited their understanding, and sometimes the lack thereof, of AYP, I entered the teacher's name, the line of text in which the response was found in the transcription, and copied the teacher's statement on an electronic spreadsheet into one of the eleven categories related to AYP identified in Sections 1111-1120A, NCLB (2001), category. Once I finished the initial analysis, I read through the responses in each category to look for key words and phrases. Then I went back through each interview and conducted a word find for each key word and phrase to identify any additional relevant responses.

The initial sort of teachers' responses into related categories resulted in a response possibly appearing more than once. I re-sorted each response into the category I

determined to be the best match by matching teacher statements to specific indicators found within each of the 11 categories. Inter-rater reliability was established at 90%.

After I determined how responses matched the eleven categories related to AYP found in *Sections 1111-1120A*, I re-sorted the remarks from each category into the twelve indicators of accomplishment identified in the statement of purpose in *Section 1001*. This was necessary to link teachers' understanding of AYP and its restructuring consequence to the purpose of the law as it relates to student achievement. While this connection was made in comparative data analysis, this does not indicate that teachers actually made the connection. As I sorted the responses, meaningful units of analysis related to the understanding of the restructuring experience began to emerge. These units consisted of both words and phrases. For example, the words 'restructuring' and 'tutoring' were identified as meaningful units as were the phrases 'student performance' and 'professional development.' As a unit was identified, I color-coded each response for easy identification. Meaningful units were organized into distinct themes related to school restructuring.

Finally, I analyzed field notes of classroom observations to find evidence of practice related to teachers' statements of understanding of AYP and the restructuring consequence. I read through the field notes for each teacher's observations and identified specific instances of instruction that related to the teacher's statements of understanding of AYP. I documented the instructional observations in the same eleven categories to link teacher practice with statements of understanding.

Teacher understanding of AYP is discussed below within the context of the indicators of accomplishment in the Statement of Purpose in *Sec. 1001* of NCLB (2001).

*Alignment of assessments, training, materials, curriculum, and state standards.*

Star's teachers discussed how assessments are used at Star to drive instruction, the types and frequency of professional development they received, and the use of new materials and curriculum.

The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) is the assessment used in Florida to determine student proficiency in reading, math, writing, and science. As discussed in Chapter Two, the test is administered each March, is directly tied to Florida's Sunshine State Standards, and is approved by the United States Department of Education as the assessment for determining AYP in Florida. Teachers' responses related an understanding of the FCAT's relationship between student achievement and AYP. Teachers discussed how "you have to get ready for the FCAT" and having to "go through everything so fast because FCAT is in March" (Interviews, April, May, and June, 2009). Regarding use of assessment data, teachers talked about receiving professional development in data analysis in order to determine points of need for their students in reading, math, writing, and science as evidenced by student FCAT scores.

According to teachers at Star, they receive professional development one to two days per week which is reduced from two days per week from the 2007-2008 school year. Professional development that was continued from last school year focused on data analysis, curriculum development, and implementation of instructional strategies (Star

School Improvement Plan, 2008). New professional development regarding implementation of a school-wide behavior management program, Positive Behavior Support (PBS), implementation of a new school-wide writing program, and implementation of the district's Response To Intervention (RTI) program were also instituted this year and required professional development support. Star's School Improvement Plan (2008) cites the implementation of PBS during the 2008-2009 school year. PBS and RTI are discussed in the Targeted Resources section.

Teachers responded to the issue of professional development both positively and negatively. Many teachers resented the intrusion on their planning times for professional development, citing the need to stay beyond contractual hours to complete lesson planning and hold parent conferences. They also indicated an overload of new instructional strategy requirements. However, teachers responded positively to training received for PBS and related an improvement in behavior resulting in increased instructional time. They also discussed the importance of learning new teaching strategies and the positive impact of increased collegiality due to grade level training sessions.

Teachers discussed the implementation of new curriculum and use of new materials more than any other topic related to this indicator. Star implemented the Max Thompson Learning Focused Schools (LFS) strategies during their first year of corrective action. According to the Learning Focused website,

The Learning Focused Schools Model was developed by Dr. Max Thompson in response to national, state, and local efforts to increase achievement for all students and to reduce achievement gaps. The Model provides comprehensive school reform strategies and solutions for K-12 schools based on exemplary practices and research-based strategies. These practices and strategies focus on five areas: Planning, Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, and School Organization (Thompson, M., Learningfocus.com, 2009).

Bell County linked LFS with its county curriculum maps during the 2006-2007 school year. All schools in Bell County are required to follow the pacing of the curriculum maps for all academic areas. Teachers at Star had a great deal to say about LFS and the use of the curriculum maps.

Teachers discussed the heavy time requirements of preparing LFS lessons. In addition to their regular plans, teachers must develop LFS plans that address the LFS components of acquisition and extended thinking for each lesson. Teachers are also required to maintain learning maps in their classrooms for reading, math, writing and science. The learning maps, part of the Learning Focus model, provided a visual representation of the classroom's daily curriculum focus. Each map contains a unit essential question (UEQ), learning essential questions (LEQs) based upon the UEQ, vocabulary related to the content, and examples of student work resulting from the learning unit. UEQs, LEQs, and vocabulary are found in each content area of the district curriculum maps. Learning maps were visible in ten out of eleven classrooms I visited. When I visited this fourth grade classroom there were only two weeks of school left and

the teacher was in the process of preparing the room for summer cleaning and had removed some her instructional materials from her walls.

Teachers also discussed the difficulty of matching their core reading program to the district curriculum map for reading. While they agreed that math and science were good matches between materials and map content, they argued that the maps did not match the required stories in their basal reading series. For example, the first grade curriculum map requires the teaching of non-fiction content during specified weeks of school, yet first grade basals contain fiction selections during the same weeks. While teachers could skip stories in order to match the requirement, they found that they skipped vocabulary and phonics skills that were cumulative throughout the text. When I asked how they accommodated this disconnect, one teacher said they had been told by an LFS consultant not to use the suggested scope and sequence in the reading series teacher's manual but to use other resources to "make it work." This resulted in frustration for the teachers in that they had to find outside resources to accomplish an already heavy lesson planning task.

Star's teachers revealed their understandings of how Florida's Sunshine State Standards, as assessed by the FCAT, drive instructional decisions in their classrooms. The frequency of professional development they received, while understood as necessary to implement new programs required by the district, was perceived as an heavy infringement on both school-planning and personal time. New curricular mandates, while understood to be implemented in order to increase student achievement, were targeted by teachers as both work-intensive and time-consuming requirements.

*Meeting educational needs associated with reading.* Teachers discussed at length the necessity of meeting the reading needs of their students. Teacher responses indicated three primary ways in which Star worked to promote student achievement in reading: pull-out reading for all children by instructional level, immediate intensive intervention (iii) for their most struggling readers, and focus on target scores for individual classrooms in reading.

Every day teachers at each grade level spent 30 minutes working with students at the students' instructional levels during the reading block. This was accomplished by each teacher being responsible for one instructional level and all students from that grade level coming to him/her for daily instruction. Supplemental materials, both narrative and expository, were provided to teachers for pull-out instruction. In the pull-out instruction, students were pulled out of their homerooms and received additional instruction at their instructional reading levels in another classroom. I observed this process during my classroom observations in second and fifth grades. This structure was discontinued during the last few weeks of school due to end of the year activities disrupting the schedule so I did not have the opportunity to observe it in all grade levels.

In addition to the grade level 30 minute pull-out program, iii students (students who need immediate intensive intervention in reading) received an additional 30 minutes of small group instruction. This was accomplished by using the guidance counselor, reading coach, and ESE resource teachers and paraprofessionals. Students left their classrooms, usually before the beginning of the reading block, and met with their iii group for 30 minutes each day, met with their instructional reading level groups, and

returned to their homerooms for the rest of the reading block. Both certified teachers and paraprofessionals delivered instruction using state-adopted supplemental instructional materials.

Target scores for FCAT reading, math and science were posted in every classroom as well as on the bulletin board in the school entry hallway. Target scores were developed by administration based upon each classroom's FCAT scores from the 2007-2008 school year. In order to measure student progress prior to FCAT, students were assessed using Kaplan benchmark assessments. The Kaplan Achievement Planner was instituted in Bell County in 2005. Kaplan assessment provide beginning, middle, and end-of-year assessments on benchmarks tested by the FCAT in reading, math, and science. According to Star's School Improvement Plan (2008) Kaplan benchmark assessments, Kaplan mini-assessments, and Kaplan lesson plans are used to "target the needs of individual students and to reinforce previously taught benchmarks" (p. 14). Teachers monitored student progress by analyzing DIBELS and Kaplan scores. Kaplan assessments were administered in August, December, and May. According to teachers, Kaplan scores were used to predict FCAT scores and inform instruction based upon student need.

I observed the final Kaplan benchmark assessments (reading, math and science) during three of my visits in a fifth grade classroom. Before administration of the test, the teacher reminded the students of the class' target score as well as their individual target score which was taped on each student's desk.



To meet their students' educational needs in reading teachers discussed two interventions, pull-out reading blocks and iii groups, as methods for targeting specific skills their students lacked in reading. Teachers also discussed the use of target scores based on a variety of assessments for both classrooms and individual students as a way to monitor progress in reading achievement.

*Closing the achievement gap.* Teachers at Star discussed AYP status of both their whole student population as well as that of disaggregated subgroups. However, there was a wide range of understanding exhibited by the teachers in regards to how well their subgroups achieved.

Star's teachers were required to keep a data book in which all assessment results for each student were maintained. Several teachers showed me their data books, which contained assessment and ongoing progress monitoring data for each student, and explained how they used it to monitor their students' progress by disaggregated groups. Assessments included 2008 FCAT, DIBELS, and Kaplan scores. Kindergarten and first grade teachers also included the 2008 SAT 10 (in place of FCAT), Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (Dunn & Dunn, 2007) and the Elements of Reading Vocabulary (Beck & McKeown, 2005) assessment (The Elements of Reading Vocabulary assessment will be discussed later in Chapter Four). Teachers in grades three through five discussed how one student could be (and was) reported in more than one AYP cell. As discussed in Chapter Two, AYP cells refer to the 39 separate components used to calculate whether or not schools achieve AYP. For example, one fifth grade teacher explained how several of her students fell into twelve cells: ESE, ESOL, Hispanic, Free/Reduced lunch, lowest 25<sup>th</sup>

percentile and overall achievement. These students are counted under each category twice: once for reading and once for math

It was in this area, however, that I found some differences in the understandings of teachers regarding Star’s AYP status. Teachers told me a variety of issues regarding subgroup achievement and impact on AYP. I was told by the teachers that Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners, African-American males, and Hispanic students were problematic. I was also told that there was not much difference in the achievement of Blacks and Hispanics. My analysis of Star’s School Report Card for the 2007-2008 school year revealed specific subgroups that did not achieve AYP.

*Table 22*

*Proficiency Level Gains by Subgroup, School Year 2007-2008 (Star SIP, 2008)*

Subgroup	Reading Gains	Math Gains
Total	0	3
White	-3 <sup>a</sup>	7
Black	-18 <sup>a</sup>	-8 <sup>a</sup>
Hispanic	12	12
Economically Dis.	0 <sup>a</sup>	0 <sup>a</sup>
English Lang. Learners	10	10
Students With Disabilities	7	7 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>**Did not make AYP.**

White students did not score at required proficiency levels in reading but this was never mentioned by teachers as a problematic subgroup. Hispanic students, one of the groups mentioned as having learning needs, made AYP in both reading and math. These discrepancies will be further discussed in Chapter Five.

Changes in subgroups scores from 2007 to 2008 also revealed issues with learning gains that were not mentioned by teachers. The number of Black students scoring at proficiency levels in reading fell 18%, White students' proficiency levels fell by 3% but Hispanic students increased 12%. Students With Disabilities scores increased by 7% as did English Language Learners by 10%. In math, all subgroups except Black students' proficiency levels increased or stayed the same from 2007 to 2008. Economically Disadvantaged Students made no learning gains in either math or reading. These data supports teachers' concerns about Star's Black students and Students with Disabilities but not Star's Hispanic students. It also shows a lack of awareness concerning the learning needs of their White and Economically Disadvantaged students as well as lack of understanding of test scores by subgroup.

Primary teachers confessed to knowing little about Star's specific AYP needs related to FCAT scores. One kindergarten teacher told me, "Maybe it makes sense to [grades] 3-5, but I'm removed from that" (Interview, April, 2009). A first grade teacher said she thought they had "needs in reading but [she was] not sure about math" (Interview, May, 2009). An excerpt from an interview with another kindergarten teacher is telling:

Teacher: I think that maybe explaining what AYP is and what we're actually doing with LFS and restructuring...but I'm in kindergarten...

Researcher: So really you don't understand what AYP is and what all that means?

Teacher: Not a clue. (Interview, April, 2009).

Teachers understood the significance of disaggregating FCAT data in respects to Star's failure to make AYP. However, there was not a correct consensus of exactly which subgroups were achieving AYP and which were not. Teachers at all grade levels admitted to not being sure about subgroup AYP or were wrong in their understandings about subgroup achievement. Primary teachers, especially kindergarten teachers, discussed their feelings of being removed from the AYP discussion and did not fully understand how AYP affected them or their students.

*Holding schools and local educational agencies responsible.* Teachers at Star discussed their school's responsibilities for achieving AYP as well as why they have not done so. Responses fell into three categories: a) understanding what constitutes AYP achievement, b) misunderstandings of Star's status as a result of failure to achieve AYP, and c) holding teachers accountable for student achievement.

*Understanding what constitutes AYP.* Teachers' responses indicated an understanding of AYP requirements as those requirements relate to Star. They reported that though Star never made AYP, certain subgroups did achieve the required annual learning gains necessary to achieve AYP and that certain subgroups achieved AYP through Safe Harbor. They discussed their school's status as SINI 5 (5 years without achieving AYP) and that in Florida's Differentiated Accountability model Star is classified as a Level I SINI school (see Chapter Two for the discussion of Differentiated Accountability and its school leveling system). Teachers expressed an understanding of

required proficiency targets in reading and math (though some primary teachers did not know what the targets were) and that the FCAT scores in grades three through five were used to determine AYP. One teacher correctly identified Star as a school in first year restructuring, that school grades are different than AYP status, and “you go through stages every time you don’t make AYP” (Interview, April, 2009).

*Misunderstandings of Star’s status as a result of failure to achieve AYP.* Teachers also related misunderstandings regarding AYP at Star. One teacher told me that Star missed AYP by “a couple of points.” While teachers correctly identified both math and reading as areas of need, there were differing responses regarding Star’s needs assessment. For example, one teacher said Star had “needs in reading and math but reading is more important” while another teacher reported “math is a bigger problem.” Star’s 2007-2008 School Accountability Report revealed that Star met 82% of the necessary criteria to make AYP (see Appendix B). Three subgroups (White, Black, and Economically Disadvantaged) did not achieve required proficiency levels to achieve AYP in reading. Likewise, three subgroups (Black, Economically Disadvantage, and Students With Disabilities) did not achieve AYP in math.

Teachers also did not understand Star’s status as a school in first-year restructuring. Responses such as “I think it’s been five years of restructuring,” “I don’t think this is our main year for restructuring,” and “I think we were in restructuring last year, too” indicated most teachers did not know, or did not mention, how Star’s status changed from year to year as a SINI school.

*Holding teachers accountable for student achievement.* Teachers reported the placement of a higher level of accountability on them this school year. Each teacher's goals for his/her annual evaluation was written by administration based upon students' beginning-of-the-year Kaplan scores because "Kaplan scores translate to FCAT scores" (Interview, April 2009). Teachers were not given the opportunity for input into the writing of their goals as in years past. They viewed this as a shift from focus on student achievement to "focus on the staff" (Interview, 2009).

During one of my classroom observations, a fourth grade teacher was called to the office for a meeting regarding her annual evaluation while her students were at specials. When she returned she was very upset. She talked with her neighboring classroom teacher regarding the results of her meeting. She stated that her students' end of the year Kaplan assessments were not good and was told she might have to change grade levels next year because of it. She went on to say that she had been at Star for seven years and had always had good evaluations but that did not matter to administration. When her students returned from specials, she told them that "today was not a pretty day for me" (Field Notes, May, 2007) and discussed their Kaplan results. She acknowledged that her absence when they took the Kaplan may have impacted their results and told them they would be retaking the test the next week. Since Kaplan was used as a district benchmark assessment the students were allowed to repeat it.

Teachers at Star discussed understandings what constitutes AYP achievement. They correctly identified Star as a school that never made AYP, Star's status within Florida's Differentiated Accountability model, and necessary targets Star must meet to

achieve AYP. The teachers misunderstood Star's restructuring status in regards to how long the school had been in restructuring. Star's teachers, especially those in grades three through five, understand they are held accountable for student achievement based on both district and state mandated assessments.

*Providing alternatives for low-performing schools.* Teachers identified a variety of changes at Star due to their restructuring status. They discussed providing tutoring for students both by Star's teachers and with private companies, changes in curriculum and instruction, pull-out strategies for iii students and grade-level reading groups, more student time in centers, differentiated centers, and more small group instruction.

These alternatives were in evidence during my classroom observations. Third grade students received additional computer lab time during their science and social studies blocks and also received after-school tutoring provided either by Star's Title I funds (using their own teachers) or federal funds (due to Star's restructuring status) allotted for private tutoring services. Students were regrouped for the first 30 minutes of the reading block to ensure that iii students received additional reading instruction with state-approved supplemental materials.

A new strategy to Star this year was the implementation of differentiated centers in each classroom. A kindergarten teacher explained that each center contained three to four different levels of similar skill-practice activities for independent use during center time. While she agreed that this differentiation was more appropriate for her students

than the non-differentiated offerings in the past, she lamented that preparing them was “a pain in the butt” (Interview, April, 2009).

Students spent more time in centers this year, and teacher agreement with this use of time was mixed. A fifth grade teacher discussed the greater use of fluency centers, that her students enjoyed it and that she had seen an increase in their fluency scores on DIBELS. A kindergarten teacher, however, did not agree with center use. She said,

I, in the last 3 years I have seen also like they put a bilingual kid with one that is not proficient in the language [in a center], so what’s happening is I have the one gets real bossy, the one that knows nothing doesn’t learn nothing because she doesn’t have the language for the other one to tell her, and I suspect the real reason we are in the situation is that the one that knows, the one that is ahead, because some of us teachers are using our more advanced kids to help us teach (Interview, April, 2009).

Teachers agreed that targeting students for supplemental instruction and services was beneficial to meeting student needs. Most teachers perceived differentiated centers, while work intensive on the teachers’ parts, were appropriate for their students and met their student’s needs at their instructional levels.

*Distributing targeted resources.* Teachers identified Response to Intervention (RTI) and Positive Behavior Support (PBS) as two specific programs implemented at Star this year due to restructuring. According to the Bell County Schools website, Positive Behavior Support (PBS)



...is a project of the University of South Florida, the Florida Department of Education, and receives federal assistance under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) [and is a] proactive approach to managing behavior by teaching expected behaviors and reinforcing appropriate behavior. PBS methods are research based and proven to significantly reduce the occurrence of problem behaviors, resulting in a more positive schools climate and academic performance (Bell County Schools, 2009b).

Bell County takes part in the Florida Positive Behavior Support Project (FLPBS). FLPBS selects model schools each spring based upon schools' "innovative, creative and functional ways of supporting PBS in their respective schools" (FLPBS, 2009). Bell County has trained 57 schools in PBS strategies since 2002 with 48 of those schools remaining active PBS schools (Bell County Positive Behavior Support [BCPBS] Newsletter, 2008b). In 2008, eleven schools in Bell County received PBS Model School Distinction.

The District was selected as demonstration site for Florida's Problem Solving/Response to Intervention Project (PSRTI), and three model schools began participation in that project in the 2007-2008 school year. According to the Bell County Superintendent,

Recognizing the common elements of PSRTI and PBS including data analysis, use of team-based problem solving process, a continuum of evidenced-based intervention, progress monitoring, implementation fidelity, and student-based

outcomes, the district stakeholders have joined together in order to successfully implement PSRTI. We believe that this combined approach can improve academic and behavioral outcomes for all students (BCPBS Newsletter, 2008).

While teachers perceived the implementation of the two programs to be a result of Star's AYP status, this was not the case. All schools in Bell County will eventually use both programs as a district-wide intervention (personal communication with Bell County Schools, 2009).

Teachers also related a heightened involvement of district personnel at Star. In addition to PBS support staff, Star is assigned a district-level supervisor who oversees the decision-making processes concerning curriculum and instruction for schools in restructuring. As discussed in Chapter Two, Florida's Differentiated Accountability Model (2008) is intended to target assistance to schools based on their specific needs. As a Correct I School (in restructuring with a school grade of B), Star receives assistance from the district in focusing the reorganization of its structure to strengthen areas missed when calculating AYP.

While Star's teachers understood that their school received targeted assistance from the district due to its AYP status, the teachers incorrectly assumed that any changes occurring at Star, such as the institution of the PBS and RTI models, were due to failure to make AYP. They correctly identified increased district oversight as a district intervention due to AYP status.

*Improving accountability for teaching and learning.* Teachers discussed an increased focus on teacher accountability. They identified the importance of student learning gains related to annual evaluations, the expectation of meeting target scores following Kaplan and DIBELS assessments, and the need for more specific record keeping and data analysis related to “student proficiency.”

While teachers at all grade levels discussed accountability for teaching and learning, one grade level exemplified accountability in restructuring in this category. First grade at Star underwent a reorganization of its reading block in January due to poor performance on the first two DIBELS assessments. Rather than maintaining a heterogeneous balance of students in each classroom, students switched classes for the reading block based upon their DIBELS scores. One teacher, identified as having the poorest progress for her students, was teamed with a veteran teacher of 24 years in a co-teaching model for the two-hour reading block. The lowest performing first grade students were placed into this classroom for the reading block. The two teachers shared whole group instruction responsibilities. During small group instruction students rotated through a group with each teacher, a group with the ESE resource teacher, and independent center activities.

Each first grade classroom kept its highest performing students (usually three or four). These students participated in whole group instruction and met with the teacher periodically throughout the week to get feedback on assignments. During the rest of the reading block, these high-achieving students worked independently or with each other to complete assignments, read and take Accelerated Reader tests.

The two first grade teachers discussed the benefits and drawbacks of this model as it related to students learning. They both liked working in a co-teaching model and reported they had more time to work with students at their instructional levels. I observed this co-teaching model during my three classroom visits. The two teachers shared reading instructional responsibilities with their students. During whole group instruction one teacher would deliver instruction while the other one circulated to help students as needed. During small group instruction each teacher worked with a small group of students. All students rotated through the two teacher groups as well as an ESE resource teacher-led group and a computer center.

Both teachers reported an increase in DIBELS scores at the end of the year. They also said that the other first grade teachers were not satisfied with the reorganization. While other first grade teachers did not have the lowest performing students in their classrooms, many of them had larger class sizes during the reading block than in their homerooms. Many of the teachers were also dissatisfied with their annual evaluation goals written for their own students, but instruction for their students was provided by other teachers for half of the year due to ability grouping during the reading block.

What happened to the two first grade co-teachers regarding accountability? The veteran teacher retired at the end of the school year noting, "I don't think I could come back, it wears you out" (Interview, May, 2009). The teacher identified as not making adequate progress with her students was not rehired.

*Providing decision-making authority and greater flexibility to local LEAs and teachers.* Teachers discussed specific decisions made at Star by administration and district supervisors. These included writing of teachers' annual evaluation goals, placement of teachers on professional developments plans (PDPs), and adding additional lesson plans to coordinate with LFS strategies.

District-level personnel are a regular presence at Star. Star's district supervisor, assigned due to Star's restructuring status, regularly performed classroom walk-throughs (David, 2007). During her walk-throughs she checked lesson plans, observed instruction and checked to determine if teachers had up-to-date learning maps posted in their classrooms. In addition to Star's district supervisor, Star's district PBS coordinator visited classrooms to monitor implementation of classroom management strategies. Exceptional Student Education personnel provided feedback on Star's inclusion classroom model.

Conversely, teachers did not perceive an increase in decision-making authority, teacher leadership opportunities, or greater flexibility for themselves. Teachers commented about feeling under-appreciated and perceived a decreased autonomy in their decision-making in regards to curriculum and instruction. One teacher, when discussing changes in her grade level, said "They looked at her (another teacher's) statistics and didn't feel her students were making progress" (Interview, May, 2009) so the teacher's students were dispersed to other classes during the reading block. Teachers also discussed their performance evaluations being based on student achievement, yet the

teachers were not allowed to write their own performance goals; their administrators wrote their goals for them.

Retention was an issue that evoked a great deal of conversation. Teachers explained that while they are asked to submit the names of children who have not met the district criteria for promotion at the end of the school year, these children were rarely retained. A first grade teacher said,

Well, I tell you there's something that is just bugging us right now. That's this promotion/retention business, because I would like to know, I was wondering and I'm not a very pushy person so I probably won't do it, but I would like to know legally who is responsible for promoting or retaining the child? I was always told that it's the teacher, but, here's the idea, they are promoting every single child (Interview, May, 2009).

A fourth grade teacher added, "But when we're just pushing them through, we're just pushing them through. And that's what the goal is? We're supposed to educate them," to which a kindergarten teacher replied, "I just think, when you look at [student], he was retained and he's the highest in my class now. For some kids it (retention) does work (Focus Group Interview, June, 2009)

When I asked why there were few retentions at Star, the teachers explained that promotion/retention decisions were made by the principal in consultation with Star's district supervisor. The teachers went on to discuss the negative issues surrounding

retention, but perceived that their recommendations were of little value when final promotion/decisions were made.

*Enriched/accelerated educational program resulting in increased instructional time.* The biggest change for Star regarding increased instructional time came in the extension of the reading block from 90 minutes to 120 minutes. Teachers reported the extra 30 minutes gave them more time to work with small groups and more time for students to work together in centers. Kindergarten and first grade teachers discussed the new vocabulary program implemented in their grade levels this year due to Star's participation in a nation-wide study concerning the effectiveness of *Elements of Reading Vocabulary* (Beck & McKeown, 2005). Each teacher was required to spend 20 minutes per day in vocabulary instruction using supplemental materials provided in the program. Students were given pre/post-tests at the beginning and end of the school year to determine learning gains in vocabulary acquisition.

*Elevating the quality of instruction.* Teachers reported two specific strategies in Star's goals to elevate the quality of instruction. The first, implementation of LFS strategies, began during the 2005 school year and continued through the 2008-2009 school year. LFS was discussed earlier in this chapter.

Linked to LFS implementation is an increase in professional development. Teachers received professional development at least once, and sometimes twice, per week during the school year. Training included implementation of a new writing program, continued LFS support, RTI, data analysis, vocabulary instruction, and

differentiated centers. Teachers also receive two professional planning days per year with their grade levels to plan for instruction in order to implement training on instructional strategies into their classrooms.

An example of the product of a planning day is the implementation of novel studies into third, fourth, and fifth grade classrooms. During their planning days, grade levels chose a novel, pulled vocabulary for instruction, located teaching resources associated with the novel, wrote UEQs and LEQs to match the novels, and wrote lesson plans. Social studies instruction was linked to each novel as were student research projects. Novel units were started following spring break and continued through the end of the school year.

I observed novel unit instruction in third and fourth grade classrooms. The third grade unit, *Bunnicula*, integrated other content areas. During the reading block, teachers followed lesson plans they created as a team for instruction in vocabulary and comprehension skills. The teacher read aloud one chapter per day while leading the students in a discussion of the story. Students followed the story in their own copies of the text. Vocabulary was introduced prior to the reading, and students discussed meanings as words appeared in the text. Writing and science were integrated into a research unit on animals where the teacher developed research questions with the students to guide their research.

In fourth grade I observed the novel unit instruction of *Strawberry Girl* in the reading block. In fourth grade classes, teachers alternated between reading the story to



their students and students reading aloud. Vocabulary in the fourth grade unit was pre-taught, and students completed extension assignments following each chapter. Students also completed a variety of graphic organizers focusing on main idea and summarizing at the end of each chapter.

*Coordinating services and affording parental participation.* Teachers made few comments regarding coordination of services intended to positively impact student achievement. Teachers discussed before and after-school tutoring as well as the use of resource personnel to work with iii groups.

Teachers discussed the importance of parental participation and student motivation as key for Star to achieve AYP. While teachers mentioned parents' rights to access transportation to send their children to a higher achieving school due to Star's AYP status, they reported they were not aware of parents taking advantage of this option even though letters informing parents of this right were sent home with students as mandated by NCLB (2001). They also discussed the lack of parental participation in student's academics in the form of few parents attending family night functions, inadequate numbers of children bringing in homework assignments, and difficulty in seeing parents for conferences.

### *Summary of Research Question 2*

Star's teachers understood that their school had not made AYP due to low student achievement in both reading and math. While they correctly identified some specific subgroups not making AYP, they neglected identifying needs with their White Students

and Students with Disabilities in reading. Teachers understood the specific consequences related to AYP failure and discussed how those consequences impacted their classroom instruction. They demonstrated an understanding of data analysis of their student FCAT scores and how some students impact AYP calculations more than others. They also understood that data analysis of FCAT scores determined which students needed targeted supplemental instruction and what types of instruction should be delivered.

Teachers did not demonstrate an understanding that NCLB (2001) allows for teachers to be part of the decision-making process regarding curriculum and instruction at their school. Conversely, teachers reported decreased authority and autonomy due to Star's failure to make AYP. While they understood that parents are to be an active part in their children's education, Star's teachers perceive little support from parents.

I have discussed Star's teachers' understandings of NCLB (2001) and the consequences associated with failure to make AYP. How do Star's teachers perceive these consequences as they relate directly to them and their students? The next section analyzes teachers' personal experiences with restructuring.

*Research Question 3: What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the restructuring process?*

School reform is part of our national education history. As discussed in Chapter Two, education reform in the United States is not a new phenomenon (Cross, 2004) and the focus of reform is ultimately improvement of student achievement (Korkmaz, 2008). The question then is not *if* education change will happen but *how* education change will

happen (Margolis & Nagel, 2006). In the middle of new legislation and policy demands stands the individual who holds the ultimate responsibility for enacting educational change: the teacher.

According to Ryan and Joong (2005) teachers should play “key roles in education reform” (p. 2) due to the direct impact reform has on strategy instruction, delivery of curriculum and assessment of student achievement. The sharing of “innovative knowledge” (Hawkins, 2009, p. 14) by teachers is essential educational change, and the roles teachers play within their schools directly impacts their satisfaction with their profession and the “viability of school reform” (Margolis & Nagel, 2006, p. 155). If teachers do not support proposed changes in curriculum and instruction, those changes may never be successfully implemented in their classrooms.

School reform evokes a variety of positive and negative emotions in teachers (Darby, 2008; Hoy, Hoy & Kurz, 2008). Emotions have a direct impact on teacher self-image, job motivation, self-esteem, and task perception (Darby, 2008). School reform may lead to feelings of professional inadequacy (Darby, 2008; Ryan & Joong, 2005), anxiety (Darby, 2008; Ryan & Joong, 2005), anger (Darby, 2008; Ross & Bruce, 2007) and fear (Darby, 2008; Olsen & Sexton, 2008). With support from administrators, district personnel, and colleagues throughout through the reform process, teachers can learn to feel ownership of the changes in their classrooms and respond positively to those changes (Darby, 2008; Margolis & Nagel, 2006). Then teachers will more successfully navigate through the emotional turmoil associated with reform and successfully institute the changes necessary to positively impact student achievement.

The number of years a teacher has taught has also an impact on acceptance of educational reform (Evans, 2009; Darby, 2008). New teachers tend to be adaptable to change engendered by reform where veteran teachers tend to distrust reform, are skeptical of its outcomes, and wait for the trend to pass (Darby, 2008; Olsen & Sexton, 2008). However, veteran teachers' exposure to the high-stakes tests embedded in education reform leads to higher levels of confidence in their abilities to effectively teach students and improve achievement (Evans, 2009). Teacher leadership provided by experienced teachers can "ease increasing educational demands, reconfigure hierarchical power structures, and unite teachers and administrators in the interest of genuine renewal and true transformation (Beacham & Dentith, 2008, p. 285). For education reform to happen, involvement of teachers in the reform process is critical.

Teacher self-efficacy is also a critical component of successful school reform (Enderlin-Lampe, 2002; Hoy, Hoy & Kurz, 2008; Kinsey, 2006). Teacher competency is directly related to teacher performance (Bandura, 1997; Enderlin-Lampe, 2002; Hoy, Hoy & Kurz, 2008), and teachers are more likely to embrace reform when they perceive they are adequately prepared to enact mandated changes (Ryan & Joong, 2005). Efficacy influences the instructional decisions teachers make as well as their commitment to persevere during the often tumultuous journey through educational reform (Evans, 2009). Efficacious teachers are empowered to make curricular and instructional decisions that enhance the academic success that drives school reform.

Recognition of student and teacher learning during the reform process is a key component to improved self-image and task perception (Darby, 2008). Recognition of

teacher knowledge (Darby, 2008; Ryan & Joong, 2005), collaboration with colleagues (Darby, 2008; Kinsey, 2006), participation in decision making (Enderlin-Lampe, 2002; Kinsey, 2006; Korkmaz, 2008) and relevant professional development (Korkmaz, 2008; Margolis & Nagel, 2006; Ross & Bruce, 2007; Ryan & Joong, 2005) lead to increased teacher dedication to and success with implementing reform mandates. In the same way teachers provide feedback to their students regarding successful learning, teachers need feedback regarding their progress in the reform journey as well as a stake in the reform process itself.

To gain an understanding of teachers' perceptions of the restructuring process I administered a survey to all instructional staff at Star Elementary School. Following survey administration and analysis, teacher interviews were analyzed to further develop emergent themes identified from survey data.

#### *Analysis of Staff Survey*

I administered the staff survey (see Appendix D) during the April faculty meeting at Star Elementary School. Before the meeting began I introduced myself to the assistant principal, Mrs. Jones, who was facilitating the meeting, and thanked her for allowing me to talk with the staff. The meeting concerned the results of the annual Title I parent survey. After the parent survey discussion, the Mrs. Jones invited any interested teachers to stay to complete "a survey." She did not introduce me nor did she indicate the topic of the survey. Approximately one half of the teachers in attendance left the meeting following her announcement.

I introduced myself to the remaining staff, explained my research, and asked them to complete the survey. One teacher asked if she could take the survey with her and give it to me later since she had work she needed to do. Mrs. Jones interceded and assured the teacher, and me, that the survey could be turned into her mailbox and delivered to me at a later date, effectively cutting off my response to the question. Approximately ten more teachers left the meeting at that time leaving twelve teachers to complete the survey and return it to me. The remaining twelve teachers were attentive, completed the survey, and turned them in. I thanked Mrs. Jones, who apologized for the number of teachers who left before completing the survey. I assured her it was fine and told her I would check back with her to collect any surveys she received.

During the next week five teachers personally gave me the completed surveys and I collected two more from Mrs. Jones bringing the total number of surveys completed to nineteen. This represented 63% of Star's classroom teachers and 37% of Star's total instructional staff.

I tallied the teachers' categorical responses for each question. Table 23 displays the responses:

Table 23

*Staff Survey of Star's Instructional Staff*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Input into decisions regarding reading instruction	2 10.52%	8 42.10%	6 31.57%	3 15.79%
Received professional development (PD)	8 42.11%	11 57.89%		
Positive experience	1 0.06%	7 38.89%	9 50.00%	1 0.06%
Reading instruction has changed	4 23.53%	11 64.71%	1 0.06%	1 0.06%
Collaborated with colleagues	5 26.32%	12 61.16%	2 10.52%	
Increase in student achievement in reading	2 12.5%	10 62.5%	4 25%	

*Note.* Some questions show less than 19 responses due to non-responses on the surveys.

To get an overall view of their agreement and disagreement to the survey statements, I reorganized responses into two categories, strongly agree/agree and disagree/strongly disagree. The results of this reorganization are displayed in Table 24:

Table 24

*Staff Survey of Star's Instructional Staff, Reorganized into Agreement and Disagreement Responses*

	Strongly agree/agree	Disagree/strongly disagree
Input into decisions regarding reading instruction	10 52.63%	9 47.37%
Received PD	19 100%	
Positive experience	8 44.44%	10 55.56%
Reading instruction has changed	15 88.24%	2 11.76%
Collaborated with colleagues	17 89.47%	2 10.52%
Increase in student achievement in reading	12 75%	4 24%

*Note.* Some questions show less than 19 responses due to non-responses on the surveys.

Survey data revealed teachers agreed or strongly agreed that 1) they received professional development (100%), 2) their reading instructions changed (88.24%), 3) they collaborated with colleagues (89.47%), and student achievement increased (75%) due to their school’s restructuring consequence. Teachers’ perceptions were split on two questions; if they had input into decisions regarding reading instructions and if restructuring was a positive experience.

I was intrigued by the split in the responses pertaining to input into decisions regarding reading instruction and restructuring being a positive experience. I wondered if years of teaching experience made a difference in these perceptions or any others. I determined that out of nineteen respondents, nine had less than ten years of experience and ten had ten years or more experience. I reorganized their responses based upon years of experience as displayed in Table 25:

Table 25

*Staff Survey Reorganized by Years of Experience*

	Strongly agree/agree Less than 10 years	Strongly agree/agree 10 years or more	Disagree/strongly disagree Less than 10 years	Disagree/strongly disagree 10 years or more
Input into decisions on reading instruction	4 44.44%	6 60%	5 55.56%	4 40%
Received PD	9 100%	10 100%		
Positive experience	3 37.5%	6 60%	5 63.5%	4 40%
Reading instruction has changed	8 88.89%	7 87.5%	1 10.11%	1 12.5%



Table 25 (Continued)

	Strongly agree/agree	Strongly agree/agree	Disagree/strongly disagree	Disagree/strongly disagree
	Less than 10 years	10 years or more	Less than 10 years	10 years or more
Collaborated with colleagues	8 88.89%	9 90%	1 10.11%	1 10%
Increase in student achievement in reading	6 37.5%	7 43.75%	2 12.5%	1 6.25%

Note. Some questions show less than 19 responses due to non-responses on the surveys.

To provide a more visual representation of the data I created a histogram to graphically represent the survey results:

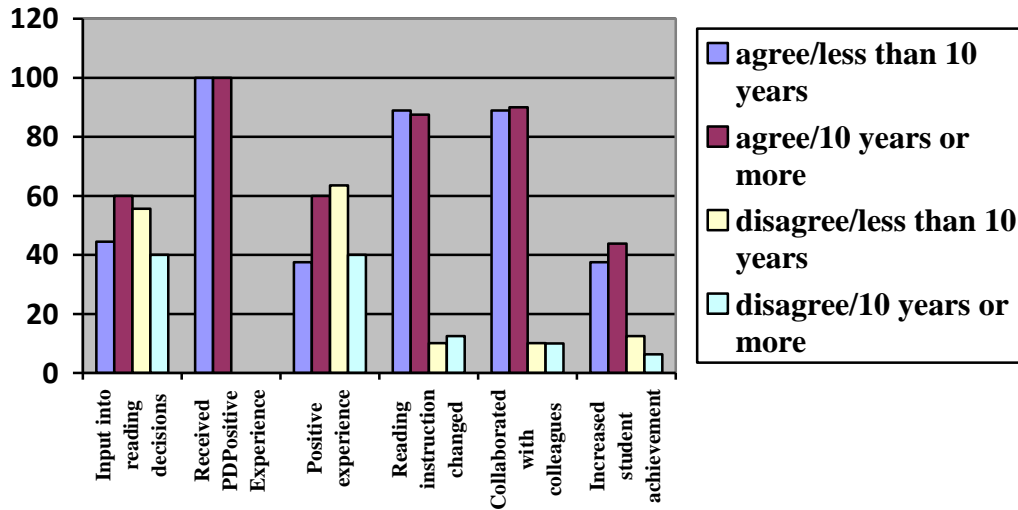


Figure 1. Staff Survey Reorganized by Years of Experience

Florida teachers with ten or more years of experience reported a perception of slightly more input into decision making with regards to reading instruction (60% to 44.4%). The gap was wider in regards to perceiving restructuring as a positive experience. Sixty percent of teachers with ten or more years of experience reported the

experience as positive while only 37.5% of teachers with less than ten years reported the experience as positive. Years of experience made little difference in the responses of teachers with regards to receipt of professional development, change in reading instruction, collaboration with colleagues and perceiving and increase in student achievement.

To summarize, the quantitative component of the survey revealed teachers received professional development, perceived a change in reading instruction, collaborated with their colleagues due to their school's restructuring consequence and whether or not student achievement increased during the restructuring period. Years of experience had an impact on responses with regards to opportunity for input into reading instruction and perception of restructuring as a positive experience.

In addition to quantitative data from responses on a Likert scale, the survey provided a space for teachers to write responses related to each question. I also provided a space at the bottom of the survey for any additional comments teachers wanted to make. To analyze teachers' written responses, I created a spreadsheet with a column for each survey question. Each written response was copied verbatim and placed in the matching question column. Teachers' comments are reported in Table 26:

Table 26

*Teachers Written Responses to Survey Questions*

Have input into reading instruction	Received PD	Restructuring as a positive experience	Reading instruction has changed	Collaborated with colleagues	Student achievement has increased	Additional comments
no choice making decisions about reading instruction	told what will be happening multiple opportunities	no-forceful feedback minimal, inconsistencies	LFS has helped have interpreted and adapted	has helped to figure out and modify curriculum to fit needs	depends on home support	We are working hard
all decisions made at county and state level	usually during block planning	makes getting better results difficult made staff edgy and irritable	little feedback grade levels structure lessons	we have weekly meetings	DIBELS scores went up statistics can be deceiving	
no longer allowed to use things that always worked	great deal of time consuming	staff worried about future positions hard time	walking a dark path leading nowhere	curriculum planning day	not always give an accurate picture	
forced to use less effective methods	work load overwhelming	demands on administration goes to teachers to perform	no curriculum addresses gaps and learning deficits			
told what will be happening not asked my opinion	extra PD terribly time consuming	great deal of time work load overwhelming	should be instructional levels			

Table 26 (Continued)

Have input into reading instruction	Received PD	Restructuring as a positive experience	Reading instruction has changed	Collaborated with colleagues	Student achievement has increased	Additional comments
	little time for anything else too much, wrong kind	considered leaving the profession putting more and more on teachers less and less help	curriculum does not take instructional levels into consideration			
		takes a great amount of time				
		made to feel incapable and incompetent, inferior				
		lose some of the joy of teaching				
		tremendous load of tedious work				
		time consuming				
		little to do with children's learning				

After each comment was entered on the spreadsheet I analyzed their comments for emergent patterns and themes. As patterns emerged, I color-coded their responses. I identified seven categories of responses: a) time consuming, b) issues with curriculum and instruction, c) no choice in decisions, d) stress, e) professional development, f) little feedback and g) impact on reading achievement. I reorganized these categories into two themes: affective impact (30% of categorical responses) and instructional impact (64% of

categorical responses). Three responses (6%) were “uncertain”. Coding procedures were duplicated to establish inter-rater reliability which was established at 96%. Table 27 displays how I organized categories into themes.

Table 27

*Themes Identified from Open-ended Survey Responses*

Affective Impact	Instructional Impact
no choice in decisions stress/punitive little feedback	issues with curriculum and instruction professional development impact on reading achievement time consuming

As I read the survey responses I noticed that while most responses were negative in nature, there were responses that were also positive or neutral. I reread each response and coded it first as positive or negative. For example, the statement, “DIBELS scores went up” was identified as a positive statement due to the positive impact on reading achievement while, “staff worried about future positions” was identified as negative since it related a concern about job security. After coding positive and negative responses I decided to include a third category, neutral, since some responses were statements of perceived fact or a response that help neither positive nor negative connotation. “Received PD” is an example of a neutral statement that relates a fact but applies neither a positive nor a negative connotation to it.

To determine the extent to which teachers responded either positively or negatively I placed each comment within the two themes, affective impact and

instructional impact, into three categories: positive, neutral and negative. Table 28 shows the percentages for each category.

Table 28

<i>Categories of Survey Comments</i>			
Theme	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Affective Impact	0	7%	93%
Instructional Impact	17%	30%	53%

Affective impact responses were overwhelmingly negative with 93% of all responses (13 out of 14) negative. Instructional impact responses were split with 47% of responses either positive or neutral (5 out of 30 and 9 out of 30 respectively) and 53% negative (16 out of 30).

*Affective impact.* Fourteen out of 47 categorical responses to the survey were affective in nature. Categories of affective responses dealt with lack of input into decisions regarding reading instruction, feelings of stress or punitive intent, and receipt of little or no feedback to teachers' endeavors in applying instructional strategies effectively.

Teachers commented that they had not been provided opportunities to have input into decision-making in regards to reading instruction. One teacher wrote that all decisions came from the district and state level, and three other responses indicated that teachers' opinions were not considered regarding reading curriculum and instruction.

Two teachers responded to survey questions with comments regarding feedback. One teacher reported minimal and inconsistent feedback to classroom instruction, while another wrote, "...since little feedback is given one is basically walking a dark path leading nowhere" (Survey Response, April, 2009).

The majority of affective responses dealt with feelings of stress and possible punitive actions toward teachers if the desired AYP result is not achieved. One teacher related restructuring as a "hard time" and there is "more and more on teachers with less and less help." Other responses indicated feelings of incompetence and irritableness, and one teacher spoke to concerns about job security. Two teachers' comments were particularly telling. One wrote that the "some of the joy of teaching" had been lost and the other stated, "I have even considered leaving the profession altogether."

*Instructional impact.* Comments regarding professional development were positive, with the exception of one teacher who commented professional development at Star was "too much, wrong kind." Teachers wrote positively about Star's reading coach, receipt of training they probably would not have received if not for Star's restructuring status, and the opportunity to work with colleagues during grade level planning days.

Teachers' comments regarding changes in curriculum and instruction were negative. Teachers related concern regarding the appropriateness of curriculum in meeting their specific student population needs and delivering reading instruction at students' instructional levels.

Comments on changes in reading instruction were mixed. Positive comments revealed teachers perceived an increase in DIBELS scores and that Learning Focus Strategies helped improve reading achievement. Negative comments revealed a distrust in data analysis of reading achievement since “statistics can be deceiving [and do] not always give an accurate picture” and dissatisfaction with the reorganization of students at one grade level into homogeneous groups by reading level.

Teachers wrote many responses regarding the time consuming nature of planning and implementing instruction during restructuring. While their responses to professional development were positive, they cited professional development as an infringement on planning time. I attributed this paradox in perceptions to the respect the teachers held for Star’s reading coach. The teachers often praised the reading coach’s efforts to help with reading assessments and instructional materials, yet they tired of the weekly meetings that took them away from their classrooms to meet with the reading coach. Other responses included “we are given a tremendous load of tedious and time consuming work,” the “work load is overwhelming,” and “it is terribly time consuming leaving little time for anything else”.

Survey data analysis resulted in the identification of two categories of Star’s teachers’ perceptions related to restructuring: instructional impact and affective impact. Next I analyzed teacher interviews to see if participants’ perceptions matched those of the staff at large.



### *Analysis of Teacher Interviews*

As discussed in Chapter Three, structured interview questions were written to mirror the content of survey questions in order to compare data collected from the survey sample to data collected from participants. I reread the transcripts of each interview with an a priori coding scheme (Patton, 2002) to locate units of meaning. The coding scheme was based on the results from the survey analysis and was related to perceptions of instructional or affective impact due to restructuring. I isolated meaningful units in the forms of phrases and sentences within each interview, then copied the passages from the interview from which each unit was found in order to provide contextual meaning for the unit. I then pasted each passage in a spreadsheet where I identified the teacher and interview line(s) of text from which the passage came. Then I color-coded interview statements into the same subcategories I identified from the survey analysis: no choice in decisions, stress/punitive, little or no feedback, professional development, issues with curriculum and instruction, impact on reading achievement, and time consuming. I filtered the responses by color so that all responses from each subcategory were grouped together. Finally, I re-sorted the statements as either positive, neutral, or negative following the same criteria used in sorting survey comments. For example, “more stressful, heavier work-load” was coded as negative due to the negative connotation of “stressful,” and “it’s been helpful” was coded as positive. Results are shown in Table 29:

Table 29

*Categories of Interview Statements*

Theme	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Affective Impact	6%	12%	82%
Instructional Impact	27%	40%	33%

Again, affective responses were overwhelmingly negative (64 out of 78 responses), where instructional responses were more neutral (22 out of 55). I compared the results of the survey comments to the statements made during interviews. Results are displayed in Table 30:

Table 30

*Comparison of Survey Comments and Interview Statements*

	Affective	Instructional
Survey positive	0	17%
Survey neutral	7%	30%
Survey negative	93%	53%
Interview positive	6%	27%
Interview neutral	12%	40%
Interview negative	82%	33%

To provide a more visual representation of the data I created a graph to show the combined results.

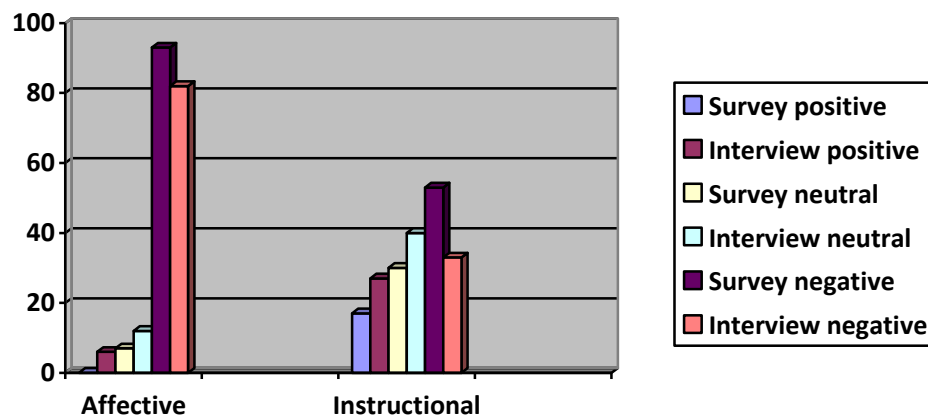


Figure 2. Comparison of Survey Comments and Interview Statements in Percentages.

Interview analyses revealed teachers’ perceptions that were related to restructuring mirrored survey analysis in affective impact with survey and interview statements overwhelmingly negative. However, more teachers discussed positive elements of instructional impact during interviews than those who had made positive comments on the survey. Similarly, there were fewer negative statements regarding instructional impact during interviews than commented upon by teachers on the survey. The greater number of positive statements during interviews may have occurred due to the conversational format of the interview sessions as compared to the more structured format of the survey. The anonymity of the survey may have also allowed a “safe place” for teachers to vent their frustrations regarding curricular and instructional changes at Star.

*Affective impact.* Seventy-eight out 133 interview statements were affective in nature. Like survey comments, categories of affective responses dealt with lack of input

into decisions regarding reading instruction, feelings of stress or punitive intent, and receipt of little or no feedback to teachers' endeavors in applying instructional strategies effectively.

Stress was the most discussed affective category with 35 out of 78 responses directly related to stress, fatigue, pressure, or frustration. "It's been a frustrating year," "teachers are wearing out," "more stressful, heavier workload," and "I think sometimes putting more pressure on the staff... well I know it's not good, not good for me" were indicative of interview statements related to feelings of stress. The concern regarding job security was also discussed. One kindergarten teacher said, "I was worried, I worried about it. I got my letter but I'm not tenured, I don't have any of that" (Focus Group Interview, June, 2009). A first grade teacher's concerns were well founded. Due to poor student performance she was not rehired for the 2009-2010 school year.

Eighteen statements related to the time-consuming nature of lesson planning, professional development, or paper work. Statements included, "...it's [LFS] hard, it's a lot of work," "We don't have enough time to actually plan what the kids need," and "PD (professional development) one to two days per week [during planning time while students are at special classes such as art, music or P.E.]." In regards to professional development, one teacher said,

We have professional development at least once a week, I don't get follow through, I write them in my lesson plan and everything, but I don't know if I'm doing it right for that concept for these kind of kids (Interview, May, 2009).

Another teacher expanded on her issue with professional development,

...then we get pulled out for a meeting here or a professional development there, and you don't have the time in your classroom so do anything like they want you to do it so it's they've given you more but taken away your time because of how you get to your kids (Interview, April, 2009).

According to Star's School Improvement Plan (2008), professional development was scheduled two times per week (one day for reading and another day for math) during each grade level's planning time. Professional development topics for reading included: a) extended thinking skills, b) summarizing, c) vocabulary in context, d) advanced organizers, and e) non-verbal representations. Professional development related to school failure to achieve AYP is a requirement for schools in restructuring (NCLB, 2001).

Teachers also discussed their perceptions of being left out of the decision-making process at their school. They were not allowed to write their own evaluation goals as they had done in previous years, nor were their recommendations regarding promotion/retention followed, especially in first grade. Additionally, Star's teachers did not participate in planning the types of professional development they needed or would receive. When asked about teacher input during our focus interview, one teacher remarked, "They need to listen, I think, a little more to teachers" (Focus Group Interview, June, 2009). These perceptions are supported by Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, and Orphanos (2009) who found that fewer than one-fourth of United States'

teachers perceive they have any “influence over setting performance standards for students” (p. 49).

*Instructional impact.* Teachers discussed the impact of restructuring on classroom instruction in the contexts of change in curriculum and instruction; some of which were perceived to be inappropriate or unnecessary. Unlike survey comments, teachers did point out positive elements of Star’s curriculum and its instructional strategies, especially in regards to Learning Focus Strategies.

Fifteen out of 55 interview statements related to curriculum and instruction were positive in nature. Co-teaching in inclusion classrooms, restructuring reading groups into instructional levels and implementation of new writing and vocabulary programs were discussed as beneficial to teaching and student learning. Learning Focus Strategies, while viewed negatively in the affective category due to stress and time requirements linked to professional development, was discussed positively in regards to its impact on teacher effectiveness and student learning. Comments included, “It helped me focus on particular skills related to reading,” “I mean all of that little stuff that we never really used to teach the kids and they didn’t have an understanding of it [now it’s taught],” and “Learning Focus has helped me tremendously” were illustrative of teachers’ perceptions of the positive nature of the strategies.

This paradox in views regarding LFS is supported by the findings of Darling-Hammond et. al (2009) regarding teacher perceptions of professional development linked to classroom practice. Professional development is effective when it is “intensive, on-

going, and connected to practice; focuses on the teaching and learning of specific academic content; is connected to other school initiatives; and builds strong working relationships with other teachers” (p. 44) and teachers find these types of professional development activities valuable. When the professional development is linked directly to the concepts and skills teachers want their students to learn, teacher practice and student outcomes are improved. When student outcomes improve, teachers respond positively to the professional development that led to these improvements in spite of time constraints placed upon teachers’ time.

Negative statements regarding instructional impact were primarily related to the pacing of curriculum maps. Teachers perceived the curriculum maps as inappropriate in regards to the amount of time allowed for teaching of certain concepts, especially in math. “It was 3 days a week for division,” “Difficulty is when you have a class like mine which is full inclusion it’s difficult to be on the same page with another 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher who has... higher kids” and “It’s hard to see what really does work because they haven’t given it enough time to see if it really is effective” related to their perceptions of pacing. Other negative comments reflected perceptions of difficulty in aligning materials with curriculum map content. This perception is discussed further in Research Question 4.

### *Summary of Research Question 3*

Survey and interview analysis reflected two categories pertaining to teachers’ perceptions of restructuring: instructional impact and affective impact. Teachers perceived the instructional impact of restructuring both positively and negatively. They discussed the positive benefits of increased professional development, but all agreed that

it imposed greatly on their planning time. Teachers were also positive about new instructional strategies resulting in an increase in their students' DIBELS scores. However, teachers in general distrusted the statistics regarding Star's reading achievement due to their perception that FCAT scores do not give an accurate picture of their students' abilities.

Perceptions of affective impacts due to restructuring were predominately negative. Teachers perceived little opportunity for input into decisions regarding curriculum and instruction and discussed the limited opportunities for teacher leadership to emerge. They also perceived the possibility of punitive actions toward them if their students do not meet academic expectations. Many teachers reported heightened stress due to changes in curriculum and instruction following failure to make AYP, but did not relate the heightened stress specifically to the consequence of restructuring.

Do teachers' perceptions of restructuring due to AYP failure have an impact on their reading instruction? The next question narrows the focus from restructuring in general to reading in particular.

*Research Question 4: In What Ways Have Teachers' Perceptions of the Restructuring Process Changed their Reading Instruction?*

As discussed in Chapter Two, reading instruction has changed since the authorization NCLB (2001) and subsequent publication of *The NRP Report* (2002). All teaching methods and materials must be based upon scientifically-based reading research and children must be explicitly taught the five essential components of reading:



phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. All programs that incorporate instruction in the five essential components of reading must meet the criteria of scientifically-based reading research (SBRR).

Foorman & Nixon (2006) cite two major impacts of policy initiatives on reading instruction: emphasis on SBRR and emphasis on early reading intervention. Debates have raged concerning the narrow focus the NRP took in its research and recommendations concerning SBRR (Allington, 2006; Krashen, 2004; Yatvin, 2002). Camilli, Wolfe & Smith (2007) argued that the NRP lacked the “substantive, methodological and classroom experience-as well as the time and resources” (p. 33) to conduct their meta-analysis. Critics assert that the NRP’s findings regarding the effectiveness of systematic phonics instruction were misrepresented and lead to the adoption of ineffective scripted reading programs that have done little to improve reading achievement of struggling readers (Allington, 2006).

Proponents of current policy initiatives point to the movement of low-achieving schools toward state goals (Weiner, 2004), improvement in reading comprehension in nearly all student subgroups (USDOE, 2008), and improvements in Black and Hispanic students’ NAEP test scores (Hall, 2007). Proponents argue that effective teachers successfully negotiate policy mandates and positively impact the academic achievement of their students (Kersten & Pardo, 2007). Current policy supports the view that good teaching is good teaching, and teachers who apply effective practices will produce students who meet state standards.

In order to ascertain teachers' perceptions of changes in reading instruction due to restructuring, I applied constant comparative analysis (Patton, 2002) to teachers' responses to interview questions. Interview transcripts were searched for comments regarding change in reading instruction. Teachers' comments were electronically copied to a spreadsheet by teacher name and location of each comment by line number. As patterns emerged I created categorical headings in another electronic spreadsheet and copied each comment under its associated category. Categories regarding change in reading instruction were a) Learning Focus Strategies, b) new vocabulary program, c) full inclusion classrooms for each grade level, d) longer reading block, e) differentiated centers, f) new instructional reading strategies, g) pull-out groups and, (h) increased student group work. I then looked for patterns across the categories and noted that some related to teacher practice and while others related to when reading was taught and what materials were used to teach reading. Inter-rater reliability was established at 92%. Three themes, change in reading block structure, change in reading curriculum and change in reading instructional strategies, were identified. I then applied content analysis (Patton, 2002) to field notes to locate evidence of implementation of changes in reading instruction noted by teachers.

#### *Change in Reading Block Structure*

Teachers discussed changes in the structure of their reading block. All elementary schools in Bell County are required to designate 90 minutes of uninterrupted time for reading instruction. This year the reading block at Star was lengthened to 120 minutes as a strategy for improving student reading achievement.

During the reading block at Star, each grade level redistributed students in homogeneous groups for 30 minutes of instruction at the students' instructional levels. For the first 30 minutes of the reading block students changed classrooms and met with another homeroom teacher or Exceptional Student Education (ESE) resource teachers for targeted instruction using state approved supplemental materials. This structure differed in grade one where students were placed in homogeneous groups for the entire 120 minute reading block. One of the first grade units housed the lowest performing first grade students. This classroom provided three teachers to work with students in small groups during the entire reading block.

Another change in reading block instruction was the implementation of one full inclusion classroom at each grade level. During the reading block an ESE resource teacher worked in a co-teaching model to support ESE and other students identified as struggling with reading. ESE students in inclusion classrooms included any ESE student who, according to his/her Individual Educational Plan (IEP) could participate in FCAT administration. Any ESE students determined not able to participate in FCAT administration received reading instruction in a self-contained ESE classroom.

According to Star's master schedule, each grade level had a dedicated 120 minute reading block. During my classroom visits I found that teachers adhered to the schedule except for fourth grade. For the last six weeks of school this grade level incorporated a novel unit into their reading curriculum and used the last 30 minutes of the reading block for social studies related to the novel.

I observed the 30 minute homogenous instruction time in one fifth grade classroom. The *SRA Passport* series, a state-approved evidence-based supplemental reading program (Star School Improvement Plan, 2008), was used during the pull-out group instruction time. Using the teacher's manual, the teacher provided background information for a nonfiction selection about forests. She guided students through a story preview using text structure to identify major topics and vocabulary. She and the students read the story together orally, and then practiced using prefixes and suffixes to define vocabulary words. When the lesson ended, the teacher dismissed students back to their homeroom classes.

I also observed the use of ESE resource teachers in kindergarten, first, fourth and fifth grade inclusion classrooms. ESE teachers circulated during whole group instruction and worked with small groups of students on specific skills. The fifth grade classroom teacher discussed at length the positive benefits of the co-teaching model associated with her inclusion classroom. District ESE supervisors asked to video the two teachers in action to serve as a model for inclusion classroom teaching.

Star's reading block structure changed in two ways since entering into restructuring. First, reading instruction now takes place for 120 rather than 90 minutes for all students rather than the previous 30 additional minutes for struggling readers only. All students receive reading instruction in the additional 30 minutes at their instructional levels. Additionally, each grade level at Star has one ESE inclusion classroom. An ESE resource teacher works with ESE students in the homeroom classroom rather than instructing students in the ESE resource room. This model provided ESE students the

opportunity to participate in a least-restrictive environment per their Individual Education Plan requirements while providing a regular classroom teacher with the support of ESE resource teachers within the context of the general education classroom.

### *Change in Reading Curriculum*

All schools in Bell County, not just those in restructuring, must adhere to curriculum maps and timelines. Star followed the Bell County Curriculum Maps and Timelines for content area instruction. Most grade levels reported working together to match materials with the curriculum maps (maps are described later in Chapter Four) for all content areas. Matching materials was accomplished by teachers previewing the maps to determine what content was to be taught and identifying curricular materials to be used during each period of instruction as defined by the map. Teachers divided this task by taking on responsibilities for planning for one content area and sharing with the rest of the grade level.

Teachers expressed frustration with using the maps and timeline. While they agreed the maps and timeline helped make sure they covered content, they discussed at length the problems associated with meeting student needs. Several teachers talked about the problem of meeting mastery under the time constraints of the timeline saying, “You have to do this in a certain period of time, and if the children don’t get it you have to move on” (Interview, May, 2009). Their concern is well founded due to the need to cover all state standards tested on FCAT in March.

Others expressed frustration with the disconnect between the maps and their

content core materials. One kindergarten teacher said, “Reading is the only one that does not follow the book because the map does not follow the book at all, you’ve got to kind of wing it and go” (Interview, May, 2009). When I asked a third grade teacher about maps matching materials she said, “Science does, the math, the math was tough because we have to go in the book and look and find each topic” (Interview, May, 2009). A first grade teacher complained, “The core don’t match the curriculum maps, and let me tell you something else, the curriculum maps don’t match the SAT 10, especially in math. Curriculum maps don’t match the SAT 10” (Interview, May, 2009). When reviewing the maps, I found this issue to be true. For example, during Fiction Focus (weeks 7-10, Bell County Curriculum Maps, 2009b) second grade basal stories include a nonfiction selection.

To resolve this issue Bell County first required second grade teachers to skip around in the two second grade basals in order to match the skills on the map. This resulted in more frustration for the teachers due to the impact skipping stories had on the reading series’ phonics instructional sequence. The district finally decided to leave the second grade story sequence intact and noted on the map that “trade books related to fiction may be substituted” (Bell County Second Grade Language Arts Curriculum Map, 2009b) for the nonfiction story.

The issue for Star’s teachers was this: Star is in restructuring due to failure to achieve AYP. The district is directly involved in the day to day operation of the school and expects Star to adopt required curricular and instructional changes in order to positively impact student achievement. But for Star’s teachers the implementation of

those changes was not only difficult due to the reorganization of curriculum but in many cases does not make sense because the required curriculum did not align itself with required materials.

Another change in curriculum was a new vocabulary program in grades kindergarten, first, third and fourth. Star participated in the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) research study of *Elements of Reading (EOR): Vocabulary* (Beck & McKeown, 2005). This study provided Florida elementary schools an opportunity to receive *EOR: Vocabulary* by Steck-Vaughn at no charge in exchange for participation in the study. The two year study, funded by a grant from the U. S. Department of Education, was designed to measure the benefits of program use by students at schools with a 40% or higher free/reduced lunch populations (McREL, 2008).

Participating students were assessed with a pre/post listening test (McREL, 2008) in which target words were used in sentences. Students determined if the word was used correctly in context and marked a smiley/frowny face to denote correct/incorrect usage. Final measures also included student SESAT (kindergarten and first) and SAT-10 (second through fifth) test scores (McREL, 2008). The increase in vocabulary instruction was one of the directives of Star's School Improvement Plan, and teachers agreed that this new program helped them meet that requirement.

I talked with kindergarten and first grade teachers about the new vocabulary program. They were in agreement concerning the ease of using the materials and implemented the program for the prescribed 20 minutes per day. One first grade teacher

said the program was “concrete, straight to the point, and .... you can differentiate, it is regimented, lovely” (Interview, May, 2009). This teacher also said, “It does more than the sounds and pictures and stuff like that. It’s all scripted to tell you what to do and that one was really good.” This teacher was placed mid-year with another first grade teacher due to her students’ poor DIBELS progress and was supervised by the other teacher during the reading block. The other first grade teacher expressed concern about the developmental appropriateness of the vocabulary for her struggling readers, but liked the program and felt it was beneficial to her more able readers.

Reading curriculum changed in Star’s classroom since entering into restructuring. Use of county curriculum maps and timelines were instituted in all district schools, not just at those in restructuring. In order to improve vocabulary development, Star participated in the McREL study to determine the effectiveness of *Elements of Reading Vocabulary* (Beck & McKeown, 2005).

#### *Change in Reading Instructional Strategies*

Teachers reported changes in instructional strategies related whole group instruction. Teachers reported that they focused on greater use of high-order thinking skills during instruction as well as use of a variety of graphic organizers for summarizing learning. Teachers also fully implemented the Catching Up Kids LFS model to incorporate strategies for previewing, learning activation, scaffolding and vocabulary instruction. While LFS strategy use began at Star three years ago, teachers fully implemented the use of learning maps reading, math, writing, and science this year. Teachers pointed out a new emphasis on using UEQs and LEQs to scaffold instruction



and focus student learning.

Reactions to LFS were mixed. One teacher pointed out that using the strategies “helped me focus on particular skills related to reading” (Interview, April, 2009). Another remarked that the UEQs “keep teachers on track “ (Interview, April, 2009). Others questioned the effectiveness of using yet another new program when “maybe they will learn, grasp the new strategy and maybe they could have grasped it the old way” (Interview, May, 2009). When asked about change in reading instruction, another teacher responded, “No, not really, I’m teaching similarly to the way I was before.”

Teachers identified a decrease in whole group and increase in small group instruction this year. Teachers also discussed using cooperative learning strategies in small groups to a greater degree than before and changes in room arrangements to better suit cooperative group interaction. These structures were evidenced in their lesson plans and in classroom observations, but I did not have access to previous years’ plans to evaluate the veracity of their claims.

During classroom visits I observed a variety of instructional strategies discussed by teachers during their interviews. In every classroom I observed the use of high-order thinking questions and a variety of graphic organizers for summarizing reading. I observed teachers consistently asking, “How do you know?” or “What makes you think that?” in response to their questions during story discussions. I also observed consistent connection of content to real-world situations. While reading “Strawberry Girl,” a fourth grade teacher connected her experiences as a child charging groceries at a local market, a

practice that has all but disappeared today. She went on to explain that charging is now primarily by use of credit cards. One of her students offered that his uncle is still allowed to charge beer at the local convenience store, to which the teacher replied that that was a real nice thing for the store owner to do (Field Notes, May, 2009).

Graphic organizers were used consistently to summarize lesson content. I also observed graphic organizers used to demonstrate knowledge of main idea and supporting details, story elements, vocabulary understanding and usage, compare and contrast, cause and effect, and sequencing. These organizers were often used in subsequent lessons for review of lesson content and preparation of story retellings.

The emphasis on vocabulary instruction was evident. In third, fourth and fifth grade classrooms vocabulary related to novel units was introduced before each chapter then discussed at length as words arose during reading. Teachers consistently prompted and probed students to define words from the context of the story. When this strategy did not produce the desired results students were directed to use dictionaries and discuss definitions in relation to vocabulary use in their texts.

During one of my visits in a third grade classroom I watched the teacher help her students navigate their difficulties with unknown words. When the vocabulary word ‘bewildering’ arose, none of the students could define or explain it. She guided them back through the story and tried to help them understand the meaning through context. When this was unsuccessful, she told them to look it up in the dictionary. One student offered the synonym ‘perplexed.’ The teacher said, “What does perplexed mean? Look

it up. How many of you are perplexed about your multiplication tables.” She kept prompting them until several students finally came up with the word ‘confused’ which led to much cheering and applause when she told them they were right.

#### *Summary of Research Question 4*

There have been many changes in reading instruction at Star Elementary School due to its failure to achieve AYP. While teachers admit to being frustrated with the changes they were forced to make, both curricular and instructional, they also discussed the benefits of those changes. These changes have occurred over a number of years, not just during restructuring. Each new year, however, brings another change. Star’s teachers perceive these changes as a result of their AYP status even though most of the changes were implemented in all Bell County schools. It is important to note that as a district Bell County has never achieved AYP, so in essence all changes, whether at Star or any other school in the district, are a result of AYP status.

#### Chapter Summary

Chapter Four opened with an introduction to Star Elementary School. Participant selection and the timeline for the study were discussed. Each research question was posed and answered. Methodology for data analysis and findings was discussed.

The first research question concerned the perceptions of Star’s teachers regarding their school’s AYP failure. While teachers placed blame on students, parents, and policy mandates, they also discussed their responsibilities in both achieving and failing to achieve targeted student outcomes.

The second research question asked if Star's teachers understand the restructuring process. Teachers demonstrated an understanding of what AYP constitutes and why Star did not achieve AYP in reading or math. Teachers understood the consequences associated with failure to achieve AYP but did not correctly identify all subgroups at their school that were tied to AYP failure.

The third research question concerned teachers' perceptions of the restructuring process. Teachers identified two areas related to impact of restructuring: instructional and affective. Teachers discussed both positive and negative instructional impacts. Affective impacts were negative with increase in teacher stress and decrease in planning time most often discussed.

Finally, question four regarded the impact of restructuring on reading instruction. Teachers discussed the curricular and instructional changes associated with AYP failure but did not link these directly to restructuring. Teachers also perceived all changes in curriculum and instruction at Star to be a result of AYP failure but not specifically related to restructuring. While schools failing to make AYP implemented these changes first, Bell County implemented these changes in all schools.

The results of this study indicate Star's teachers perceive themselves having little if any decision-making authority during their school's reform process. The consequences of this lack of autonomy resulted in perceptions of powerlessness associated with continual change in curriculum and instructional practices as well as elevated stress and frustration resulting from increased time mandates due to professional development that impinged upon their planning time.

While school reform mandates are intended to improved teacher quality through improved instruction, long-term consequences associated with failure to achieve AYP at Star created a negative environment related to teachers' affective perceptions of the process. In schools where teachers perceive themselves to be less competent (Evans, 2009), threatened (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2008), and/or look for others to blame for academic failure (Protheroe, 2008), efficacy suffers. Considering the causal relationship between efficacy and student achievement (Evans, 2009; Fives, Hamman, & Olivarez, 2006; Gabriele & Joram, 2007; Hawkins, 2009; Hoy, Hoy, & Kurz, 2008), my research supports the Restructuring Inverse Impact Theory: consequences of NCLB's (2001) reform mandates intended to enhance student achievement may *negatively* impact that achievement due to the undermining of teacher efficacy. This theory is discussed further in Chapter Five.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into teachers' perceptions of Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) and its restructuring consequences. Four research questions were proposed and answered in order to meet this purpose:

1. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding their school's failure to make Adequate Yearly Progress?
2. What are the understandings of teachers regarding the restructuring process?
3. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the restructuring process?
4. In what ways have their perceptions of the restructuring process changed their reading instruction?

Chapter One provided the rationale and background for this study of teachers' perceptions of the restructuring process due to failure to achieve AYP for five consecutive years. I discussed my previous experiences, relationships with teachers in the restructuring process, and background in reading instruction constituting an impetus for me to undertake this research. In Chapter Two a review of the literature informing the study was provided. An overview of NCLB (2001) requirements in regard to accountability, determinations of how AYP is achieved, and a discussion of how states' design decisions affect achievement of AYP were included.

In Chapter Three I provided an overview of the qualitative methods employed in my study. Grounded theory, ethnography as a research tool, and critical discourse analysis provided the theoretical frameworks for this organizational case study. Data collection and analysis pertaining to each research question were discussed in Chapter Four. Twelve teachers from a Title I elementary school in its first year of restructuring due to failure to achieve AYP were the participants of this study. I analyzed survey, interview and field note data and performed a document analysis of Title I: Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged, Section 1001, and Part A (also under Title I), Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies, Sections 1111 through 1120A of NCLB (2001) to answer the research questions. A review of the literature that lead to the research questions, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further research are discussed in this chapter.

### Introduction

The call for assessment and accountability in education is not a new phenomenon (Cross, 2004). Increased student enrollment in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, low literacy rates of soldiers in World War I, and the launch of Sputnik in 1957 lead to increased federal interest in education. Establishment of Title I and the Department of Education as a separate entity led to increased federal involvement, specifically funding, in our nation's schools. The publication of *A Nation at Risk* (1983) called for closer scrutiny of student achievement and implementation of higher standards in United States schools, leading to the tracking of student performance in an effort to hold schools and teachers accountable for student achievement.

NCLB (2001) placed assessment and accountability as the “key mechanism” for the improvement of student achievement (Ryan, 2002, p. 453) and further expanded state testing requirements (Goetz & Duffy, 2003). Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) constitutes the minimum proficiency level of improvement in reading and math where public schools must achieve each year (Yell & Drasgow, 2005), with data from all student sub-groups disaggregated in an effort to close the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged groups. Failure of even one sub-group in one subject to demonstrate AYP results in school failure to make AYP (Olson & Robelen, 2002; Porter, Linn & Trimble, 2006; Weiner & Hall, 2004).

Failure to achieve AYP results in a variety of consequences including increased professional development for staff, parent options to send their children to alternate, high-achieving schools, provision by schools to supply economically disadvantaged students with tutoring services, and induction into corrective action. Title I schools that fail to make AYP for five consecutive years enter into restructuring, in which LEAs must choose one or several of the following corrective actions: replace staff, implement new curriculum, reduce management authority at the school site, appoint an outside expert, extend the school year, and/or restructure the internal organization of the school NCLB (2001).

Proponents of NCLB (2001) and its AYP consequences point to increased attention to reading and math achievement, especially to under-served populations whose academic achievement levels are historically below those of their more advantaged peers. Billions of dollars in federal funding through the Reading First program reportedly led to



increased achievement in reading fluency and comprehension for nearly every grade and subgroup (USDOE, 2008). The *Reading First Impact Study: Interim Report* (2008) reported that teachers in Reading First schools increased instructional time in the five major components of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension). Schools receiving Reading First grants later in the funding process (in the year 2004) showed significant impacts on the time first and second grade teachers spent on instruction in the five components of reading as well as gains in first and second grade reading comprehension scores. For the first time, states were required to create assessments that were compatible to state educational standards and implement a system for recording and reporting student progress, including data disaggregated by ethnicity, socioeconomic status and disabilities.

Critics of NCLB (2001) point to the unrealistic goal of all children reading on grade level by 2014 and the impact of inequitable distributions of high/low achieving students in schools. With its focus on student achievement in the classroom, the law ignores students' experiences outside of the classroom, especially for students living in poverty (Berliner, 2006). Critics also point to the disparities within reporting AYP since each state is responsible in setting its own AYP criteria, such disparity resulting in 50 testing systems, sets of standards, accountability systems, and determinations of AYP (Peterson, 2007; Shannon, 2007). Measuring individual student gains has resulted in different determination of proficiency achievement than the AYP subgroup model (Choi, Seltzer, Hermann, & Yamashiro, 2007) Such an arrangement has resulted in students in schools that made AYP often did not make learning gains as large as students in schools

that failed to make AYP (Peterson & West, 2006). NCLB (2001) also positioned teachers as part of the problem with failure to make AYP (Shannon, 2007), which led to increased instructional time for low-achieving students at the expense of instructional time for higher-achieving students (Lewis, 2007a).

The message the public received regarding the quality of United States teachers is that teachers are inadequate and must be held accountable (Granger, 2008). According to Cochran-Smith & Lytle (2006) NCLB's (2001) view of good teaching is contingent upon a teacher's ability to identify student weaknesses and the resulting positive outcomes of high-stakes testing. They go on to say, "NCLB clearly indicates that it is teachers who make the difference, but only when their teaching conforms to particular images of good teaching implicit and explicit in the NCLB (2001) framework" (p. 679). It is in this climate characterized by inadequacy and failure the participants of this study teach their students every day. Their understandings of NCLB (2001) and its AYP consequences, as well as their perceptions of those consequences on their school and themselves, were the focus of this research.

### Conclusions from the Current Study

I reached four conclusions regarding AYP and restructuring at Star Elementary School: a) restructuring is not the issue, b) Star's teachers perceive all changes at their school as a result of AYP status, c) change is done "to them" not "with them," and d) there is a difference between the reality and the perception of school quality at Star Elementary School. Each finding is discussed by tying evidence from research at Star to relevant research related to the finding.

*Restructuring is not the Issue*

Restructuring at Star is perceived as “just one more thing” related to failure to achieve AYP. During interviews, teachers discussed the constant redress of not making AYP but did not discuss restructuring as an explicit consequence unless specifically asked about it. The “restructuring year” title that figured prominently in NCLB’s (2001) requirements regarding accountability did not exist for these teachers. While there were references to more paper work and even more professional development, the majority of responses alluded to their restructuring year being similar to last year (planning for restructuring). “It hasn’t had an effect on me,” “My reading instruction hasn’t really changed this year,” “It’s not that much different,” and “I don’t feel like this is our main year for restructuring” were indicative of teachers’ responses in regards to their perceptions of first year restructuring (Interviews, April, May, 2009). Another teacher said,

When I heard the term restructuring, I’m thinking like everything is going to be turned upside down... It’s been a change but not a huge change that it was just unbearable, you know (Interview, May, 2009).

While the 2008-2009 school year, the year of this study, was not perceived as much different due to restructuring than the previous school year, there was an understanding that there could be changes if AYP was not met again. One teacher said, “It hasn’t really been more different than the other years because we’re only in restructuring level one, but that may change next year” (Interview, May, 2009).

As discussed in Chapter Two, schools that do not make AYP for five consecutive years enter into restructuring. The consequences of restructuring can be a) reopen the school as a charter school, b) replace all or most of the staff, c) contract with a private management company, d) turn the operation of the school to the state, e) any other major restructuring arrangement that makes fundamental reforms to improve student achievement (NCLB, 2001). As discussed in Chapter Four, Bell County contracted with Learning Focused Schools (LFS) to implement LFS strategies in all schools in the district starting with the schools identified as Schools in Need of Improvement due to AYP failure. The 2008-2009 school year was Star's fourth year implementing LFS. While each year brought implementation of new aspects of the program, LFS was not viewed as new to Star as a consequence of restructuring, but was understood to be an effort by the district to improve AYP. Their reactions to LFS were mixed. While teachers understood the benefit of LFS strategies on their instruction, the cost in time as well as the mandate for all aspects of the program to be implemented immediately in their classrooms, led to frustration and stress.

State educational interventions produce a variety of reactions in teachers. Concern about the process, demoralization, and perceptions of unjust treatment, disrespect and distrust are common reactions by teachers when they are told that their schools are not achieving as they should be, and that teachers themselves are not performing in a way that induces adequate academic achievement in their students (McQuillan, 2008). These perceptions were voiced by Star's teachers. They perceived

the heightened scrutiny by district officials to be indicative of the district's distrust in their abilities to teach their students well. One teacher said,

I just think it's hard for a school that has so many problems. The county keeps saying try this, try this, and then they yank things away next year and say try this, try this, try this, and it's hard to see what really does work because they haven't given it enough time to see if it really is effective (Interview, April, 2009).

This perception of scrutiny is supported by Cochran-Smith & Lytle, (2006) who discussed how teachers and administrators "bear the brunt" (p. 669) of both the expectations of achieving AYP and the criticism that follows the failure to do so. Cochran-Smith (2006) defines what good teachers do according to NCLB (2001):

NCLB and its supporting documents consistently portray good teachers as consumers of products, implementers of research-based programs, faithful users of test data, transmitters of knowledge and skills, and remediators of student weaknesses (p. 679).

When teachers fail to achieve those expectations they view that failure as a threat to their jobs (Roellke & Rice, 2008) and Star's teachers were no exception. Concern regarding job security surfaced during several interviews. During one session the teacher was interrupted by a knock on her classroom door. She excused herself and went outside to talk to another teacher. After the interview resumed I asked her about discussions she had with her colleagues regarding Star's first year in restructuring. The interview continued:

Teacher: I'll tell you too, teachers...another reason that uh, the stress they're under is they weren't assured of a job. They weren't...they didn't know what the future held for them, and some of them still don't. That's what that knock on the door was about. Did you get your letter giving you your primary contract?' Yes I did, I got mine yesterday, but she doesn't have hers. (Interview, April, 2009).

Their concerns regarding job security were not without merit. One of the study participants was not rehired due to her poor classroom performance and her student achievement outcomes.

Additionally, teachers in low-performing schools with high minority and second-language learner populations perceive state intervention as reinforcing the stereotypes their schools have struggled to overcome (McQuillan, 2008). This was also true at Star. The label of "failing school" was a bitter pill for Star's teachers who already work in what many of them regard to be a mission field. Star is the epitome of a low-income, high-minority neighborhood school located in an undesirable part of town. Teachers discussed the warnings they received from friends and colleagues about working at Star. One teacher related how her friends warned her about coming to Star. She said, "[Friends said] Oh, God are you crazy? You don't want to go there, check out the neighborhood first, check this out, check that out. I didn't. I just came. I can't imagine going anywhere else" (Interview, April, 2009).

While teachers at Star understood that their school faced consequences for not making AYP, the label of being a school in restructuring was not perceived as any more

or less of a consequence than those imposed in previous years, nor were characterizations depicted by frequent warnings. However, the teachers did discuss concerns regarding continued failure to make AYP and further changes that might be required of them.

*All Changes in Curriculum and Instruction are a Result of AYP Status*

As discussed in Chapter Four, there have been many curricular and instructional changes at Star over the last five years. However, these same changes have been gradually imposed at all schools in Bell County as strategies for improving student achievement. Learning Focus Strategies, Positive Behavior Support, implementation of data books, as well as inclusion in the McREL Vocabulary Study were not limited to Star, but teachers perceived these changes as consequences of AYP failure. One teacher stated, “I don’t know how to describe it [not making AYP], it’s just been, to me it’s been more stressful, just because of everything we’ve had to do, trying to start new programs as well. Sometimes...well...it’s just been a lot of work” (Interview, May, 2009).

Why Star’s teachers have this perception linking AYP consequence to curricular and instructional changes only at their school is unclear. It is also unclear to what extent the implementation of these programs promote student achievement, specifically in Bell County, or if the implementation these programs simultaneously has contradictory effects. According to Bell County’s School Accountability Report (2009), the percentage of Bell County students reading proficiently in Bell County Schools (as measured by FCAT) increased by 1% from 2008 to 2009, and the overall increase in reading achievement (as measured by FCAT) is 7% in five years. The lowest 25%tile posted an increase in reading proficiency of 2% from 2008 to 2009, and a 5% increase in five years.

However, percentage of AYP criteria met by Bell County schools fell by 6% from 2004 to 2009 (Bell County Schools AYP Report, 2009). While Bell County Schools are improving overall, the degree of improvement is not sufficient to keep pace with the escalating demands of AYP including the Safe Harbor provision.

Because change can be difficult, teachers tend to reminisce about what worked for them in the past (Blankstein, 2004), and this was true at Star. “I would like to teach the children like I was taught,” and “...and another thing the kids that I have, I taught them the strategies, like let me show you...something I did before we didn’t get to do that this year” were indicative of Star’s teachers’ thoughts on change in instruction from past to present. One teacher put a positive spin on instructional change:

It seems like every year there’s always one new program that comes into the school that you have to learn, and you throw away something that was working for you in order to start something new, and most of the time when you start something new it is a better thing, it really is, but it...change is hard” (Interview, April, 2009).

Another teacher was explicit regarding what she considered to be a detrimental change in reading instruction:

I always enjoy working with the children that need the most help, and I actually a few years ago, before all the Reading First when we were still using the [previous strategies] thing , the whole of 1<sup>st</sup> grade used it, changed the reading just because [researcher] said every child should be on their instructional level, and it was just



much easier to do that... They have to be in whole group, and the whole group has to sit there and read these texts and it doesn't matter if you can read it or not, you should listen to it on a tape and they should hear it 10 times and they should be able to read it, and that's not at their instructional level (Interview, May, 2009).

Regardless of their positive or negative perceptions about the outcomes of instructional change, the impact of constant change took a toll on Star's teachers:

But it's just that change all the time, and that...I've though the last 3 years, OK, next year it's got to be...it won't be so stressful next year, it just can't be and then the next year there's something else" (Interview, May, 2009).

The expectation that teachers change what has been successful for them in the past may be unrealistic (Kersten & Pardo, 2007) and some teachers may ignore new mandates while others find ways of "hybridizing" (p. 146) new practice with old. One teacher said,

Now I'm finding that you can really do your own stuff that you've used for years, it's just in a different...you write it up differently. Now it's not that you can just follow along you've got to change it up each year (Interview, May, 2009).

I asked teachers how AYP failure impacted their reading instruction. All of the teachers discussed increased time designated to reading, county curriculum maps, implementation of LFS strategies, and changes in lesson planning. One teacher elaborated:

Yes, there's been a huge impact, we've always did 90 minute reading block, now we're up to 120 minute reading block, we have a new curriculum which is LFS, it has been in place, we were one of the first schools to implement it, it's been around for 3 years now, it's more detailed. We have to have our LFS (learning map) up everyday. We have to refer to it as much as possible. We have to do centers, a lot of more intensive lesson plans, they have to be very detailed. The students have to... we have SRA reading where we break the students up into 3 groups, I would teach the low reading group, another teacher would teach a higher reading group, then we have another teacher that would teach the lowest of the low. That is something we did not do last year, and we are implementing it this year. In 5<sup>th</sup> grade, which is what I taught last year, did not implement that, 4<sup>th</sup> grade did implement SRA but 5<sup>th</sup> grade last year did not. So that's something new for me.

While these were changes referred to as implemented due to AYP failure, each of these changes is required by Bell County in all schools, including schools who have successfully achieved AYP. All Bell County schools' reading blocks are 90 minutes with an additional 30 minutes designated for intensive intervention, all schools are required to use LFS strategies, full inclusion for ESE students has been implemented district-wide, and the SRA reading series is on Bell County's adopted supplemental reading materials list for use with students needing additional intervention beyond those provided in the core reading series.

For school reform to be successful, schools as an organizational culture must face change proactively (Blankenstein, 2004), yet the most common responses are to a) avoid the challenge, b) embrace every possible solution or choose the quickest and/or easiest, c) blame others for the problem, d) ignore the data, e) “shoot the messenger,” or d) burnout (p. 8). At Star, teachers perceive that state and district officials have “embraced every possible solution” to combat AYP failure to the extent that change is occurring so rapidly teachers are having difficulty keeping up with the demands. New curriculum, new teaching strategies, and new programs have left Star’s teachers tired, stressed out and ready to “shoot the messenger.”

*Change is Done “To Them” not “With Them”*

Star’s teachers perceive themselves as powerless in regards to choice in the types of changes necessary to positively impact student achievement. Each year, Star’s teachers have implemented new policies and programs mandated by the state and district with no avenue for discussion or consensus by teachers. Every change is perceived as “one more thing” that takes time: a recurring theme in the interviews I conducted with Star’s teachers. Implementing new programs takes time, analyzing student data takes time, attending professional development takes time, assessing students takes time, and on and on and on. As each “one more thing” is added to the plates of Star’s teachers, their sense of power is diminished as they struggled to find time to do everything required of them without a sense of ownership in the decision-making process. One teacher stated,

Well, for me the consequences have been every year I've had more autonomy as a teacher taken away from above, more people coming in telling me what to do, more money spent on training of things for what to do, and that's for me the major effect (Interview, May, 2009).

As discussed in Chapter Two, organizations are hegemonic structures based upon power structures between groups of people (Fairclough, 2005). When an organization faces change, groups develop strategies “for achieving a new ‘fix’, and through a process of hegemonic struggle a new hegemonic ‘fix’ may occur” (p. 931). The success or failure of the new fix is dependent upon “the resilience, resistance, or inertia of existing organizational structures...” (p. 933). At Star, change associated with failure to make AYP is mandated hegemonically from federal to state to district to school administration to teachers.

Star's teachers discussed their administrators and their perceptions were generally positive. One teacher said,

I think our administration is positive...they don't always tell us what we want to hear, you know, but um, they have tried as hard as they can to do everything by the book and to be as fair as they can be (Interview, April, 2009).

Another teacher added,

Anytime you have physical ailments I think a lot of it tends to be due to stress and I know that the administration has a lot of stress on them. And they have really

worked hard this year, worked so hard, and they are a great administration, too, and I'd hate to lose them (Interview, May, 2009).

Teachers also discussed a variety of decisions made at Star by school administrators and district supervisors, none of which were discussed with or agreed upon by Star's teachers. Teachers' annual performance and evaluation goals were set by administration, not by teachers, for the 2008-2009 school year. This was a change from past years:

Teacher: Now my principal did come in and she did evaluate my performance in the classroom, however we're having a second evaluation, and from my understanding, it is got to be based on my Kaplan and how well the kids did.

Researcher: Did you determine the goal for that?

Teacher: No, I did not. The school did, because what we're...what the school believes is that if the students achieve a 70% in reading and they achieve a 60% in math on Kaplan...then because Kaplan is almost near FCAT...if they can do that on the Kaplan then we believe with that score they shall have no problem passing FCAT (Interview, April, 2009).

School-wide goals for FCAT testing were posted on the bulletin board in the central hallway at Star. Each grade level's AYP goal was posted as were the individual classroom Kaplan and DIBELS goals and student scores (identified by numbers, not names) for each assessment period. I asked teachers about the bulletin board:

Researcher: And are the goals that are posted on the bulletin board, is that you school's goals for AYP?

Teacher: Yes

Researcher: To make AYP...and would that be the increase for Safe Harbor or is that the state goal this year?

Teacher: I don't really know how they figured the goals, that was done by administration and they said 'these are the goals.' I really don't know how they figured that. I don't think it's to make safe harbor. I think it's the state goal (Interview, April, 2009).

I also asked teachers to discuss the posting of their classroom scores on the bulletin board:

Teacher 1: I think that could be detrimental in some ways because if a teacher sees her name plastered up there with all reds and no greens, I mean it does...even if I had a class I knew had progressed...but you still, it looks like their...

Teacher 2: And for me it's totally the opposite because I'm so... her greens make me, it motivates me to say if she can do it, we can do it. So it all depends. I'm a motivator, that will challenge me to say wait, hold up, I'm not doing as good as I think I'm doing, I can do more, so I appreciate it because whether I'm doing good or not when those parents walk down the hallways they can see, hey look [teacher name] is a great teacher, she got all these greens, this is what I want for my child.

Teacher 1: But if you have all greens and another teacher has reds then they think...

Teacher 3: Yeah, what a lousy teacher.

Teacher 2: And then it will motivate you to do better (laughs)

Teacher 1: The parents don't always understand what it...the way the classrooms are set up or anything (Focus Group Interview, June, 2009).

The use of color-coding for tracking student progress was not unique to Star.

Under the Reading First initiative, the Dynamic Indicator of Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) was established as the primary screening assessment tool for reading fluency in kindergarten through grade three (Schilling, et. al., 2007). Developed by Good and Kaminski in 2002, DIBELS measures students' abilities in letter naming, phonemic awareness, nonsense word decoding, and oral reading fluency. Students were categorized by color depending on outcome scores in each of the subtests with red indicating a need for intensive intervention, yellow indicating the need for moderate intervention, green indicating grade-level achievement, and blue indicating above grade-level achievement. During the 2008-2009 school year, all elementary students in Bell County were screened using DIBELS, and teachers used these data to group their students according to DIBELS recommendations. Student progress, especially in oral reading fluency, was carefully monitored and used as a predictor of FCAT success. Oral reading fluency became the definition of reading ability.

While some studies indicated a correlation between DIBELS achievement and achievement on standardized tests (Elliott et. al., 2001; Riedel, 2007), other studies found DIBELS not to be a reliable or valid indicator of reading achievement (Kamii & Manning, 2005; Schilling et. al, 2007). DIBELS was replaced by the Florida Assessment in Reading (FAIR) in the 2009-2010 school year, but the color-coding system remained with some adjustments. Students in grades kindergarten through second received a Probability of Reading Success (PRS) score based upon letter-naming or word list reading accuracy, and students in grades three through twelve received an FCAT Probability of Success (FPS) score based upon passage comprehension and previous FCAT results. Scores in the red zone indicate a probability of 15% or below of test success, scores in the yellow zone indicate a probability from 16% to 84% of test success, and scores in the green zone indicate a probability of 85% and higher of test success.

As revealed in the interview transcript, some of Star's teachers were sensitive to the perception of their teaching abilities being portrayed as effective or ineffective based upon the number of green students on their classroom pie chart. DIBELS data was closely monitored by school and district administration, so there was an expectation for the green section of the pie chart to get bigger following each administration. Teachers worked hard to meet this expectation by providing more opportunities for their students to work on fluency and build their reading rate. One teacher, however, took umbrage with tracking student success with numbers:



Right, well my opinion is that everything that they're doing... my opinion is that they're building a false wall of statistics that doesn't reflect what's actually going on with the children. And they sit, oh they sit, they look at numbers and they look at ways to change the numbers or make the numbers better, but they don't look at the children or the population or anything else that's going on. That's my opinion (laughs) (Interview, May, 2009).

This perception of manipulation by outsiders was not limited to student assessment scores. As discussed in Chapter Four, many teachers discussed their frustrations with decisions regarding student retention. One teacher said,

Teacher: But we can't, our principal absolutely will not [retain students] because of whoever is over us absolutely will not...

Researcher: I see,

Teacher: So it's not in our hands, it's not in our principal's hands...so that's what I'm wondering, is it...now [district supervisor] is the one who has the last say on who is retained, that's what I don't understand (Interview, May, 2009).

Student retention is a much-argued and often volatile issue with both parents and teachers. Students with low academic ability, low socio-economic status, low parental expectations, and high mobility rates, are more likely to be retained (Wilson & Hughes, 2009). Wu, West, & Hughes (2008) found mixed results in both short and long-term reading achievement for retained first graders when compared to their non-retained peers. Hong & Yu (2008) reported no evidence of socio-emotional harm to retained

kindergarteners, yet Holmes (2006) found small gains associated with third grade retention are “eradicated” (p. 56) by the time the student reaches sixth grade. In a study in which the author’s site unethical practices leading to “contamination of accountability data,” McGill-Franzen & Allington (1993, p. 19) reported an increased likelihood of retention for struggling second-grade students in low-performing schools in order to delay their inclusion in school assessment data.

While teachers were sensitive to the implications of retention, appropriateness of retention was not the teachers’ issue. Their frustration rose from their perception of lack of input into the retention discussion. In the same way outsiders decide how well their students are achieving, outsiders also decide whether or not their students have the necessary skills to move on to the next grade.

Regardless of the institution of new and effective programs, it is the quality of the teacher and the learning experience that has a positive effect on student achievement (IRA, 2002). However, NCLB (2001) has positioned teachers as “saviors” (Cochran-Smith, 2006, p. 24) who, if properly trained, can overcome all deficits students bring into the classroom including economic status, health issues, and family structure, and life experiences. Berliner (2006) points out the conflicting messages policy makers send regarding the educational effects of poverty and reform measures related to the educational achievement of children. Policy-makers demand that schools meet the educational needs of these children, yet in turn do little to resolve the educational issues related to poverty that they could impact. He states, “. . . more politicians need to turn their attention to the outside-of-school problems that affect inside-of-school academic

performance” (p. 977). This view is supported by Clabough (2007) who reported school-aged children constitute 35% of the nation’s poor, and internationally the United States ranks twenty-third (first being best) when comparing poverty rates among school-aged children. In Florida, 17.9% of school-aged children live below the national poverty rate (First Focus, 2008) while in Bell County 58% of students are identified as living in impoverished homes. What about Star? According to the 2009-2019 School Improvement Plan, 93% of Star’s students live at or below poverty levels, and many come to school hungry, inappropriately dressed, and conflicted by the opposing messages being responsible at school while no one takes responsibility for them at home.

At Star, teachers do not perceive themselves as part of the decision-making processes that promote the key elements for reform success necessary for school improvement. While survey data indicated that teachers have input into the decision-making process with regards to reading instruction, interview data contradicted this finding. This contradiction could be a result of the small survey sample or participants’ deeper consideration of their input opportunities due to interview probing. Since change is done to them, not with them, an essential component defined in NCLB’s Statement of Purpose (2001), that schools and teachers be provided greater decision-making authority and flexibility, is subverted.

### *Reality vs. Perception of School Quality*

Star’s teachers work in an environment that is perceived as a low-performing school, yet Star received an ‘A’ under the Florida school grading system for the 2008-2009 school year and achieved 92% AYP status. This is a one-letter school grade

increase and a 10% AYP increase from the 2007-2008 school year (Star School Reports, 2008 & 2009, see Appendix C). All subgroups with the exception of English Language Learners and Students With Disabilities achieved AYP in reading, and all subgroups with the exception of Students With Disabilities achieved AYP in math. Table 31 displays Star’s student achievement percentiles for both school years:

Table 31

*Student Achievement in Reading and Math, School Years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 (Star School Accountability Report, 2009)*

	Reading 2007-2008	Reading 2008-2009	Math 2007-2008	Math 2008-2009
All students	54	59	58	66
White	56 <sup>a</sup>	65	62	67
Black	39 <sup>a</sup>	50	44 <sup>a</sup>	58
Hispanic	57	58	60	67
SWD	38	34 <sup>a</sup>	38 <sup>a</sup>	41 <sup>a</sup>
ED	51 <sup>a</sup>	58	56 <sup>a</sup>	65
ELL	48	47 <sup>a</sup>	53	64

<sup>a</sup>Did not make AYP.

In addition, 71% of the struggling students at Star made a year’s worth of progress in reading, 74% of struggling students made a year’s worth of progress in math, and 93% of students achieved proficiency on the state writing assessment, up from 90% in the 2007-2008 school year (Star School Accountability Report, 2009). However, failure to achieve state expectations or Safe Harbor in three subgroups resulted in failure to achieve AYP for yet another year.

Star's teachers continue to maintain a balance between sensitivity to the needs their students bring to school and a demand for high educational standards. These teachers understand that what happens out of school has an effect on school achievement but, like other teachers in low-performing schools (Clabough, 2007), they are accused of making excuses if they voice this concern. Cochran-Smith & Lytle (2006) discussed NCLB's (2001) focus on teachers as the primary agents of change:

The law and its supporting documents lay the onus on teachers to turn things around single-handedly, falsely creating the expectation that if teachers were *highly qualified*, they could just do it all by fixing everything that is wrong with public schools (p. 688).

Star's teachers feel the weight of this expectation with regards to their student population in a variety of categories.

### *Language*

Students living in poverty and acquiring second languages often lag behind their middle class, English proficient peers in reading achievement (Esche, Chang-Ross, Guha, Humphrey, Shields, Tiffany-Morales, Weschler & Woodcock, 2005). In addition to its high poverty rate, 29% of Star's students are classified as an English Language Learners. One teacher noted, "I have kids who don't have the language because of the population served, and I have these kids that come in with very limited English, very limited experience, very limited background" (Interview, April, 2009). Spanish is the dominant first language of Star's ELL students with 50% of Star's student population being Hispanic.

To address the needs of its ELL population, Star instituted a dual-language kindergarten program in which students, both English and Spanish speakers, received one-half day in English instruction and one-half day in Spanish instruction. This intervention was consistent with research findings that dual-language instruction is beneficial for both ELL and English-dominant students (DeJesus, 2008; Letners, 2004). The program was taught by two teachers: one native English-speaker and one native Spanish speaker. Unfortunately, the English-speaking teacher chose not to continue with the program and no other kindergarten teacher was willing to take her place. The program was discontinued.

### *Mobility*

Schools that fail to make AYP tend to have high mobility rates (Smith, 2005) and high mobility rates impede program implementation deemed necessary to positively impact student achievement (Center for Education Policy, 2007). Star's mobility rate for the 2008-2009 school year was 34%, indicating that 34% of its population was "enrolled after day 15, or withdrawn after day 15 and before the end of the year" (School Improvement Plan, 2009-2010, p. 2). One teacher explained:

And then our kids are like a revolving door, in and out, it's not the same. You may start out the beginning of the year with a student, withdraws after Christmas, and then before school is out that student is back in someone's class again. So it's like that we're taking hits, because at the beginning we were counted for those kids, so then when they leave, and I know a lot of it could be because of seasonal

work the parents have to go and the kids have to go with you, but then we still take the hit when they come back (Focus Group Interview, June, 2009)

While Star's mobility rate was down from 42% for the 2007-2008 school year, the changing population of teachers' classrooms was recognized by teachers as an impediment to student achievement. Bell County's curriculum maps were designed as an initiative to reduce the probability of redundancies and gaps in instruction due to the high mobility rate of its students.

### *Sub-group Distribution*

NCLB (2001) requires that all schools meet specific academic criteria in reading and math in order to effectively close the achievement gaps related to race, ethnicity, language, and socioeconomic status (Cross, 2004). Star's teachers monitor each subgroup's end-of-year assessments as well as ongoing assessments to identify the needs of specific students as representative of targeted subgroups. As discussed in Chapter Four, each teacher keeps a data book in which student achievement is disaggregated by subgroups (identified as cells for AYP). I asked a teacher about her perceptions of her school's strengths and weaknesses:

Teacher: We have some weak spots, I think over all we're a very strong school. And I just wish that we were able to make AYP. They don't take certain things into consideration I think...I have 20 kids, 5 ESE, 5 ESOL., and a couple that should be (shows the breakdown of how her kids fit in a variety of cells). That's a lot of cells.

Researcher: Did you, what percentage of your kids would be free/reduced lunch?

Teacher: Oh, geez, 95%... I would be shocked to find out if I had one student that was not free lunch. We could be 100% (Interview, April, 2009)

Like most Title I schools, Star has students in every sub-group. Since each sub-group is populated by at least 30 students as required by statute, all sub-group's FCAT scores count toward AYP.

With its high mobility rate and low-income levels, Star's difficulties with achieving AYP are not surprising when compared to other schools with similar make-up (Al Otaiba, et. al, 2008; Berliner, 2006; Kaminski & Good, 1996; Schilling, Carlisle, Scott & Zeng, 2007). However, schools with similar demographics to Star do achieve AYP, both in Bell County (Bell County Schools, 2009) and across the United States (Blankstein, 2004). If other schools can do it, why cannot Star? In the next section I discuss the implications of this research for low-performing schools in the context of reform.

### Implications

Star's teachers bear the weight of the consequences for failure to achieve AYP but have no voice in the decision-making process that is required due to their school's restructuring status. While they are held accountable for student achievement, they cannot make decisions regarding curriculum and instruction, professional development, or goal-setting for their individual classrooms. Additionally, the lack of teacher leadership, often problematic in low-performing schools, limits Star's teachers' abilities



to become part of the reform process. The Restructuring Inverse Impact Theory suggests negative implications for Star's student's long-term achievement due to the undermining of Star's teachers' efficacy if these conditions continue. Three implications for school reform, especially for schools identified as in need of improvement, are discussed in the following section.

### *Teachers Must Be Included in the Reform Process*

For reform to be successful, teachers must be an integral part of the process (Fullan, 2007; Fullan & Levin, 2009; Tuytens & Devos, 2008). Ignoring the human element associated with change is a barrier to success (Blankstein, 2004). According to Tuytens & Devos (2008) teachers must understand the need for change at their schools, the goals for their schools, the complexity of the change process, and the practicality of change measures in regards to benefitting their students. As discussed in Chapter Four, Star's teachers' understanding NCLB (2001) is in some cases limited, resulting in misunderstandings about why they are required to implement new curriculum and instructional strategies.

Respect for teachers' knowledge and ability coupled with professional development that supports teachers in daily learning are necessary to withstand the consequences of being labeled as failures (Blankstein, 2004) and have the stamina to find opportunities for success (Fullan, 2007; Johnston, 2002; Routman, 2002). As discussed in Chapter Two, NCLB (2001) requires professional development for teachers in low-performing schools that is targeted to the school's specific needs and *developed with participation from teachers*. While the district and school administration have made

efforts to choose professional development opportunities that target Star's academic needs, teachers have no input into the types of professional development they receive. While professional development is plentiful at Star, its benefits are sometimes lost on these teachers as they struggle with the time demands associated with receiving training and implementing what they learned in their classrooms.

According to Nunnery (2008), teachers' perceptions of reform changes are predictors of the impacts of those changes on instructional practices. At Star, teachers perceive changes at their school to be punitive and resulting from failure to make AYP. While some teachers perceive benefits from the mandated changes in instructional practices, many of them consider previous practices to be beneficial and view new policies and practices to be part of the "here today, gone tomorrow" cycle so many of them have lived through during their teaching careers.

Goetz and Duffy (2003) suggest that school-based performance goals and incentives are not sufficient to motivate teachers to make changes in order to reach their students' academic achievement goals. NCLB (2001) includes a provision for rewarding schools whose students exceed state expectations in student achievement, but those rewards mean little if teacher energy is focused on survival rather than success. Florida's A+ School Grading System provides for monetary rewards for schools receiving an "A" based on previous school-year FCAT scores. For the first time in five years, Star received an "A," and teachers received a bonus for their success in boosting test scores. The bonus totaled \$629.00 per teacher; \$52.42 per pay period; or \$3.31 per day (before taxes).

While Star's teachers participate in the *end-product* of the decision-making process for positively impacting student achievement, they are not part of the *process*. Teachers know their students better than anyone else at their schools. Why then, are teachers so often left out of the decision-making process that directly impacts their students? While passing down edicts and demanding compliance may be an efficient way of meeting state and federal requirements, it is not the approach research indicates leads to successful school reform and improved student achievement (Blankstein, 2004; Fullan, 2007; Fullan & Levin, 2009; Tuytens & Devos, 2008). Additionally, teachers' perceptions of these organizational politics may negatively impact both teacher efficacy and commitment (Chan, Lau, Nie, Lim, & Hogan, 2008) resulting in an inverse impact on student achievement.

#### *Teachers Must Be Included in Decisions Regarding Professional Development*

While NCLB (2001) requires state and local intervention in schools failing to make AYP, state and local educational agencies alone cannot make the changes required for school improvement (McQuillan, 2008). Commitment of staff (McQuillan, 2008; Nunnery, 2008) and long-term professional development (McQuillan, 2008) are necessary components for successful school reform.

NCLB (2001) mandates ongoing professional development for teachers in schools identified as in need of improvement, and those schools receive professional development; lots of it. As discussed in Chapter Three, the types of professional development required of teachers in low-performing schools are focused on improving

teachers' knowledge of academic subjects that are aligned with state standards, providing skills so teachers can help students meet challenging academic standards, advancing teacher understanding of adopted programmatic solutions and their procedures that lead to a positive and lasting impact on student learning. These professional development activities are to be planned *with participation from* teachers, principals, parents, and administrators of schools (Sec. 9019(34)(A) of NCLB, 2001).

Teachers involved collaboratively in professional learning are more willing to problem-solve instructional dilemmas and share best practices (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009; Strawn, Fox & Duck, 2008; Wood, 2007). Additionally, collaborative learning increases teacher efficacy (Tobin, Muller & Turner, 2006) thereby reducing teacher burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2008). Since effective professional development is on-going and connected to practice, it is important that teachers study specifically what they need to know to teach their own students. Darling-Hammond et. al reported,

Going further, research suggests that professional development is most effective when it addresses the concrete, every day challenges that are involved in teaching and learning different subject matter, rather than focusing on abstract educational principals or teaching methods taken out of context (p. 44).

Professional learning communities (PLCs) reflect a continuous and sustained focus on teaching practice within the setting where teachers work (Blankstein, 2004; Fullan, 2007; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2008). PLCs exhibit reflective dialogue among teachers, focus on student learning and collaboration (Blankstein, 2004) and are designed

by teachers (Wood, 2007). Teachers investigate issues directly related to their teaching contexts (Strawn, Fox & Duck, 2008), and professional learning is created through shared responsibility for student learning (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2008). Successful implementation of PLCs results in enhanced teacher engagement in professional learning and positively impacts student achievement (Blankstein, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Fullan, 2007).

While schools often report the establishment of PLCs as part of their teacher's professional development, teachers may not have choice in the topic of the professional development or the training is not specifically relevant in individual classrooms (Blankstein, 2004). This is true at Star as well as other low-performing schools (Fullan, 2007). At Star, teachers are "invited" to PLCs one or two days per week, but the professional development is related to areas of need identified in Star's school improvement plan. Professional reading is part of Star's teachers' professional development, but the readings are provided by administration without the input of teachers. While this professional development may be necessary for school improvement plan compliance, it does not meet the criteria of a PLC since it is planned and delivered without teacher input nor does it focus on specific needs of individuals or groups of teachers.

For schools to successfully engage in reform, they must be "responsive to the audiences they serve" (Strawn, Fox & Duck, 2008, p. 276). Teachers who engage in effective, on-going professional development learn more about their audiences than anyone else. However, when teachers are excluded from the conversation regarding the

types of professional development that would be most beneficial for the specific needs of their students, reform measures may not be effective (Beauchum & Dentith, 2004).

Teachers need professional development that is meaningful in the contexts of their classrooms, and they need the time to practice their learning with their colleagues.

Star's teachers struggle with balancing the time it takes to receive professional development, often delivered during their planning time two days per week, and doing the planning necessary to deliver quality instruction that meets the demands of their professional development. Time management as a barrier to efficacious teaching is not unique to Star (Bibou-Nakou, Kiosseoglu & Stogiannadou, 2000; Cantrell & Hughes, 2008; Martin, 2009; McQuillan, 2008). Reform mandates contribute to teacher overload (Johnston, 2002), and the mandated professional development due to Star's restructuring status leaves teachers scrambling for time to plan, get to the copy machine, collaborate with colleagues, and go to the bathroom. How can teachers be committed to change when they perceive themselves to be barely getting their jobs done?

In academically high-achieving countries, time for professional development is built into teachers' workday by providing class coverage by other teachers, thereby alleviating the burden of lost planning time (Wei, Andree, & Darling-Hammond, 2009). This is especially noteworthy, since United States teachers "spend 80% of their total working time engaged in classroom instruction, as compared to about 60% for these other nations' teachers who thus have much more time to plan and learn together..." (p.48). There is little opportunity for teachers to participate in continuous learning in the settings in which they work (Fullan, 2007) due to their responsibilities with their own students

that prevent them from observing other teachers during the school day. Giving teachers time to learn from and work with other teachers is valuable, but an expense that few principals can afford due to budget restrictions and mandated professional development expenses.

I observed exemplary teaching during my classroom observations at Star. While some professional development delivered by outside experts may be necessary, teachers can also find models of good teaching right down the hall. Teachers need opportunities during the instructional day to observe and learn from each other (Fullan, 2007). While the reading coach can deliver point-of-need professional development in teachers' classrooms, teachers who watch an exceptional teacher in the daily context may gain a clearer picture of what good instruction entails.

Teachers in the midst of reform need sustained and intensive professional development to meet the needs of their students (Fullan, 2007; Strawn, Fox & Duck, 2008). For this professional development to be successful, teachers must have choice regarding professional development that is connected to their perceptions of what they need in their classrooms as well as time to study, practice, and work with colleagues in order to implement new practices effectively (Beauchum & Dentith, 2004). Restructuring efforts that force specific types of professional development without input from teachers may reduce teacher efficacy (Chan et. al, 2008) and may, as a consequence, negatively impact student achievement.

*Teacher Leadership Is a Necessary Component for Effective School Reform*

NCLB (2001) demands new and multi-faceted roles for school administrators. Principals must interact with a wider range of stakeholders in education, be accountable for his/her school's academic success, and oversee the institution of new state and federal initiatives mandated by school policy reform (Beachum & Dentith, 2004; Feeney, 2009; Reeves, 2009; Spillane, 2009). In the past, school administrators were viewed as captains of their ships; leaders with the answers to a school's problems and with that responsibility, the expectation to solve them. School leadership drives reform (Beachum & Dentith, 2004), and post- NCLB (2001) principals struggle under the weight of the pressures and responsibilities reform mandates entail (Feeney, 2009).

School reform processes demand greater responsibilities from school leaders than they may have experienced in the past (Beachum & Dentith, 2004; Hoerr, 2009). School leaders must work with a variety of audiences and make decisions regarding effective school improvement initiatives. School leaders must also “understand, embrace and participate deeply” (Fullan & Levin, 2009, p. 30) in those initiatives in order for effective reform to occur. Today, effective leadership cannot be contained in one set of prescribed leaders; it must come from all levels of the educational system.

Distributed leadership (Hamann & Lane, 2004; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2008; Johnston, 2002; Nunnery, 2008; Spillane, 2009) allows principals to use able others who hold responsibility for various school roles as part of a leadership team. Effective principals recognize that good leaders are often not administrators (Hoerr, 2009), and classroom teachers, who are predominately responsible for enacting reform mandates in



their classrooms, may fulfill necessary roles in school leadership requirements (Spillane, 2009). According to Ackerman & Mackenzie (2006) this redefinition of roles may be met with discomfort both from teachers, who often find themselves at odds with current school policy, and principals, who may find their roles as the definitive leaders of their schools compromised. Regardless of the struggle to redefine leadership roles, effective principals recognize the importance of shared responsibilities in leading their schools through reform processes (Kurtz, 2009). Teacher leaders may provide the link necessary to move reform from concept to reality. As discussed in Chapter Four, Star's teachers do not perceive themselves as active participants in decision-making in regards to curriculum or instructional practices. While supportive of their administration, these teachers follow their leader but seldom lead.

Teacher leaders provide a variety of roles in their schools. They may open their classrooms to other teachers, ask and answer questions with colleagues and mentor new teachers (Ackerman & Mackenzie, 2006). These leaders model effective instructional strategies for other teachers (Reeves, 2009) and, in turn, watch other teachers teach so they can apply new practice in their own classrooms and later share this new expertise. They consistently broaden their knowledge about teaching and learning while sharing their knowledge and experiences when learning with others (Ackerman & Mackenzie, 2006). Teacher leaders work closely with their administrative leaders to improve professional practice and make change meaningful to the rest of the staff (Reeves, 2009).

Teacher leaders are an essential component of school leadership capacity and increased student achievement (Feeney, 2009). Whether due to attrition, the principal's

leadership style, or lack of initiative there are few, if any, classroom teachers at Star who serve in leadership capacities. While each grade level has a chair and each chair serves on the leadership committee, these teachers are involved with few if any decision-making processes at Star. There are no model classrooms identified at Star, and the only modeling opportunities available to these teachers come from the reading coach or visits made to other schools to watch other teachers in their classrooms.

Without a strong teacher leadership component, Star's school leadership capacity is reduced. The principal has to work harder, and her message regarding improvement in classroom instruction might not be received as clearly as it would if modeled through the practices of other classroom teachers. Teacher connectedness (Kinsey, 2006), promoted when teachers are actively involved in leadership decisions at their schools, is linked to teacher efficacy that positively impacts student achievement.

### *Restructuring Inverse Impact Theory*

School restructuring, as a consequence of failure to make AYP, may impose a variety of changes at a school. Research indicates when decisions are made without input from teachers reform is not effective (Fullan, 2007; Fullan & Levin, 2009; Tuytens & Devos, 2008). Lack of voice in decisions regarding professional development as well as lack of teacher leadership opportunities may result in reduced teacher efficacy, both individual and collective (Evans, 2009), that may over time negatively impact student achievement. The Restructuring Inverse Impact Theory suggests that the ramifications of school restructuring may in fact lead to the opposite result from that which was intended: reduced rather than enhanced student achievement.

While this theory emerged on my research at one Title I school, other research supports the premise that teachers' perceptions of their roles within the school reform context shape their instruction and impact their efficacy. Results of the Comprehensive School Reform Program (NCLB, 2001, discussed in the next section) have shown little effect of current reform practices on student achievement. This may be why teachers who work in low-income, struggling schools often feel "less competent and less responsible, and therefore, less efficacious to address the needs of students of color and of low-performing and/or poor students" (Evans, 2009, p. 85).

#### Recommendations for Further Research

Inquiry leads to more inquiry. Answering the four research questions that led me to this study has led to more questions regarding school reform, AYP, restructuring, and teachers' experiences related to those topics. Questions for further research include:

##### *Do Current Restructuring Practices Lead to Long-term AYP Improvement?*

In 2002, the Comprehensive School Reform Program (CSR) was authorized as part of NCLB (2001) to help low-achieving K-12 public schools meet performance standards (USDOE, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Policy and Program Study Services, 2008). According to NCLB (2001), there are eleven components to CSR which, when utilized together, lead to effective school reform.

*The Third Year Report* from the Evaluation of the Comprehensive School Reform Program Implementations and Outcomes (2008) provided data measuring the relationship between the CSR program and outcomes on student achievement. The Report concluded:

1. Receipt of a CSR award was not associated with increased achievement in reading or math through the first three years of the study.
2. Schools who received CSR awards were no more likely to implement legislatively specified CSR components than non-CSR schools.
3. Comprehensiveness of implementation of CSR was not related to student achievement in reading or math.
4. Low-performing elementary schools who adopted models with stronger evidence of effectiveness showed gains in math.
5. There was limited scientific evidence middle schools who adopted models with stronger evidence of effectiveness showed gains in reading and math.
6. In no other instances was there evidence that adoption models with a scientific research base were related to increases in student achievement.

This report suggests few if any positive impacts on student achievement under current CSR practices. A comprehensive analysis of current restructuring practices on long-term student achievement is necessary to determine a) if current practices have any impact on student achievement, and b) if any impact is evident, to what extent is student achievement affected.

*What Impact Do Teacher Leaders Have on Long-Term Academic Achievement in Schools  
Identified as in Need of Improvement?*

According to Blankstein & Noguera (2004), teachers who succeed in improving the achievement of their students take on the accountability associated with those outcomes. Teacher leadership is vital to the success of any school reform measure (Ackerman & Mackenzie, 2006; Fullan & Levin, 2009), and teacher leaders include not only curriculum coordinators and resource personnel, but classroom teachers (Ackerman & Mackenzie, 2006; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006) who derive their authority from their classroom experiences. Teacher leaders emerge as they recognize the need for change and commit to taking action (Kurtz, 2009). These teachers serve as a link between administration and other teachers in the teaching and learning necessary to improve student achievement.

Teacher leadership has become “essential” in improving student achievement (Feeney, 2009, p. 213) because teacher leaders provide point-of-need professional development to their colleagues as well as serving as a conduit between staff and administration. However, little research is available on the long-term impact of teacher leaders on student achievement in low-performing schools, especially in corrective action and restructuring schools.

Full Circle

Even with the improvements in academic achievement of its students, Star still did not achieve AYP, is still classified as a school in need of improvement, and is now in

its second year of restructuring. Teacher attrition was down for the 2009-2010 school year with only two teachers leaving their positions, but the loss of four classroom units due to low enrollment following the beginning of school led to an additional loss of four teachers, all of whom returned from the 2008-2009 school year. There are three new classroom teachers and two new ESE resource teachers as well as a new guidance counselor at Star for the 2009-2010 school year.

Due to the loss of Reading First funding, the reading coach position was removed from schools but replaced with an Academic Intervention Facilitator (AIF) position for either math, reading, or science based on school need. The AIF is responsible for many of the same duties as the former reading coach but, as one district official said to me, “The AIF is a reading coach on steroids” (personal communication, 2009). The official job description defines the AIF is:

Responsible for delivering appropriate teacher-to-teacher professional learning and coaching support, resulting in improved effectiveness of classroom instructional practices and enhanced student achievement (Academic Intervention Facilitator Job Duties and Responsibilities, Bell County District Schools, 2009a).

The AIF’s duties include modeling, coaching, analyzing data, delivering professional development, and maintaining the accountability for federal, state, and district instructional programs. Star was granted one reading AIF. Star’s former reading coach retired, so a new teacher was hired for the AIF position. I am the new AIF at Star.

During the summer of 2009, following the completion of data collection at Star, I applied for, and was accepted into, the pool of teachers qualified for a reading AIF position in Bell County. Mrs. Smith, Star's principal, called me and invited me to interview for her AIF position. I was surprised by the invitation. I had little contact with Mrs. Smith during data collection at Star and perceived that while she was gracious during my time at her school she felt I was somewhat of an intrusion. During the interview she told me she contacted several teachers with whom I had worked during data collection, and the teachers told her they enjoyed working with me. At the conclusion of the interview she offered me the position contingent upon approval of her district supervisor.

I had many questions from the time she called me for an interview to the moment she offered me the position. Did I want to take any AIF position? Yes, I wanted the opportunity to work with teachers as an instructional coach and mentor. Did I want to permanently leave my former school where I had been rehired to teach fourth grade? Yes, I could do that. My year on professional leave made severing ties to the school easier. Did I want to work at Star? This was the biggest question. My perceptions of Star and its teachers were positive. I had the opportunity to spend time in classrooms and work with students and teachers at Star, and my experiences were good. But I was concerned that taking a position at Star would compromise my research. Could I hold bias in check if I became a part of the staff? I had completed the majority of data analysis prior to interviewing for the position, so I felt that the completion of the dissertation would not be compromised. In addition, I would have the opportunity to

view how the beginning of Star's school year would be impacted by both improved academic achievement and, unfortunately, failure to achieve AYP yet again. All of the questions coalesced into the answer of "yes" as I provisionally accepted the AIF position at Star. Within 30 minutes Mrs. Smith called me to formally offer the position, and I formally accepted.

When people ask me about my job at Star I tell them, "I have the best job in the world!" My perceptions of the staff as hard working and dedicated have not changed. They welcomed me as their new AIF and made me part of their school family. Nine out of the twelve teacher-participants still teach there, and the teacher-participant who retired is often on campus as a substitute. Those ties eased my transition as a new staff member, and my position quickly placed me in classrooms new to me and enabled me to get to know the rest of the staff.

I have come full circle. I teach in a Title I school that does not have a good reputation but is staffed by dedicated and talented teachers. Colleagues from my former school often make snide remarks about where I work. "She went downhill and works at Star" was proffered by one of those colleagues during a social gathering just last week. I laughed and reminded her that Star made an 'A' this year but her school made a 'B.' That quieted the comments for the moment.

The AIF position is funded for only two years. What will I do after that? I do not know. When I asked to conduct research at Star I never imagined I would work there within the next few months. It is enough for me to work there now. I have two years to not only learn to do my job better but to help Star's teachers do their jobs better, too. My



research had a profound effect on me regarding teacher involvement in school reform, and I hope to make an impact on the level of participation Star's teachers have in the decision-making process at their school. Star's goal to make AYP has become my goal. Who knows? 2010 could be the year it happens.

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## APPENDICES

**TITLE I—IMPROVING THE ACADEMIC  
ACHIEVEMENT OF THE DISADVANTAGED**

**SEC. 101. IMPROVING THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF THE DISADVANTAGED.**

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6301 et seq.) is amended to read as follows:

**“TITLE I—IMPROVING THE ACADEMIC  
ACHIEVEMENT OF THE DISADVANTAGED**

**“SEC. 1001. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE.**

“The purpose of this title is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and state academic assessments.

This purpose can be accomplished by—

“(1) ensuring that high-quality academic assessments, accountability systems, teacher preparation and training, curriculum, and instructional materials are aligned with challenging State academic standards so that students, teachers,  
20 USC 6301.

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parents, and administrators can measure progress against common expectations for student academic achievement;

“(2) meeting the educational needs of low-achieving children in our Nation’s highest-poverty schools, limited English proficient children, migratory children, children with disabilities, Indian children, neglected or delinquent children, and young children in need of reading assistance;

“(3) closing the achievement gap between high- and lowperforming children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and nonminority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers;

“(4) holding schools, local educational agencies, and States accountable for improving the academic achievement of all students,

## Appendix A: (Continued)

and identifying and turning around low-performing

schools that have failed to provide a high-quality education to their students, while providing alternatives to students in such schools to enable the students to receive a high-quality education;

“(5) distributing and targeting resources sufficiently to make a difference to local educational agencies and schools where needs are greatest;

“(6) improving and strengthening accountability, teaching, and learning by using State assessment systems designed to ensure that students are meeting challenging State academic achievement and content standards and increasing achievement overall, but especially for the disadvantaged;

“(7) providing greater decisionmaking authority and flexibility to schools and teachers in exchange for greater responsibility for student performance;

“(8) providing children an enriched and accelerated educational program, including the use of schoolwide programs or additional services that increase the amount and quality of instructional time;

“(9) promoting schoolwide reform and ensuring the access of children to effective, scientifically based instructional strategies and challenging academic content;

“(10) significantly elevating the quality of instruction by providing staff in participating schools with substantial opportunities for professional development;

“(11) coordinating services under all parts of this title with each other, with other educational services, and, to the extent feasible, with other agencies providing services to youth, children, and families; and

“(12) affording parents substantial and meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.



Appendix B: 2007-2008 Star Elementary School AYP Report

2007-2008 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Report - School Level - Page 1		Bell STAR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL		
Did the School Make Adequate Yearly Progress?	NO	Percent of Criteria Met: 82%		
Total Writing Proficiency Met:	YES	2007-2008 School Grade:	B	
Total Graduation Criterion Met:	NA			
	95% Tested Reading	95% Tested Math	Reading Proficiency Met	Math Proficiency Met
TOTAL	YES	YES	NO	YES
WHITE	YES	YES	NO	YES
BLACK	YES	YES	NO	NO
HISPANIC	YES	YES	YES	YES
ASIAN	NA	NA	NA	NA
AMERICAN INDIAN	NA	NA	NA	NA
ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED	YES	YES	NO	NO
ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS	YES	YES	YES	YES
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES	YES	YES	YES	NO

Appendix C: 2008-2009 Star Elementary School AYP Report

2008-2009 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Report - School Level - Page 1			Bell STAR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	
Did the School Make Adequate Yearly Progress?	NO	Percent of Criteria Met: 92%		
Total Writing Proficiency Met:	YES	2008-2009 School Grade:	A	
Total Graduation Criterion Met:	NA			
	95% Tested Reading	95% Tested Math	Reading Proficiency Met	Math Proficiency Met
TOTAL	YES	YES	YES	YES
WHITE	YES	YES	YES	YES
BLACK	YES	YES	YES	YES
HISPANIC	YES	YES	YES	YES
ASIAN	NA	NA	NA	NA
AMERICAN INDIAN	NA	NA	NA	NA
ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED	YES	YES	YES	YES
ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS	YES	YES	NO	YES
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES	YES	YES	NO	NO

Appendix D: Staff Survey

\_\_\_\_\_years teaching

\_\_\_\_\_ years at this school

I have input into decisions regarding reading curriculum and instruction at my school.

**Strongly Agree**

**Agree**

**Disagree**

**Strongly Disagree**

Please make additional comments in this space:

I received professional development in reading instruction since entering into the restructuring process

**Strongly Agree**

**Agree**

**Disagree**

**Strongly Disagree**

Please make additional comments in this space:

The restructuring process has been a positive experience.

**Strongly Agree**

**Agree**

**Disagree**

**Strongly Disagree**

Please make additional comments in this space:

Appendix D: Continued

My reading instruction has changed since entering into the restructuring process

**Strongly Agree**      **Agree**      **Disagree**      **Strongly Disagree**

Please make additional comments in this space:

I collaborated with my colleagues regarding reading instruction during the restructuring process.

**Strongly Agree**      **Agree**      **Disagree**      **Strongly Disagree**

Please make additional comments in this space:

Student achievement in reading has increased due to curricular and instructional changes during the restructuring process.

**Strongly Agree**      **Agree**      **Disagree**      **Strongly Disagree**

Please make additional comments in this space:

Is there anything else you would like to add?

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sharon Moser received a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education from Warner Southern College in 1990 and a Master's Degree in Elementary Language Arts from the University of South Florida in 1998. She has taught as an elementary classroom teacher, reading resource teacher, adjunct instructor, graduate assistant at the University of South Florida, and an Academic Intervention Facilitator.

Sharon has two children, Jamie and Jim, and a granddaughter, Sidney.