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Factors Influencing the Improved Academic Success in Literacy at the Knowledge is EducatPower Program School in the Delta Region According to Administrator, Teacher, and Student Perceptions: Case Study

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FACTORS INFLUENCING THE IMPROVED ACADEMIC SUCCESS
IN LITERACY AT THE KNOWLEDGE IS POWER PROGRAM SCHOOL IN THE DELTA
REGION ACCORDING TO ADMINISTRATOR, TEACHER, AND STUDENT
PERCEPTIONS: CASE STUDY

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE IMPROVED ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN LITERACY AT
THE KNOWLEDGE IS POWER PROGRAM SCHOOL IN THE DELTA REGION
ACCORDING TO ADMINISTRATOR, TEACHER, AND STUDENT PERCEPTIONS:
CASE STUDY

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

By

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the factors that have influenced the literacy success of the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) students in the low-income, poverty stricken Delta Region of a mid-south state. The study examined the progress made since the implementation of the KIPP Program and the influence the program has made upon student achievement in literacy, at the KIPP Middle and High Schools, according to administrator, teacher, and student perceptions. The study explored what factors are influencing the improvement of previously at-risk students. The study adopted the research of Gene Bottoms' High Schools that Work Initiative that states high expectations plus rigor, relevance, and relationships increases student achievement as a theoretical framework. Additionally, the study was analyzed through the critical race theory and the advocacy paradigms. The themes emerged from the study were high expectations, rigor, relevance, and relationship along with the extension of time used as a scaffold to help students master skills and state standards in literacy.

This dissertation is approved for recommendation
to the Graduate Council.

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DISSERTATION DUPLICATION RELEASE

I hereby authorize the University of Arkansas Libraries to duplicate this dissertation when needed for research and/or scholarship.

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Kimberly Jonetta Brown

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First and foremost, I would like to thank God for allowing me to start and to complete the dissertation and degree from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. Without God's help, I would not have made it. It has been a laborious, worthwhile journey.

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DEDICATION

My dissertation is dedicated to my grandparents, parents, and sisters who encouraged me to pursue an education, strive for excellence, and to be a role model and leader in all my endeavors:

Paternal Grandparents: Isaiah Brown, Sr. and Louise Neal Brown

Maternal Grandparents: Lovester Kilgore, Sr. and Nora Mae Scales Kilgore

Parents: Theodore Brown and Jo Ann Kilgore Brown

Sisters: Louise Brown Moore and Ingrid Brown Johnson

Brothers: Shawn Moore and Julian Frederick Johnson, Sr.

Nephews: Solomon Theodore Moore and Julian Frederick Johnson, II

Neither my paternal nor maternal grandparents physically live, however, their blood continue to run through my veins daily. I am proud to be their granddaughter. As a young adult, I promised my grandmother, “Mother Dear” that I was going to law school and become an attorney like my Uncle Jewel, who also graduated with his J.D. from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. I did not go to law school; nevertheless, I believe Mother Dear would still be proud of me graduating Ed.D. from the best university in Arkansas, the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----|
| ABSTRACT | |
| LIST OF TABLES | |
| LIST OF FIGURES | |
| Chapter One: Introductions | 1 |
| Table 1 | 3 |
| Statement of the Problem | 4 |
| Background of the Study | 5 |
| Historical Background of School Reform | 5 |
| Charter Schools | 7 |
| Purpose of the Study | 9 |
| Figure 1 | 10 |
| Significance of the Study | 11 |
| Research Questions | 12 |
| Theoretical Framework | 13 |
| Theoretical Sensitivity | 14 |
| Research Design | 14 |
| Researcher's Role | 15 |
| Professional Background and Training | 16 |
| Limitations and Delimitations | 17 |
| Definitions of Operational Terms | 18 |
| Chapter Two: Review of the Empirical Literature | 21 |
| Conceptual Framework | 22 |

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Illiteracy in the Delta Region | 23 |
| Figure 2 | 24 |
| Figure 3 | 25 |
| Coleman Report | 26 |
| Effective School Movement | 26 |
| History of School Reform..... | 27 |
| Goals 2000 | 30 |
| No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (2002)..... | 30 |
| Achievement Gap Among Minority Student in School Reformed Schools | 32 |
| History of Charter Schools..... | 33 |
| Charter Schools in mid-south state | 34 |
| Historical Background of KIPP Schools..... | 35 |
| KIPP’s mission..... | 37 |
| KIPP Studies | 38 |
| KIPP Diamond 4 Year Study in Memphis, TN | 38 |
| KIPP Diamond Year One..... | 39 |
| KIPP Diamond Year One Summary | 40 |
| KIPP Diamond Year Two Evaluation..... | 41 |
| KIPP Diamond Year Three Evaluation..... | 42 |
| KIPP Diamond Year Four Evaluation | 43 |
| Evaluation of KIPP DC/Key Academy, District of Columbia; KIPP Gaston College Preparatory School, North Carolina; and 3D Academy, Houston Texas | 43 |
| Summary of KIPP DC/Key Academy, District of Columbia | 44 |

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Summary of KIPP Gaston College Preparatory School, North Carolina..... | 45 |
| Summary of 3D Academy, Houston, Texas | 45 |
| Study of San Francisco Bay Area KIPP Schools..... | 46 |
| Findings..... | 46 |
| High Expectations | 46 |
| Choice and Commitment | 47 |
| More Time | 47 |
| Power to Lead | 47 |
| Focus on Results | 48 |
| Considerations for KIPP | 48 |
| San Francisco Bay Area KIPP Schools Final Report..... | 49 |
| Potential Problems or Weakness of the KIPP Schools | 50 |
| Contributing Factors to Student Achievement..... | 51 |
| The Baltimore KIPP Ujima Village Academy..... | 52 |
| Findings..... | 52 |
| 24 KIPP Schools Study..... | 53 |
| Findings..... | 53 |
| Recommendations..... | 54 |
| Study done on Woodcock-Johnson Test of Achievement | 54 |
| Findings..... | 54 |
| KIPP Delta Theoretical Framework..... | 55 |
| Methods..... | 55 |

| | |
|----------------------------------------------|----|
| Study Limitations..... | 57 |
| Future Research Questions | 57 |
| Concluding Remarks and Recommendations | 58 |
| Chapter Three: Introductions | 59 |
| Research Questions..... | 60 |
| Research Design..... | 61 |
| Research Site..... | 62 |
| Research Subjects | 63 |
| Researcher Ethical Dilemma..... | 64 |
| Human Subject Consideration | 64 |
| Data Collection | 65 |
| Gaining Entry to the Research Site..... | 65 |
| Data Sources | 65 |
| Observations | 65 |
| Interviews..... | 66 |
| Documents | 67 |
| Data Analysis and Interpretation | 67 |
| Management of the Data..... | 67 |
| Trustworthiness..... | 68 |
| Chapter Four: Results | 71 |
| Introduction..... | 71 |
| Research Site..... | 71 |
| Conversational Interview | 72 |

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Gaining Access to the Interview Participants | 74 |
| Table 2 | 76 |
| Table 3 | 77 |
| Themes Emerging from Data..... | 78 |
| Research Questions | 78 |
| Participants..... | 79 |
| Table 4 | 81 |
| Table 5 | 83 |
| Audit Trail..... | 84 |
| Table 6 | 85 |
| Data Analysis | 86 |
| Table 7 | 88 |
| Figure 4..... | 89 |
| Table 8 | 90 |
| Research Question One..... | 91 |
| Themes | 91 |
| Research Question Two | 108 |
| Figure 5 | 110 |
| Table 9 | 111 |
| Table 10 | 112 |
| Themes | 113 |
| Research Question Three | 121 |
| Table 11 | 122 |

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Themes | 123 |
| Observations | 125 |
| Figure 6 | 126 |
| Themes | 128 |
| Document Analysis | 133 |
| Lesson Plans..... | 133 |
| Professional Development Handouts | 136 |
| Master Schedule..... | 138 |
| Summary of Document Analysis | 139 |
| Themes | 139 |
| Summary | 139 |
| Descriptions of Themes Emerging from Data | 141 |
| Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations | 143 |
| Discussion..... | 144 |
| Findings Review by Research Questions..... | 145 |
| Research Question One..... | 145 |
| Figure 7 | 148 |
| Research Question Two | 149 |
| Figure 8 | 151 |
| Research Question Three | 152 |
| Theory Link | 153 |
| Recommendations..... | 154 |
| Figure 9 | 156 |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| Suggestions for Future Research | 157 |
| Conclusion | 157 |
| References..... | 159 |
| Appendix..... | 167 |

LIST OF TABLES

| Table | Page |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| Table 1 <i>Chart for Calculating Adequate Yearly Progress in a Mid-south state</i> | 3 |
| Table 2 <i>KIPP Proficiency Levels in Literacy for 2006-2011 Represented in Percentages</i> | 76 |
| Table 3 <i>Helena-West Helena School District Proficiency Levels in Literacy for 2006-2011 Represented in Percentages</i> | 77 |
| Table 4 <i>Administrator and English Language Art Teacher Demographics</i> | 81 |
| Table 5 <i>Student Demographics</i> | 83 |
| Table 6 <i>Audit Trail Notations for Interviews</i> | 85 |
| Table 7 <i>Emerging Themes among KIPP Administrator and English Language Art Teachers</i> | 88 |
| Table 8 <i>Distribution of Themes by KIPP Administrator and English Language Art Teachers</i> | 90 |
| Table 9 <i>Emerging Themes that Developed among the Students</i> | 111 |
| Table 10 <i>Distribution of Themes according to Student Perceptions</i> | 112 |
| Table 11 <i>Audit Trail Notation for Observations and Documents</i> | 122 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| Figure | Page |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| <i>Figure 1.</i> Components of literacy | 10 |
| <i>Figure 2.</i> 1993 National adult literacy survey | 24 |
| <i>Figure 3.</i> Literacy skills of Arkansas..... | 25 |
| <i>Figure 4.</i> Schematic model for themes derived from Administrator and English language teacher interviews..... | 89 |
| Figure 5. Schematic model for themes derived from student interviews | 110 |
| <i>Figure 6.</i> Observation protocol..... | 126 |
| <i>Figure 7.</i> Variable enhancing student achievement according to administrator and English language art teacher perceptions | 148 |
| <i>Figure 8.</i> Variable enhancing student achievement according to student perceptions..... | 151 |
| <i>Figure 9.</i> KIPP attrition rate from 2002- 2011 | 159 |

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Ideally, our public school system has the responsibility of providing a quality education to every student, regardless of race, national origin, gender, socio-economic status, or religion. Debate centers on whether students of color and low socio-economic status have received a quality education from the American public school system. Organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) argue that there are gross inequities in the quality of education that minority and low income students receive (NAACP, 2009). The federal government has recognized that many students of color and low socio-economic status are at risk of failing or dropping out of school all together. As a result, the federal government, under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002) has provided federal monies to schools under Title I to provide various interventions for students from low socio-economic backgrounds in order to become successful and graduate from high school (NCLB, 2002). Schools are designated Title I when 35% of the student population is from low-income or poverty-stricken backgrounds and receive free or reduced lunch. Currently, over half of public schools in the United States are designated as Title I schools (NCLB, 2002). According to the state Department of Education, there is an estimate of 1,043 public schools in the mid-south state that are designated Title I schools (Arkansas Department of Education, 2012).

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 (2002)

Former President George W. Bush attempted to rectify the problem of minority students and students of poverty not receiving a quality education with the mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002). Currently, Title I schools must meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) goals set by each state's department of education. In the state, AYP is the annual

target that schools must meet in mathematics and literacy on the augmented state benchmark examinations and end-of-course examinations (Arkansas Department of Education, 2012). The chart for calculating AYP is included in Table 1 on the following page.

Table 1

Chart for Calculating Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for Mid-South State Schools in

Mathematics and Literacy Grades K-12 for 2005-2014

| Revised June 2006 Starting Point | K-5 Math | K-5 Literacy | 6-8 Math | 6-8 Literacy | 9-12 Math | 9-12 Literacy |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|-----------------|--------------|------------------|
| 2005-2006 | 40.00 | 42.40 | 29.10 | 35.20 | 29.20 | 35.50 |
| 2006-2007 | 47.50 | 49.60 | 37.96 | 43.30 | 38.05 | 43.56 |
| 2007-2008 | 55.00 | 56.80 | 46.83 | 51.40 | 46.90 | 51.63 |
| 2008-2009 | 62.50 | 64.00 | 55.69 | 59.50 | 55.75 | 59.69 |
| 2009-2010 | 70.00 | 71.20 | 64.55 | 67.60 | 64.60 | 67.75 |
| 2010-2011 | 77.50 | 78.40 | 73.41 | 75.70 | 73.45 | 75.81 |
| 2011-2012 | 85.00 | 85.60 | 82.28 | 83.80 | 82.30 | 83.88 |
| 2012-2013 | 92.50 | 92.80 | 91.14 | 91.90 | 91.15 | 91.94 |
| 2013-2014 | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 |

(Arkansas Department of Education, 2006)

There are six criterion-referenced assessments that test the content standards students are to master in mathematics, literacy, and writing. These assessments are administered in grades three through eight (ADE, 2012). The end-of-course examinations are taken in Algebra, Geometry, and 11th grade English (Arkansas Department of Education, 2012).

Combined school populations and subpopulations must demonstrate proficiency in order for the school to meet adequate yearly progress. The subpopulations are (a) Caucasian, (b) African-American, (c) Hispanic, (d) Limited English Proficient, (e) economically disadvantaged, and (f) students with disabilities (Arkansas Department of Education, 2012; NCLB, 2002).

Statement of the Problem

Too many minority students are at-risk of failing in our public schools (Southern Education Foundation, 2002; National Association Advancement of Colored People, 2009). At-risk of failing, in this study, was defined as either not proficient, not on grade level, or not being promoted to the next grade. At-risk students in the study were typically poor, African American students who have not realized their full potential, talents, and skills. As a result, many minority students in public schools become the statistics for low academic achievement, discipline problems, dropout rates, or failure (NAACP, 2009; Southern Education Foundation, 2002). According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), white students scored, on average 26 points higher than African American students on all 2007 administered assessments (Vanneman, Hamilton, Baldwin-Anderson, & Rahman, 2009).

KIPP students are typically one or two grade levels below (Woodworth, David, Guha Wang, and Lopez-Torkos (2008). Woodworth et al., (2008) found the scores of KIPP students entering the fifth grade, ranged from the 9th to the 60th national percentile in reading and mathematics on the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT10).

Background of the Study

The topic of human diversity in regard to race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status is very sensitive in our society. Human diversity is defined as the differences in people in terms of intelligence, socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, language, and gender (Sheehan, Stevens, & Wood, 2002). Human diversity has greatly impacted the public schools and the classrooms. Not only has human diversity influenced school policy and program implementation, but it has also affected curriculum and instruction. According to Sheehan, Stevens, & Wood (2002), ignoring differences of human diversity in individuals, subordinates them to similarities, or elevates them to a higher position. Sheehan, Stevens, & Wood also claim when educators ignore differences in students, in most cases, more harm is done at the expense of minority students.

Recently, United States Census data has shown changes in demographics of the United States. The 2010 Census reported the following:

1. Fewer African American students are graduating from high school with a diploma or General Educational Development (GED).
2. The poverty rate for the country has slightly declined.
3. The number of single mothers with children has tripled in the last three decades (United States Census, 2010).

The Census statistics greatly suggest future changes in the American public schools in terms of adopting policy, program implementation, curriculum, instruction, and evaluation (Sheehan, Stevens, & Wood, 2002).

Historical Background of School Reform

Before President Bush and the approval of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002, governors from all 50 states at the National Governors' Conference (NGC) attempted to

restructure the American public school system in order to meet the needs of those students who were failing at an alarming rate (O'Neil, 1993). School restructuring or school reform came about as a result of *A Nation at Risk* (1983), a study by the United States Department of Education, which questioned whether American high school graduates would have the skills to successfully compete in the 21st century's global economy (O'Neil, 1993). *A Nation at Risk* (1983) report argued that in order for high school graduates to be able to successfully compete in the 21st century's global market, American public schools had to increase high school graduation requirements, strengthen teacher preparation and certification standards, and lengthen the school year (O'Neil, 1993). In response to *A Nation at Risk* (1983), the Carnegie Foundation released *A Nation Prepared* (1987) report. *A Nation Prepared* (1987) report advocated restructuring schools in order to provide teachers with a professional work environment, which allows educators to decide how to best meet the needs of children. At the same time, the teachers would have to meet state and local mandates and be held accountable for increasing student achievement. School reform ranged from flexible scheduling, decentralization, and changes in staff roles to the introduction of charter schools (O'Neil, 1993).

Later in the 1990s, many states participated in the standards-based educational movement. Out of this movement came assessments of students' proficiency on state-wide academic standards. The most notable law passed during the standards-based movement was Goals 2000. Goals 2000 were rigorous academic outcome-based standards that students were to master by year 2000 (Goals 2000, 1994). Presently, mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) are a culmination of the standards-based education reform movement in the 1990s.

Charter Schools

According to Good and Braden (2000), charter schools are independent public schools that are given a charter from the state to educate children without the interference of state rules, requirements, and regulations by which other public schools must abide. The charter is normally renewed every five years. However, charter schools are not exempt from Federal Public Law 94-142, which regulates special education students or regulations set by the Office of Safety and Health Administration (Good & Braden, 2000).

In the mid-south state, two types of charter schools exist: conversion charter schools and open enrollment charter schools. Conversion charter schools were originally public schools that converted to charter status and can only recruit students from within the school district's boundaries. Like conversion charter schools, open-enrollment charter schools are operated by a government entity, university or college, or a tax-exempt non-sectarian organization. Open enrollment charter schools also can recruit students from across district boundaries (Arkansas Department of Education, 2012).

Additionally, in the mid-south state, charters are initially granted by the state Board of Education to the superintendent of the school district. These charters are for a period of five years. Newly established charter schools must abide by the rules and regulations of the state Department of Education. The superintendent of the school district must request any waivers for the charter in writing. Teachers must be certified by the state and are covered by the state Teacher Fair Dismissal Act. All students who attend charter schools must take yearly statewide academic assessments in the spring (Good & Braden, 2000; Arkansas Department of Education, 2010). Basically, the charter school's autonomy is given in exchange for positive academic results. Those charter schools that fail to show positive academic results will not have their

charter renewed by the state Department of Education (Good, & Braden, 2000; Arkansas Department of Education, 2010).

Research from charter schools has concluded that little innovation has taken place in terms of curriculum or instruction (Good & Braden, 2000). According to Good and Braden's research, there is little difference in charter schools from the regular public schools. One exception is the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP), a charter school founded in inner-city Houston, Texas, in 1994 by co-founders, Mike Feinberg and Dave Levin. KIPP schools have received national attention for increasing student achievement among minority students who were previously failing in public schools (McDonald, Ross, Abney, & Zoblotsky, 2008; Doran & Drury, 2002; David, Woodworth, Grant, Guha, Lopez-Torkos, and Young, 2006; Iver, Avelle & Farley-Ripple, 2007; Educational Policy Institute, 2005). KIPP Schools are located throughout major urban cities with large populations of minority and low-socio-economic students.

Advocates of KIPP would agree that the mid-south state is fortunate to have a KIPP charter school in the Delta Region (KIPP, 2012). Future plans include chartering thirteen additional KIPP Schools throughout the state in communities similar to the Delta Region by 2019. KIPP Schools are normally found in urban areas. KIPP Schools in the Delta Region are rare instances. What is it about KIPP Schools have allowed them to be successful with minority students whom were originally deemed to fail in traditional public schools?

The history, culture, and economy of the Delta Region distinguish it from any other geographical regions. In the early 1900's, the Delta Region's economy depended upon agriculture. Cotton was king during this time. Plantations were prominent in the Delta Region. Many plantation owners depended upon manual labor for the extensive work needed for a successful crop. Over the years, automation replaced manual work in the Delta Region. As both

farm and manufacturing jobs disappeared, so did the economic base of the Delta Region. As a result, many counties in this area have double digit unemployment percentages. More than half of the residents in the Delta Region live below the federal poverty line. Twenty percent of the population of the Delta Region has relocated due to high unemployment, leaving the area with an unskilled labor force (Elliot, 2005). The Delta Region has the high poverty rate in the state, the highest dropout rate, and the fewest college graduates in the state.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify factors that have influenced the academic literacy improvements of KIPP Schools. The Delta Region consists of those rural towns that are close to the Mississippi River. Illiteracy in the Delta is an economic problem for the mid-south state (Elliot, 2005).

Inadequate literacy skills prevent individuals from fully functioning in society. According to the National Institute for Literacy, individuals with inadequate literacy skills can not read and summarize a news article or complete an employment application. Counties part of the Delta Region, including Lee, Phillips, and Chicot counties have the highest illiteracy rates in the state. 40% to 45% of the adults in these counties have inadequate literacy skills. In St. Francis and Monroe counties, 35% to 39% of the adults have inadequate literacy skills. 70% to 89% of the Delta residents have marginal literacy skills or below, which is next to the lowest level of inadequate literacy skills (Dillah & Rodgers, 2007). Middle and high school students from Lee and Phillips Counties attend the KIPP Schools.

Literacy includes cultural and conceptual knowledge, oral and print literacy, and numeracy skills. Oral literacy is comprised of listening and speaking skills. Print literacy is comprised of writing and reading skills (National Institute for Literacy, 2007).

Components of Literacy

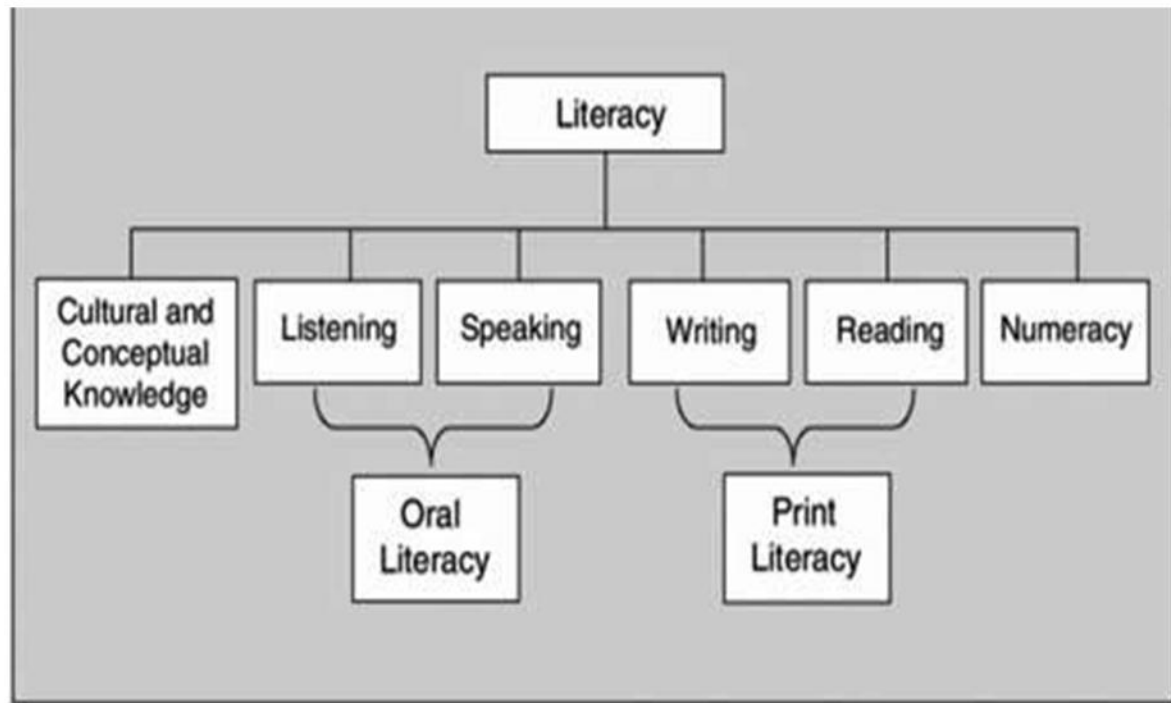


Figure 1. Components of literacy.

Note: As presented by Dillah & Rodgers to the state of Arkansas

in Little Rock, Arkansas October 11, 2007

Significance of the Study

It is imperative that public school leaders narrow the academic gap that exists between white, black students, and students from poverty in the public (NAACP, 2009). Only 8.3% of students from low income backgrounds have earned college degrees by their mid-20s (McDonald, Ross, Abney, & Zoblotsky, 2008). The numbers are even more dismissal from students from the Delta Region. However, students at KIPP Schools are taking the same state-wide assessments and are scoring proficient or advanced (McDonald, Ross, Abney, & Zoblotsky, 2008; Doran & Drury, 2002; David, Woodworth, Grant, Guha, Lopez-Torkos, and Young, 2006; Iver, Avelle & Farley-Ripple, 2007; Educational Policy Institute, 2005). If the KIPP Schools are successful in educating the same students who were previously failing in the traditional public schools, the question remains what factors have influenced academic improvements in literacy? After identifying what factors have influenced the improvements in literacy according to administrator, teacher, and student perceptions, can components of the KIPP Program be used as an instructional model for improvement in the public school system to bring about the same increased student achievement for all students, and narrow the academic gap for African American students and students from poverty? (KIPP, 2012)

The results of this study are beneficial to educators and the community in general because of the information concerning KIPP's structure, learning environment, graduation rates, college matriculation rate, and college graduation rates. These factors have helped students graduate from high schools, universities, and colleges around the nation. Graduates from KIPP have a plethora of opportunities that may not have been realized in their former public schools. For example, over 90% middle school KIPP students enroll in college preparatory high schools throughout the nation. Over 85 % of KIPP high school students attend college (KIPP, 2012).

KIPP's 85% college matriculation rate is significant compared to 40% of the nation's from students with similar backgrounds. For every 100 black and Hispanic students, less than 20 earn a college degree (Mathews, 2009). As future leaders empowered with content knowledge, skills and character, KIPP students may change the landscape of the 21st century workforce. Educating these students may also help to decrease the nation's poverty rate, crime statistics, and high unemployment rate.

More importantly, this research is significant because it is the only study that has interviewed and captured the experience of the first graduates of the KIPP School in the Delta Region. The students had the opportunity to fully share their experiences with the researcher.

Research Questions

Students who attend KIPP Schools are no different from the students attending traditional public schools. The KIPP students live in the same neighborhoods, have the same challenges as their counterparts who attend the nearby traditional public schools, but are achieving at very high academic levels (McDonald, Ross, Abney & Zoblotsky, 2008; Doran & Drury, 2002; David, Woodworth, Grant, Guha, Lopez-Torkos, and Young, 2006; (Iver, Avelle & Farley-Ripple, 2007; Educational Policy Institute, 2005). However, they are performing on an above grade level in many instances and are meeting expectations of student success (McDonald, Ross, Abney, & Zoblotsky, 2008; Doran & Drury, 2002; David, Woodworth, Grant, Guha, Lopez-Torkos, and Young, 2006; Iver, Avelle & Farley-Ripple, 2007; Educational Policy Institute, 2005). This 180 degree turn-around warrants investigation on what factors have influenced this phenomenon.

Thus, the main research questions in the research study were the following:

What factors have influenced the increased academic success of previously at-risk students in the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) Charter School in Literacy in the Delta Region according to administrator, teacher, and student perceptions?

How is it possible now for the KIPP students to have very different academic outcomes on the same assessments that they scored basic or below basic a year or two ago at traditional public schools, according to student perceptions?

How has the KIPP Program affected teachers' practice, role, and professional development?

Theoretical Framework

In designing a qualitative research study, not only should a researcher develop the research question to be studied, but also adopt a theoretical framework from which he or she will conduct the study (Creswell, 2007). Kerlinger (1979) defined a theory as a set of interrelated variables explaining natural phenomena. In qualitative research, theories are used as a broad explanation for people behavior and attitudes. The theory will consist of constructs, hypotheses, and variables. The theory becomes a lens or a perspective from which the researcher conducts the study.

According to Creswell, the theoretical lens shapes the research questions to be asked, indicates how the researcher should position himself in the study, informs how data should be collected and analyzed, and concludes with how the final paper should be written, sometimes as a call for action or change (Creswell, 2007). Creswell recommended identifying a theory that is applicable to the study and explaining its relevance. He stated theories may be used in qualitative studies as an up-front explanation, an end point, or as an advocacy lens as described earlier with the critical race theory.

The theory used for this study was the research from Gene Bottoms, Director of the Southern Regional Educational Board's High Schools That Work Initiative, (SREB) who stated rigor, relevance, relationships, along with high expectations increase student achievement (Bottoms, 2005). The study explored whether the factors that have influenced the improvement of previously at-risk students are the high expectations of the literacy teachers, rigor of the KIPP Program, the relevance of the lessons, and the positive teacher-student relationships developed.

Theoretical Sensitivity

The research was a qualitative study because a naturalistic approach was utilized to understand the KIPP school phenomenon in its natural setting (Patton, 2001). The researcher attempted to make sense of all the success surrounding the KIPP School's phenomenon in the Delta Region with a large population of minority students in a high poverty setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The phenomenon of the KIPP Schools is the success the schools have thus far had with minority students, who were previously failing in public schools. The phenomenon was studied in its original setting. The qualitative method that was conducted is an illustrative case study. Creswell defined a case study as an investigation of a bounded system or a case over time through complete, in-depth data collection (2007). The system was bounded by time and location, and the case researched was the program, people, events, or organization. In this study, the system was bounded by its location in the Delta Region and the time span was from 2003 until present and the case studied was the KIPP School System. The phenomenon is the success of previously failing students at the KIPP Schools. Creswell stated that the case should be situated within a physical, social, historical, and/or economic context for the study (2007). The case was situated within its physical context of the school buildings and social contexts of the staff and students.

Research Design

Further, the illustrative case study involved semi-structured open-ended interviews, researcher observations, and document analysis. The answer as to why the KIPP Schools are having much success was unknown and as the researcher, my job was similar to an anthropologist. The answers to what factors are influencing the increased student success at the KIPP School in Literacy in the Delta Region will not be revealed until the completion of the study.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the research design and methods may change or be refined throughout the entire study. They stated not only the research design and methods may change throughout the study, but also the research topic and questions may constantly change throughout the study as well. It is not until withdrawal from the study, that the researcher can specify the specific steps he or she used in the research study.

Additionally, the research of the KIPP School and its impact upon student achievement among minority students was labor-intensive and has great implications for school administrators, school policy, curriculum and instruction, and program implementation. The success of KIPP Schools aligns with Educational Leadership Constituent Council's (ELCC) Standards: ELCC Standard 2.2 Provide effective instructional programs: a candidate applies principles of effective instruction to improve instructional strategies and curricular materials and ELCC Standard 2.3 Apply best practices to student learning: A candidate applies best practices for student learning.

Researcher's Role

In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument for data collection and data analysis as opposed to data being collected through inventories, questionnaires, and machines in

quantitative research (Creswell, 1994). As the instrument, I went to the KIPP School in the Delta Region, observed and interviewed the administrators, teachers, and students in their natural setting, recorded the behaviors observed, and made meaning of the entire process (1994).

As the qualitative researcher, I was a good research instrument because I am a product of Delta Region who graduated Salutatorian of my high school class, received an academic scholarship to attend Hendrix College: the number one Liberal Arts private school in the state of Arkansas, graduated from Hendrix College with a grade point higher than 3.00, and received a graduate assistanceship to complete my Masters Degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. In my academic career, I have successfully completed three college degrees: a Bachelor of Arts in History with an emphasis in Secondary Education from Hendrix College, a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, and an Educational Specialist's Degree in Educational Administration and Supervision from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. I am currently pursuing a Doctoral Degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville.

Professional Background and Training

I have professional experience as both a gifted and talented teacher and Assistant Principal in working with minority students and students from poverty-stricken backgrounds. On a daily basis, minority students from poverty stricken backgrounds need a rigorous curriculum, enriched experiences, caring adults, relevant lessons, and high expectations from their teachers. Findings from Bottoms' High School That Work Initiative state minority and students from low-socio-economic backgrounds benefit from a rigorous and challenging curriculum taught by highly qualified teachers who care about their overall welfare (2005).

Furthermore, with the KIPP case study, the Critical Race Theory may apply. The Critical Race Theory focuses upon groups or events that have been affected by race, class, or gender. Topics of study that may incorporate critical race theory, for example, will include minority groups, women, marginalization, empowerment, and the homeless. Critical race theorists such as Bell argued that institutions such as public school systems have been designed to support the white status quo (Billings & Tate IV, 1995; Gillborn, 2005).

Also, another world view that may be utilized in this research was the participatory action or advocacy paradigm (Creswell, 2009). Advocacy research was designed to help those marginalized groups such as the minority and poor students who attend KIPP Schools and have a political voice that is often unheard. The research addresses issues such as inequality, equity, and empowerment and has a plan of action to improve the lives of those marginalized groups (Creswell, 2009). Hopefully, after investigating the results of the KIPP study, school leaders will develop a plan of action to help minority students be successful in traditional public schools also. A plan of action may include a more rigorous curriculum, a genuine, caring relationship among the teachers, relevance of the lessons, and high expectations of teachers as recommended by the Southern Regional Educational Board (Bottoms, 2005).

Limitations and Delimitations

First, the lack of transferability of findings was a limitation to the study. Due to its extremities, the case findings can only be generalizable to other KIPP Schools in similar rural settings.

Second, the KIPP Schools are fairly new and there are very limited research publications on the KIPP Schools.

Definitions of Operational Terms

The following definitions and acronyms are provided to guarantee an understanding of the terms throughout the study.

Academic success: when a student scores Advanced or Proficient on the Statewide- benchmark examinations and the end-of-course examinations.

African-American: a person who has origins in any of the Black racial origins of Africa. It includes people who indicate their race as Black, African American, or Negro (United States Census, 2010).

Arkansas comprehensive testing, assessment, and accountability program: (ACTAAP) a comprehensive statewide-system for the state that includes high standards for students, professional development for educators, student assessment, and accountability for schools and districts (Arkansas Department of Education, 2012).

Adequate yearly progress: (AYP) an annual target goal that measures year-to-year student achievement on the ACTAAP examinations. Each year the annual target goal is increased so that by school year 2013-2014, 100% of the students will be proficient on all statewide assessments. This concept stemmed from the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB, 2002).

Augmented benchmark examinations: the six criterion-referenced tests that evaluate the content standards students are to master in mathematics, literacy, and writing administered in grades three through eight (Arkansas Department of Education, 2012).

Charter school: a public school that has been given a charter by the state and operates independently without the constraints of rules and regulations imposed by the state (Arkansas Department of Education, 2012).

Delta region: consists of those rural towns in a mid-south state that are close to the Mississippi River and has a high illiteracy and high unemployment rates (Census, 2010).

Effective schools: schools with high student achievement and share common characteristics such as effective instructional leadership, sound instructional strategies, and high expectations of all students, regardless of race, sex, ethnicity, religion, or socio-economic status (Lezotte, 2007).

Inadequate literacy skills: literacy skills that prevent individuals from fully functioning in society, according to the National Institute for Literacy. Examples include not being able to read and summarize a news article or complete an employment application (National Institute for Literacy, 2007).

Knowledge is power program: (KIPP) a non-profit charter school that originated in Houston, Texas, and according to various studies has had much success in educating minority students and students from low socio-economic backgrounds (McDonald, Ross, Abney, & Zoblotsky, 2008; Doran & Drury, 2002; David, Woodworth, Grant, Guha, Lopez-Torkos, and Young, 2006; Iver, Avele & Farley-Ripple, 2007; Educational Policy Institute, 2005).

Kipsters: students who attend the Knowledge is Power Program Schools (KIPP, 2010).

Literacy: consists of cultural and conceptual knowledge, listening, speaking, writing, reading, and numeracy skills (National Institute for Literacy, 2007).

Low-socio-economic status: household that makes less than \$22,000 a year and lacks financial, social, and educational resources to help its children in school (Census, 2010).

Performance levels: the four levels of student achievement on the state augmented benchmark examinations. The four levels are Advanced, Proficient, Basic, and Below Basic.

Advanced: Students who scored well beyond grade level proficiency in reading, writing, and mathematics. They use higher order thinking skills to solve problems and independently make insightful connections.

Proficient: Students who are on grade level and well prepared for the next grade level of schooling. Unlike advanced students, they need more modeling and supervision from the teacher.

Basic: Students who are partially able to demonstrate and apply their skills in reading, writing, and mathematics.

Below basic: Students who are below grade level proficiency and lack the mastering of skills in reading, writing, and mathematics (Arkansas Department of Education, 2012).

School reform: the altering of the overall organization, practices, and relationships within and outside of the organization in order to increase student achievement for all students.

Title I: schools that have 35% of the student population from low-income or poverty-stricken backgrounds and receive free and reduced lunch (NCLB, 2002).

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

This review of related literature focuses on the following: illiteracy in the Delta Region, a brief history of school reform in the United States, the effectiveness of charter schools, integrative studies of the Knowledge is Power Program Schools (KIPP), and the theory advocated by Gene Bottoms' High Schools That Work Initiative of high expectations, rigor, relevance, and relationships which may be the catalyst surrounding the success of KIPP Schools. The literature also includes the alarming rate of illiteracy in the Delta Region, a brief history of school reform from the 1990s to present day, and the creation of charter schools with emphasis on the KIPP Program. Additionally, the review examines the recent empirical literature on the KIPP Program in urban areas and the theoretical framework of high expectations, rigor, relevance, and relationships. The goal was to provide educators with a complete, evaluative, and modern literature review surrounding the KIPP Schools' impact on student achievement.

The review is structured as follows: In section one, there is a presentation of the conceptual framework that outlines the inception of KIPP Schools, specifically with the reformation of public schools to the creation of charter schools to solve problems such as high illiteracy in the Delta Region. Also, there is a brief theory of how high expectations, rigor, relevance, and relationships may be at work in the KIPP Schools. In the second section, there is a description of the methodology used for inclusion and evaluation of research for the literature review. The third section contains the review of the literature pertaining to the research question: What factors have influenced the academic success of at-risk students in the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) Charter School in Literacy in the Delta Region, according to administrator,

teacher, and student perceptions? The final section of Chapter Two contains concluding remarks and recommendations for future research.

Conceptual Framework

This review of literature is part of a broader effort to address a new wave of the charter school: Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP). The purpose was to examine the KIPP Program and identify the variables influencing the increased student achievement in literacy among poor, African American students, according to administrator, teacher, and student perceptions. The factors include the high expectation of the literacy teachers and administrators, the rigorous curriculum of the KIPP Program, the relevance of the literacy lessons, and the positive, teacher-student relationships developed at the KIPP School. In other words, what is motivating these students to do their best? Maybe the academic success of the KIPP students is due to the theoretical framework advocated by Gene Bottoms' High Schools That Work Initiative that stated high expectations, rigor, relevance, and relationships positively increase student achievement (2005). The answers to the research questions were unknown until the findings of the case study were revealed.

An understanding of how charter schools came about and the history of educational reform are essential in understanding KIPP Schools. The conceptual framework developed for this review of literature includes illiteracy in the Delta Region, the history of reform and charter schools in the United States, and the KIPP Program. The theoretical framework includes Gene Bottoms' High Schools That Work Initiative research from the Southern Research Educational Board that states high expectations, rigor, relevance, and relationship increase student achievement. These factors are used as an up-front explanation of the variables that may be

influencing the increased student achievement in literacy at the KIPP Schools in the Delta Region.

Illiteracy in the Delta Region

Illiteracy in the Delta Region is an economic problem for the state. Inadequate literacy skills are next to the lowest level of literacy skills and prevent individuals from fully functioning in society. According to the National Institute for Literacy, individuals with inadequate literacy skills can not read and summarize a news article or complete an employment application, for instance. Lee, Phillips, and Chicot, counties part of the Delta Region, have the highest illiteracy rates in the state. Forty to 45% of the adults in these counties have inadequate literacy skills. In St. Francis and Monroe counties, Thirty five to 39% of the adults have inadequate literacy skills. Seventy to 89% of Delta Regional residents have marginal or below literacy skills, which is next to the lowest level of inadequate literacy skills (Dillah, & Rodgers, 2007).

From the 1800s to early 1900s, the Delta Region's economy depended upon agriculture. Cotton was king during this time. Plantations were prominent in the Delta Region. Many plantation owners depended upon slave labor for the extensive work needed for a successful crop. Over the years, automation replaced manual work in the Delta Region. As both farm and manufacturing jobs disappeared, so did the economic base of the Delta Region. As a result, many counties in this area have double digit unemployment percentages. More than half of the residents in the Delta Region live below the federal poverty line. Twenty percent of the Delta Region's population has relocated due to high unemployment, which currently leaves the area with an unskilled labor force (Elliot, 2005). Figure 2 shows the literacy skills among adults in percentages who have proficient to inadequate levels of literacy skills. Figure 3 shows the adults in the mid-south state with proficient to inadequate levels of literacy skills within the state.

1993 National Adult Literacy Survey

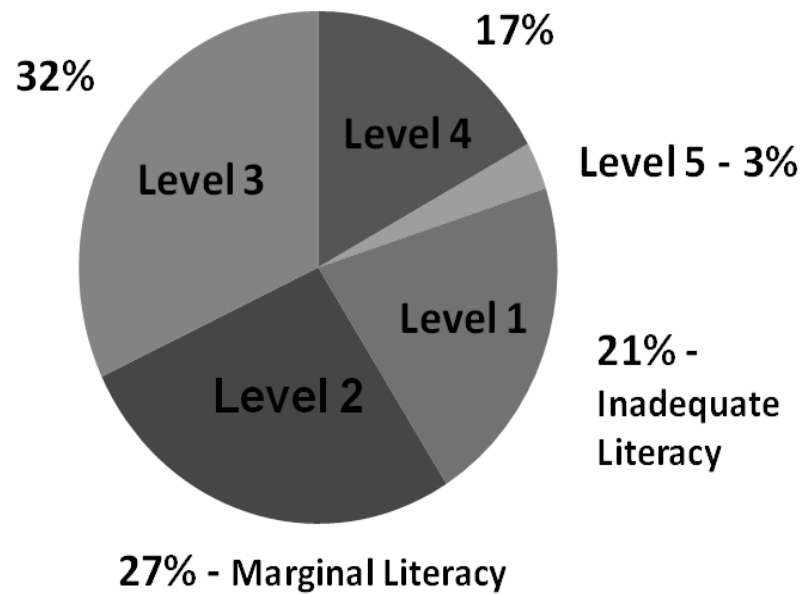


Figure 2. 1993 National adult literacy survey.

Note: As presented by Dillah & Rodgers to the state of Arkansas
in Little Rock, Arkansas October 11, 2007

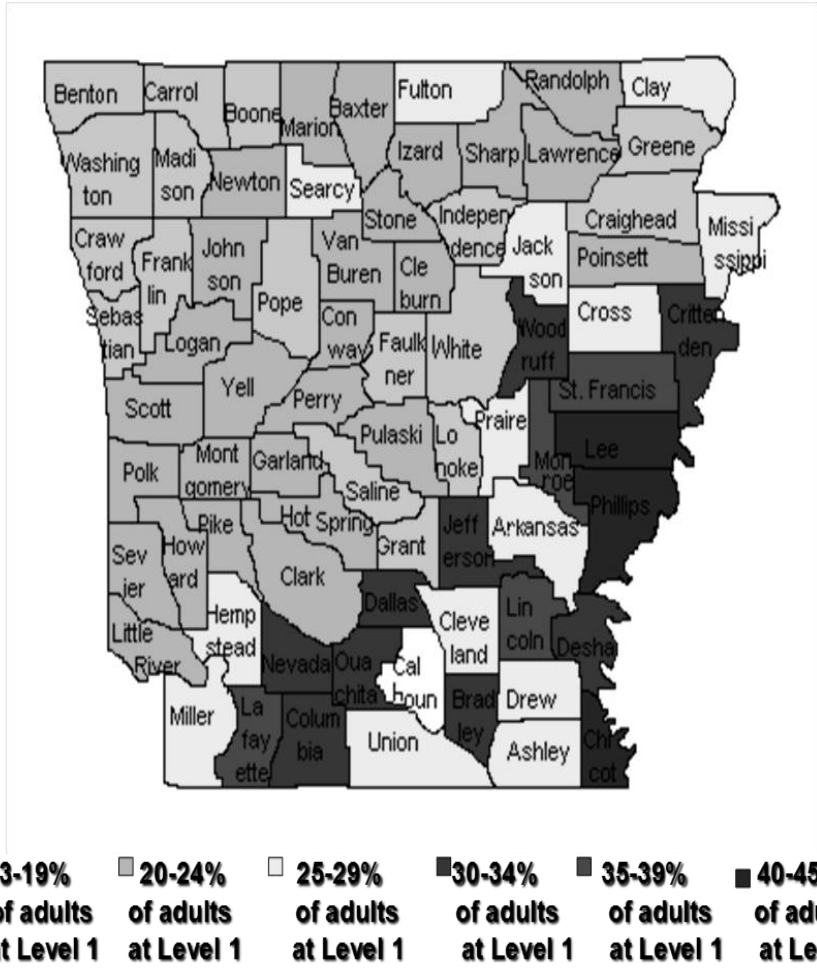


Figure 3. Literacy skills of Arkansas.

Note: As presented by Dillah & Rodgers to the state of Arkansas in Little Rock, Arkansas October 11, 2007

Coleman Report

In July 1966, J.S. Coleman published the Equal Educational Opportunity Survey, which basically stated a student's background determined his or her academic success at school. According to Coleman, regardless of what the school teachers taught and how they taught it, factors related to a student's background such as poverty and parents' lack of education kept these students from learning (Lezotte, 2007).

Unfortunately, many educators accepted the Coleman's report at face value that children of poverty or low socio-economic status could not learn due to their families' background, regardless of what schools did to educate them. This report stimulated a strong reaction from many people who believed otherwise. This strong reaction would become the research basis for the Effective Schools Movement (Lezotte, 2007).

Effective School Movement

The educational researchers of the Effective School Movement strongly believed that schools are important in the lives of children. These researchers believed that regardless of background or socio-economic status, all children could learn (Lezotte, 2007). The Effective School Movement researchers did not discredit the importance of parent involvement of student achievement. They recognized that parental involvement was important in increasing student achievement. Research showed that the number one factor in student success was the amount of parental involvement. Still, it was the moral and ethical responsibility of the educators in the schools to provide the students with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to fully function as a contributing individual in society. The effective schools researchers found schools all over the United States in both rural and urban settings that provided a high-quality education to all of its students regardless of low socio-economic backgrounds (Lezotte, 2007).

More importantly, the researchers identified specific characteristics such as school policies, practices, and beliefs these schools had in common (Lezotte, 2007). The researchers also found that effective schools had the following common characteristics:

- effective instructional leadership
- clear and specific mission
- effective instructional strategies and teaching methods
- high expectations of all students, regardless of background
- frequent monitoring of student achievement
- safe and orderly environment (Lezotte, 2007)

Schools exhibiting these characteristics with high student achievement became the models of effective schools. Many studies have been conducted on effective schools with high-poverty backgrounds (2007). KIPP has recently been included in similar studies because of its success with students from poverty-ridden backgrounds who had been previously failing in the public schools (McDonald, Ross, Abney, & Zoblotsky, 2008; Doran & Drury, 2002; David, Woodworth, Grant, Guha, Lopez-Torkos, and Young, 2006; Iver and Farley-Ripple, 2007; Educational Policy Institute, 2005).

History of School Reform

Donley (1992) defined school reform as renewal, reform, and restructuring occurring simultaneously throughout public schools at various levels. Donley distinguished the three as: renewal as those activities that help the schools operate more effectively and efficiently; school reform as the modification of existing practices to adapt to new conditions and requirements. Donley (1992) defined restructuring as the altering of the organizational structure and practices in order to increase student achievement for all students.

Before the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2002, governors from all 50 states attempted to reform the public schools in the United States. School reform ranged from restructuring schools to the introduction of charter schools such as the KIPP Schools. School reform came about as a result of *A Nation at Risk*, (1983) a study conducted by the United States Department of Education, which questioned whether American students would graduate from public schools with the skills, knowledge, and abilities to successfully compete in the 21st century's global economy (O'Neil, 1993). The study cited numerous problems within the public school system ranging from low, reading comprehension skills to high, dropout rates. *A Nation at Risk*, in 1983, called for new demands that schools were expected to meet. These new demands included increasing student graduation requirements, strengthening teacher preparation and certification standards, standardized testing of students, and lengthening the school year (O'Neil, 1993).

Later, the Carnegie Foundation published a report entitled *A Nation Prepared*, stating that the desired goals listed in *A Nation at Risk* would not bring about increased school productivity, student performance, and learning. *A Nation Prepared* advocated restructuring schools in order to provide a professional, results-oriented working environment, teacher empowerment, and accountability (O'Neil, 1993). Immediately, governors from all 50 states came together and developed a framework for school reform, listed reasons for the reform, and analyzed what worked in the school reformation process (O'Neil, 1993).

Many teachers and administrators resisted the change that came about during the school reformation process. Teachers and administrators wanted to know why their schools were being reformed. Many reasons were given for the need to reform the schools. Advocates of school reform argued poor student achievement on standardized tests, no accountability for educators, a

large percentage of incompetent workers, and an outdated educational system as reasons for reforming the schools (O'Neil, 1993). Mainly, poor student achievement on standardized tests has been the fuel for the push for school reform. Business and industry leaders argued that they need competent workers in order to compete with foreign competitors. Taxpayers refused to support an outdated educational system. Thus, the push to reform the public educational system came to a peak (O'Neil, 1993).

The National Governors Association (NGA) focused on improving instruction, enhancing the curriculum, decentralizing authority and decision making, creating new staff roles, and implementing an accountability system for all schools going through the reformation process (O'Neil, 1993). School reform became the new buzz word around public schools in the late 1980s. Additional recommendations included the following: Higher order thinking skills should be taught to all students. Flexible schedules such as A/B day or double blocking should be implemented for maximizing instructional time. Student learning activities should be more rigorous and challenging. Teaming or grouping of students should encourage more cooperation, unity, and engagement. As a result of school reform, more interdisciplinary units, flexible blocks, A/B scheduling, 4/4 scheduling, and block scheduling have been introduced. Schools have expanded their honors, Pre-Advanced Placement, and Advanced Placements programs. Teachers are incorporating cooperative groups, peer tutoring, and various groupings to increase student achievement and learning. With the modification of curriculum and instruction, flexibility in time, changes in roles and responsibilities, teacher empowerment, and increased accountability, student learning and achievement have improved (Arkansas Department of Education, 2012).

GOALS 2000

Next, Goals 2000: Educate America Act, Public Law 103-227, was the nation's means to set educational goals. This was done by the U.S. Congress for the year 2000. Goals 2000 was funded by former President Bill Clinton in 1994. Public Law 103-227 stated the following:

1. All American students will start school ready to learn.
2. High school graduation rates will increase to 90 percent or greater.
3. All students will demonstrate mastery in core curriculum at the end of grades four, eight, and 12.
4. Students will graduate prepared for citizenship, graduate school, or employment.
5. American students will place first in mathematical and scientific endeavors worldwide.
6. Every American citizen will possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to compete in a global society.
7. All schools in the United States will be free from violence, drugs, and alcohol.
8. All schools in the United States will have an environment that is conducive to learning.
9. American teachers will have professional development, training, and resources to prepare them to teach the skills and knowledge students needed to be successful in the 21st century.
10. American schools will encourage active parental involvement to foster the academic, social, and emotional development of all students, regardless of background (Goals 2000, 1994).

No Child Left Behind Act of 2002

Former President Bush attempted to assure that all students are learning and receiving a quality education. Under the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB, 2002) is the increased emphasis of accountability for student performance. Out of all of the attempts of school reform, NCLB

(2002) is probably the most controversial because of the accountability component of the law. Accountability measures are in place for student performance at all public schools receiving federal funds. NCLB states each state shall develop a statewide accountability system that will be effective in ensuring that all public schools districts and individual schools, within the district, receiving federal dollars meet adequately yearly progress, (AYP), (NCLB, 2002). The law states all public schools must assure that all students, regardless of background, are meeting rigorous academic standards (NCLB, 2002). In order for schools to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) they must provide the following:

1. Rigorous academic standards, such as Common Core State Standards, for all students
2. Data driven statistics, such as percentage of students meeting proficiency
3. Annual academic improvement and growth for all schools
4. Annual measurable achievement growth for all sub-populations of the school
5. English as a Second Language (ESL) students mathematics scores are calculated for AYP, if

they have been in the country less than one year. Literacy scores are not calculated.

6. Met high school graduation rate of 85%
7. 95% attendance of student population testing is also used as second indicator (NCLB, 2002).

More importantly, there are rewards and sanctions for not meeting AYP, respectively.

Schools that meet AYP are recognized as high performing schools. On the other hand, schools that do not meet AYP are put on alert status, and then moved to year one, two, three, four or five of school improvement. Schools that are in year four or five improvement are mandated to implement America's Choice curriculum and are restructured by the state department of education. Additionally, students at poor performing schools will be allowed to attend any public

school of their choice at the state's expense. For instance, students who are attending schools that are on alert status or in school improvement are allowed to attend another public school within the district that is not on alert status or school improvement. Other sanctions by the state department of education may include hiring outside experts to assist the school, extending the school day and year, and taking over the school (NCLB, 2002, Act 35).

Students are also held accountable under NCLB. For instance, students who score basic or below basic in mathematics or literacy on the Augmented Benchmark examinations are placed on an Academic Improvement Plan (AIP) and are provided academic remediation throughout the school year. Academic remediation includes mandatory after school tutoring and interventions. By 2013, students who do not pass the end of the year exit exams will be retained or will not graduate from high school until they score proficient or advanced on the skills tested (NCLB, 2002; Act 35).

Achievement Gap Among Minority Students in School Reformed Schools

Since the enactment of the Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) Demonstration Program in 1997 by the United States Department of Education, many inner city, Title I schools, have attempted various reform models to increase student achievement (Ross, McDonald, Alberg, and McSparrin-Gallagher (2007). Unfortunately, recent studies of the systematic urban reform models have only had limited success due to various factors ranging from low teacher approval and scarce resources to inadequate professional development (McDonald, Ross, Abney, & Zoblotsky, 2008; Good & Braden, 2000). Bodilly & Berend (1999) found that school reform models were more difficult to implement at middle and high schools than elementary. Middle and high school teachers feared trying new, different, and innovative instructional strategies for

various reasons. Regrettably, recent reports of urban school reform have been dismissed due to reasons ranging from lack of low teacher ownership to scarce instructional resources.

As a result, very little progress has been made in significantly increasing student achievement among minority students in urban areas (Ross & Gallagher, 2005). According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), in 2005, there was an academic gap of 34 points between White and Black students. On average, Black students scored 29 points less on the NAEP assessment. This gap has existed for over 13 years from 1992 to 2005 (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Similarly, the Southern Education Foundation (2002) reported African American students are lagging four years behind their white student counterpart in terms of academic proficiency, as measured by the NAEP assessment. Thus, one can infer that African American students are graduating from high school with the skills comparable to a white eighth grade student. Despite all of the school reform, American public schools have made little progress in providing a high quality education to children of color and poverty (Gillborn, 2005; NAACP, 2009).

History of Charter Schools

Thus, out of the many problems with public schools such as high illiteracy rates for instance, have come the demand for the creation of charter schools. Bruno Manno, a proponent of charter schools, defined charter schools as an independently operating public school granted a charter from the state department of education for a certain number of years to educate students with little interference from the state in exchange for increased student achievement. Charter schools give up state interference for increased student achievement among its students (Good, & Braden, 2000; Arkansas Department of Education, 2012). Charter schools are held accountable for increased student achievement. Charter schools are not exempt from Public Law 94-142

regulating special education, and Occupational Safety and Health Administration rules and regulations (Good, & Braden, 2000).

There are various types of charter schools. Charter school may be new schools, former public schools, former private schools (religious or non-religious) or home schools (Good, & Braden, 2000; Arkansas Department of Education, 2012). Charter schools vary from state-to-state in terms of creation, finances, and longevity of the charter. Nathan (1999) advocated why the state public schools should become charter schools. He stated these four arguments for charter schools:

1. Choice among public schools for families and their children
2. Entrepreneurial opportunities for educators and parents to create successful schools
3. Direct responsibility for improved student achievement, as measured by standardized tests
4. Healthy competition for traditional public schools

Nathan (1999) summarized these arguments for charter schools as choice, autonomy, accountability, and competition.

In theory, competition from charter schools is suppose to motivate traditional, public schools to work harder in educating American youth. With school choice, the creation of charter schools provides a means of healthy competition within the public schools. Proponents argue that charter schools are a means of rescuing students from failing schools in the public school system (Good & Braden, 2000).

Charter Schools in Mid-south State

In the mid-south state, the state Board of Education grants two types of charters for the creation of charter school: conversion charters and open enrollment charter schools. Conversion

charter schools are traditional public schools that are converted to public charter schools and can only enroll students from within the school district boundaries. An open enrollment school, on the other hand, can pull students from across school districts. The charter is granted to the superintendent for three years initially up to a maximum of five years. State rules and regulations are not given up immediately. Charter schools must meet the specified requirement of the charter, produce improved student achievement, and meet fiscal responsibilities. The superintendent of the school district must request, in writing, any waivers in the charter. Teachers must be certified by the state Department of Education and are covered by the teachers' union for the school district. Students in public and charter schools are required to test in the statewide assessments in the spring and show improved academic student achievement (Good & Braden, 2000; Arkansas Department of Education, 2012).

Research from these charter schools has concluded that minimal change has taken place in terms of improved curriculum and instruction in the newly chartered schools. Horn and Miron reported that curriculum was chosen mainly by the school principal with very little input from the classroom teacher. For instance, Packs noted in California that teachers in the charter schools were teaching in the same manner they taught in traditional public schools. In essence, there was no difference in curriculum and instruction at charter schools than the public schools (Good & Braden, 2000). However, one charter school that is making a difference in terms of student achievement is the Knowledge is Power Program, (KIPP).

Historical Background of KIPP Schools

What are KIPP Schools? Knowledge is Power Program Schools (KIPP) started in 1994 with co-founders, Mike Feinberg and Dave Levin, in inner-city Houston, Texas. KIPP Schools are non-profit charter schools. The first KIPP School was a fifth grade school only. Currently,

there are 109 KIPP Schools throughout the nation and in Washington D.C. (KIPP Organization, 2012). Students who attend KIPP charter schools are often minority and poor. More than 85% of KIPP students qualify for the federal free and reduced-price meal program, and more than 95% are African American, Hispanic, or Latino. The students entering KIPP Schools are usually below one or two grade levels in both reading and mathematics. Nevertheless, these same minority students have made tremendous improvements in academics, discipline, and motivation with the KIPP Program. These students have become the American success stories that public schools are striving to deliver. The same students who entered KIPP Schools below grade level, dramatically increased from below basic to proficient or advanced students (McDonald, Ross, Abney, & Zoblotsky, 2008; Doran & Drury, 2002; David, Woodworth, Grant, Guha, Lopez-Torkos, and Young, 2006; Iver, Avelle & Farley-Ripple, 2007; Educational Policy Institute, 2005). Kipsters have earned \$21 million dollars in scholarship to attend some of the top high schools in the nation.

In the fall of 2003, the first class of KIPP: Houston and KIPP: Bronx entered college. More than two-thirds of the original students who attended KIPP since implementation, earned admission to four year colleges and universities around the country. More than 85% of KIPP graduates have matriculated to college.

Additionally, the KIPP Academy in Houston was distinguished as a Texas Exemplary School each year after its initial opening. The students of the KIPP Academy in the Bronx outperformed all other middle school students in math and reading in the boroughs. The student orchestra of KIPP Academy in the Bronx has performed at Carnegie Hall and is one of the best orchestras in the country.

Also, in 2000, a special partnership was formed between the founders of KIPP and Doris and Donald Fisher, the co-founders of Gap Inc, the retail Gap blue jean outlets throughout the nation. This partnership was done to establish more KIPP Schools throughout the nation. With the Gap partnership, KIPP is able to recruit and train both teachers and administrators to effectively operate KIPP Schools throughout the nation (KIPP Organization, 2012).

KIPP's Mission

The mission of KIPP Schools is to provide a high-quality education for underserved minority students who graduate with the skills, knowledge, and character to be successful in the 21st century global market (KIPP Organization, 2012). KIPP Schools operate on five central beliefs known as the Five Pillars:

1. Students have a longer school day beginning at 7:30 A.M. and ending at 5:30 P.M.
2. Students attend Saturdays biweekly from 8:00 A.M. until noon.
3. Students attend Summer School.
4. Students complete two to three hours of homework daily.
5. Teachers, parents, and students sign a Commitment to Excellence form, holding all three parties accountable for students' attendance, homework, and behavior at KIPP Schools.
6. Students participate in extracurricular activities, such as chess, band, orchestra, athletics, and martial arts in the afternoons.
7. Students attend field lessons to college campuses and important national historical sites (KIPP, 2012).

Students are expected to achieve, behave, and excel at KIPP Schools. Many incentives are in place for student achievement. For example, students are rewarded points toward a weekly

paycheck which they can spend in the school's bookstore for various items such as t-shirts. Other incentives include skating, bowling, and end-of-the year field trips.

The rules for student behavior are strict. There are consequences for students who misbehave or do not complete their assignments. For example, students who talk without permission or fail to complete an assignment lose points toward their weekly paycheck. Some stay after school or forfeit field trips for their misbehavior.

Additionally, KIPP School opened in 2002 in the Delta Region of a mid-south state. The school opened with 75 fifth-grade students who were recruited from the housing projects. The following year they added sixth-grade students. In 2004-2005, the eighth grade class was added to the program. Today, they have approximately 700 students in elementary, middle, and high schools. KIPP plans to open 13 addition schools throughout communities similar to the Delta Region by 2019. 97% of KIPP students are African American and 87% of them qualify for free or reduced price lunch. The school is located in the second poorest county in the state. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, less than 63% of adults in this county have high school diplomas and 12.4 have college degrees.

Nevertheless, in 2008 the KIPP School was named as a Blue Ribbon School by the United States Department of Education because of the academic success it had demonstrated on the state benchmark and end-of course examinations. KIPP was also ranked second in the mid-south state by the Washington Post High School Challenge Index for preparing student for college and university readiness (Maranto & Shuls, 2011).

KIPP Studies

Studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of the KIPP Program on student achievement in urban areas. Studies have been conducted at the KIPP Schools in Memphis, TN;

Gaston, NC; San Francisco, CA; Houston, TX; and Washington, DC. Studies have also been conducted by organizations such as the Educational Policy Institute, New American Schools Education Performance Network, Center for Research in Educational Policy, and the SRI International Center for Educational Policy.

**KIPP Diamond 4 Year Study in Memphis, TN:
Year 1:**

Ross et al., (2007) conducted a four year study on the implementation of the KIPP School in Memphis, TN. In year one, the researchers conducted a mixed-method, quasi-experimental design consisting of interviews, observations, surveys, and statistical analysis of achievement tests. 49 students were individually matched to students from similar backgrounds in terms of ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, and ability. The control group was from various Memphis City Schools who lived in the same neighborhood. KIPP Diamond students' scores were statistically significant on four of the six standardized administered tests (McDonald, Ross, Abney, & Zoblotsky, 2008). The main research question was whether KIPP Diamond students would achieve at higher levels than would matched control students in literacy and mathematics on Tennessee's mandatory standardized assessments. The researchers noted that the KIPP Diamond students and the control group had identical means on all fourth-grade pretests. However, the KIPP Diamond students demonstrated significantly higher scores on four out of six fifth-grade tests, with effect size, (ES) ranging from +0.31 to =0.63. The median adjusted ES was =.31 for all six achievement measures, indicating a moderate to strong effect. Another noteworthy point was that the effect of the KIPP Model took only one school year. Researchers of school reform such as Desimone (2002); Fullan (2000); and Levin (1993) stated that several years were required to measure program implementation based on student achievement (McDonald, Ross, Abney, & Zoblotsky, 2008). The researchers' theoretical framework was

based upon the Correlates of Effective Schools and the Desimone-Porter Model. Ross et al., (2007) contributed KIPP Diamond's success to the presence of the Correlates of Effective Schools (Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte, 2000) and elements of Desimone-Porter Model (Desimon 2002; Poerter, 1994). They documented a strong presence of instructional leadership, high expectations, a safe and orderly environment, communications, and a clearly stated mission (Edmonds, 1979, Lezotte, 2000). These are five of the seven characteristics of effective schools identified in Edmonds and Lezotte's research. However, two of the characteristics: opportunity to learn and monitoring of progress were ranked moderate at the school (McDonald, Ross, Abney, & Zoblotsky, 2008). Similarly, Ross et al., (2007) documented strong presence of authority and consistency: two components of the Desimone-Porter Model. Authority refers to the staff's input in the KIPP's selection and implementation of the model. Specificity and power were moderate, while stability was rated as very weak. Power referred to the degree which stakeholders had control over developing school policies and making local decisions.

Year One Summary:

Factors that may have contributed to KIPP Diamond's success include the following: the potential advantage of parents and students being more committed, teachers' commitment and buy-in, increased instructional time, students' time on task, and a positive school climate. Bulkey & Fisher, 2002; Collins, 1999; and RAND, 2001 argued that charter schools attract more committed parents and students because they have a choice whether to participate. Borman et al., 2003; Desimone, 2002; Ross & Gil, 2004; Rowan et al., 2004 documented the impact teacher buy-in had upon comprehensive school reform models. Similarly, Bloom (1980) and Good & Brophy (1987) measured the effects of increased instructional time and students' time on task on student achievement (McDonald, Ross, Abney, & Zoblotsky, 2008). Rowan et al., (2004) posited

that teachers need the motivation to learn and the practice of new instructional strategies and the professional development training in order to teach them. Of the factors listed above, the most crucial was a positive school climate. According to Ross et al., (2007) KIPP's school positive school climate facilitated program implementation, effective teaching, curricula, and ultimately, student achievement. A positive school climate allows a new curricular program designed to increase student achievement to be implemented successfully at the school.

Problems that Ross et al., (2007) noted included communication and resource problems with Memphis City Schools. Concerns the study cited included the mobility and burn-out of many urban teachers (Haycock, 1998), diminishing of teacher buy-in for innovation over time (Berends et al., 2002; Muncey & McQuillan, 1996; Ross, 2003), and limited student participation in extracurricular activities.

KIPP Diamond Year Two Evaluation

Likewise, in year two of the KIPP Diamond study, McSparrin-Gallagher & Ross (2005) conducted a mixed-method, quasi experiment. KIPP Diamond students were individually matched to control students of similar backgrounds from nearby neighborhood schools. Three sub-samples of KIPP Diamond students took Tennessee Comprehensive Program/Achievement Test (TCAPAT): (a) fifth graders who completed their first year at KIPP, (b) sixth graders who completed their first year at KIPP, and (c) sixth graders who completed their second year at KIPP. As stated earlier, the means for KIPP Diamond students and the control group were identical on the pretest in the year prior to the KIPP Diamond students' enrollment.

Students' examinations were compared on the Reading, Language Arts, and Mathematics subtests of the TCAP/AT examination. The results directionally favored KIPP Diamond students in seven out of nine analyses (median $ES=+0.14$) unadjusted for pretest score, and eight out of

nine analyses (median ES=+0.16) adjusted for pretest scores. The inferential analyses revealed KIPP Diamond students' achievement to be statistically significant for only the fifth-grade and sixth-grade longitudinal cohort subsamples (McSparrin-Gallagher & Ross, 2005). Equally, on the criterion-referenced (CRT) portion of the TCAP/AT, more KIPP Diamond students scored proficient or advanced than the control group on all three subsamples. The measure, however, was not statistically significant. McSparrin-Gallagher & Ross (2005) noted the results were very positive in light of the school size doubling and the loss of a strong administrator.

KIPP Diamond Year Three Evaluation

Year three of the KIPP Diamond study was conducted to address the progress made in program implementation, school climate, and student achievement. Again, the study was a mixed-method quasi-study. All stakeholders perceived the KIPP Diamond students as achieving. School climate slightly declined over the past three years of KIPP implementation, with school order ranking the lowest of the seven dimensions on the School Climate Inventory (SCI). In comparison, KIPP Diamond's school climate ranked higher than the control's. Unlike years two and three, KIPP teachers were utilizing more traditional instructional strategies found in traditional public schools such as direct instruction and independent seatwork. Technology was rarely observed. Cooperative learning, student discussion, high levels of student attention, and student engagement were occasionally observed during the school visits (Thompson, McDonald, & Sterbinsky, 2005). Lastly, the loss of a strong principal impacted the program's implementation. Thompson et al., (2005) recommended that the school continue to focus upon the following: Diversifying instructional strategies, incorporating technology, developing and enforcing student behavior plans, and increasing parental and student input in decision making (Thompson et al., 2005).

KIPP Diamond Year Four Evaluation

McDonald, Ross, Abney, and Zoblotsky (2008) conducted the fourth year of KIPP Diamond to measure its impact upon student achievement of at-risk urban middle school students. The study was a mixed-method quasi design. 165 KIPP students were individually matched to a control group of similar backgrounds from nearby neighborhood Memphis City schools. The results directionally favored KIPP students; however, the only statistically significant measure was 5th grade mathematics. Seven out of eight measures (88%) showed positive effects with average grade-level effect sizes as 0.22 in Reading/Language Arts and 0.33 in Math, reflecting educationally moderate to strong advantages (McDonald, Ross, Abney & Zoblotsky, 2008).

Factors that may have contributed to disruption of the implementation of the KIPP Program included the loss of a strong building administrator and student misbehavior. The school unexpectedly lost a strong principal. Datnow, Hubbard, & Mehan (2002); Desimone, (2002), and Rowan et al., (2004) documented the crucial role that a strong building administrator plays in comprehensive school reform (McDonald, Ross, Abney & Zoblotsky, 2008). Additionally, teachers discussed student misbehavior as negatively affecting instruction, thereby impacting overall student achievement at KIPP Diamond.

Evaluation of KIPP DC/KEY Academy, District of Columbia; KIPP Gaston College Preparatory School, North Carolina; and 3D Academy, Houston, Texas

The Education Performance Network (EPN) at New American School conducted an independent study of KIPP DC/ KEY Academy in D.C.; Gaston College Preparatory School in NC; and 3D Academy in Houston, TX; to determine whether the schools could replicate the

academic gains of KIPP: Houston and KIPP: Bronx, the two original KIPP Schools, in year one of its operation (Doran & Drury, 2002). The research questions were:

1. What percentage of students is making normal educational growth each year?
2. Have KIPP students made statistically significant achievement gains as compared to prior enrollment?
3. Have KIPP students outperformed their peers at their former public schools?

Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) scores, scale scores, performance levels, and prior achievement data were collected for each fifth grade student. The researchers used longitudinal multivariate statistical models to evaluate the effects of the KIPP Program upon student achievement at the KIPP DC/KEY Academy in Washington, D.C. Researchers conducted pre and post test data to determine whether the scores were statistically significant and whether the gains came after the student enrollment. The researchers also disaggregated the data by demographics in order to determine whether the subpopulations were making statistically significant gains as well.

Summary of KIPP DC/KEY Academy, District of Columbia

The KIPP students' gains in mathematics and reading were greater than any other middle or junior high school within the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) (Doran & Drury, 2002). On average, all students in all subpopulations increased 23.5 NCE points in mathematics and 12.1 NCE points in reading from the pre-test in the fall to the post-test in the spring as measured by the Stanford-9 (Doran & Drury, 2002). Furthermore, KIPP students had similar academic gains on the Terra Nova negating the suggestion that the test gains were test-specific. The post academic gains were statistically significant in reading and mathematics. The students'

academic means were greater than the national norm means in the post test (Doran & Drury, 2002).

Summary of KIPP Gaston College Preparatory School, North Carolina

The KIPP students attending the Gaston Preparatory School in North Carolina had similar academic gains as the KIPP/DCKEY Academy. KIPP Gaston students showed a 36 percentage points increase on the pass rate on the reading End-of-Year exam in 2002. Before attending KIPP, only 57% of the same students passed the End-Of-Year Reading examination (Doran & Drury, 2002). Further, 82% of fifth grade special education students passed the state reading exam compared to 11% as fourth graders attending another DCPS school (Doran & Drury, 2002). The fifth grade KIPP reading gains were statistically significant, whereas before being admitted to KIPP gains were not (Doran & Drury, 2002). Likewise, KIPP mathematical gains were statistically significant. All subgroups showed an increase in mathematics. 90% of the KIPP students had a pass rate on the End-Of-Course exam in Mathematics, compared to 81% prior to attending KIPP Schools. However, scores for special education students slightly decreased. Similarly, to KIPP DC/KEY Academy, KIPP Gaston's students outperformed any other school in the Northampton County School District (Doran & Drury, 2002).

Summary of 3D Academy, Houston

The academic gains were statistically significant for all subtests of the Stanford 9 as were the academic gains prior to 3D Academy's enrollment. The average passing rate for reading and mathematics was higher than the average Houston Independent School District (HISD) passing rate (Doran & Drury, 2002). For example, 98% compared to 89% passed the math subtest on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) for 5th grade students. 88% compared to 84% passed the reading on the TAAS. All subpopulations scores improved in the reading and

mathematics subtest of the TAAS (Doran & Drury, 2002). The average 5th grade KIPP Stanford-9 score exceeded HISD average in mathematics. The average 5th grade KIPP scores were comparable to HISD average in Language and Reading on the Stanford 9 (Doran & Drury, 2002).

Study of San Francisco Bay Area KIPP Schools:

The researchers conducted a mixed method study of all five KIPP Schools in the San Francisco Bay area. The study was the first year of a three year study of the KIPP School. The study was conducted in 2004-05 school year. The qualitative method conducted was a case study consisting of interviews with the administrators and teachers, focus groups with students and parents, and classroom observations. The quantitative method consisted of KIPP's effect upon student achievement data.

Findings

The researchers found evidence of the Five Pillars of KIPP Schools: high expectations, choice and commitment, more time, power to lead, and focus on results (David, Woodworth, Grant, Guha, Lopez-Torkos, and Young, 2006).

High Expectations

KIPP teachers and administrators had very high expectations of students in terms of student achievement and student behavior. "KIPP Schools expect their student to achieve at high levels academically in a rigorous, college preparatory program and demonstrate the desire, discipline, and dedication necessary to succeed at KIPP and beyond" (David, Woodworth, Grant, Guha, Lopez-Torkos, and Young, 2006, ES-1). For example, students are expected to master the state standards and the college preparatory curriculum in order to be promoted to the next grade level. Students are expected to complete a minimum of two hours of daily homework (David,

Woodworth, Grant, Guha, Lopez-Torkos, and Young, 2006). KIPP also has a set of strict rules for student behavior. Students are given a paycheck for their weekly academic performance and student behavior that they can cash at the school's bookstore for various items such as KIPP backpacks and t-shirts (Jones, 2003).

Choice and Commitment

With No Child Left Behind, parents and students now have a choice in selecting the schools they attend. Students have the choice to leave a failing school (NCLB, 2002). KIPP parents and students choose to be part of the KIPP community. Not only do they choose, but they commit to the rules and policies they have in place. Every year students and parents sign a Commitment to Excellence form stating that they will abide by the rules and policies. Parents and students understand that students may be expelled from KIPP if they choose to not follow any of KIPP's rules (David, Woodworth, Grant, Guha, Lopez-Torkos, and Young, 2006). According to the researchers, some students left KIPP Schools for various reasons including family relocation, behavioral problems, failing grades, and failure to adhere to the Commitment to Excellence form (David, Woodworth, Grant, Guha, Lopez-Torkos, and Young, 2006).

More Time

Students attend school daily from 7:25 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., on Saturdays bi-weekly until 1:00 P.M., and in the summer. Students have a minimum of two hours of homework; thereby, extending the school day also.

Power to Lead

Unlike the public schools, the KIPP administrators have autonomy over the selection of their staff and the allocation of their budget. KIPP Foundation "applicants go through a rigorous selection process, provides intensive training and ongoing support in implementing the KIPP

Model, and retains the right to revoke the KIPP name” (David, Woodworth, Grant, Guha, Lopez-Torkos, and Young, 2006). Researchers noted that none of the school administrators had been principals before KIPP and their knowledge in curriculum, instruction, and instructional leadership varied. Unfortunately, without the instructional leadership of the principal, teachers were left to develop the curriculum and academic programs for the KIPP Schools (David, Woodworth, Grant, Guha, Lopez-Torkos, and Young, 2006).

Focus on Results

According to the researchers, staff was not able to answer the main research question: Do Kipsters perform better academically than they would have had they not attended a KIPP school? (David, Woodworth, Grant, Guha, Lopez-Torkos, and Young, 2006,). The researchers noted that the data collected from The California Standards Test (CST) and the Stanford Achievement Test, Tenth Edition (SAT-10) was not student-level. Instead, the student data was cross-sectional and school-level. However, they noted that the percentage of KIPP students who scored proficient or advanced on the CST was constantly higher than students from neighboring schools in the San Francisco Bay area. Likewise, on the SAT 10, the percentage of students at or above the 50th percentile increased in all but one case (David, Woodworth, Grant, Guha, Lopez-Torkos, and Young, 2006). At one KIPP School, there was an increase of 6 percentage points in 5th grade reading. Similarly, another KIPP School had an increase of 51 percentage points for 6th grade mathematics (David, Woodworth, Grant, Guha, Lopez-Torkos, and Young, 2006).

Considerations for KIPP

The demands on the teachers may require KIPP to continue to replenish the teaching staff. Also, because of the principal’s limited or lack of instructional leadership, there were significant problems with the overall performance of the school.

San Francisco Bay Area KIPP Schools Final Report:

In the last three years of the study, the researchers' goals included 1.) measuring the effectiveness of KIPP through statistical analysis, 2.) studying the importance of leadership at Bay Area KIPP Schools and the KIPP Foundation, 3.) identifying KIPP's culture, 4.) discussing how staff and students became accustomed to it, and 5.) understanding how curriculum and instruction are designed and taught at KIPP Schools.

In terms of student achievement, Woodworth, David, Guha, Wang, and Lopez-Torkos (2008) found that mainly minority students who were from poor backgrounds entered KIPP Schools. Sixty three to 81 % of the students qualified for free or reduced lunch. The KIPP Schools have been accused of creaming the top students from inner city schools. In contrast, this study refuted these accusations. Those students entering KIPP Schools in the fifth-grade acquired scores ranged from the 9th to the 60th national percentile in reading and mathematics on the SAT10. However, after a minimum of one year at KIPP, fifth grade students outperformed their matched counterparts on ELA and the mathematics section of the CST. The scores were statistically significant in terms of percentile ranks ranging from 5.6 to 33.0 points and effect sizes ranging from 0.16 to 0.86. Similarly, KIPP students who enrolled in the sixth grade saw significant differences in percentile points ranging from 8.9 to 33.9 points and effect sizes ranging from 0.24 to 0.88 (Woodworth et al., 2008). Also, the KIPP scores were above the fifty percentile on the mathematics of the SAT10, compared to national norms.

In terms of school leadership and support, the KIPP Foundation hires principals and gives them the "power to lead" KIPP Schools as they deem fit (Woodworth et al., 2008). The principals are held accountable for positive results in exchange for autonomy. KIPP Foundation reserves the right to remove the KIPP name from any school that fails to bring about positive

results in terms of increased student achievement. The principals view the hiring and firing of teachers as their most important job duty (Woodworth et al., 2008).

In terms of school culture, the culture is characteristic of high expectations for academic performance, positive student behavior, and emphasis placed upon graduating high school and completing college. KIPP's culture is embedded in the chants, songs, rituals, language, slogans, and banner. The school has a discipline system of rewards and consequences set in place to reinforce these values and expectations. For example, banners of Ivy League Schools such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton are visible throughout the schools. Also, student classes were referred to as the year the class was graduating such as the class of 2013, for instance.

In terms of curriculum and instruction, Woodworth et al., (2008) found that the KIPP Schools do not have a prescribed curriculum or protocol of instructional strategies and methods. Instead, the teachers design the curriculum and instructional practices. Students spend a minimum of 85 minutes on ELA and mathematics. The remaining time was devoted to science, social studies, enrichment, study, and physical education. Additionally, students are at school until 5:00 to 5:30 P.M. in the afternoon, attend Saturday School biweekly, and a minimum of two to three weeks of summer school. Students who are not on grade level are retained at the end of the school year. Furthermore, teachers utilize interim assessments to determine the areas that need remediating before Spring assessments.

Potential Problems or Weakness of the KIPP Schools

Woodworth et al., (2008) identified several potential problems that may negatively impact the KIPP Schools ability to sustain their momentum.

1. The decline of student enrollment after sixth grade
2. Attrition rate of 60% before the end of eighth grade

3. High teacher turnover rate (18 to 49% from 2003-04 to 2007-08)

4. Principal's job to raise \$400,000 to \$700,000 in addition to state and local funds to cover the school's overall operating costs annually

Contributing Factors to Student Achievement

Woodworth et al., (2008) believed that the possible contributing factors to increased student achievement are as follows:

1. A culture of high expectations for student achievement and behavior
2. Ample time and assistance for student learning
3. Documentation of student progress
4. Data-driven instruction
5. A belief of continuous improvement

More importantly, they argued that five KIPP Pillars of high expectations, choice and commitment, more time, power to lead, and focus on results are the guiding principles or theory of action necessary for students' success from low-socio-economic backgrounds (Woodworth et al., 2008). The five pillars work in conjunction with one another. According to Woodworth et al., (2008) the absence of one affects the whole. For example, merely extending the school day from 7:30 A.M. to 5:30 P.M. would not bring about the enhanced student achievement if changes were not made in the school's culture, time to lead pillar, teacher collaboration and planning, and data-driven decision making. Thus, the challenge for high-poverty public schools was to implement these guiding principles and gain teachers, parents, and students' buy-in and commitment. (Woodworth et al., 2008).

The Baltimore KIPP Ujima Village Academy:

The study was a four year longitudinal study of four cohorts of 5th grade students in the Baltimore KIPP Academy from 2002-2006. Students were compared to a control group of students with similar student achievement and demographics. However, the researchers did not control for parental education and support that could contribute also to increased student achievement (Iver, Avele & Farley-Ripple, 2007).

Findings

Iver, Avele & Farley-Ripple (2007) found that fewer special education students attended the Baltimore KIPP Academy compared to the control group. The first and fourth cohort KIPP students did not differ from the control's group in terms of their 4th grade achievement scores. Even when the researchers controlled for pre-existing differences such as higher student achievement, KIPP students significantly outperformed the comparison group in 5th grade mathematics every year (Iver and Farley-Ripple, 2007). Unfortunately, this was not the case in 5th grade reading. Even when KIPP students were promoted to middle schools, they outperformed the control group in reading and mathematics. The KIPP effect was statistically significant. Although, it should be mentioned that the scores of students who were retained, were not included in the test score analyses and may have impacted the final scores (Iver, Avele & Farley-Ripple, 2007).

Iver, Avele & Farley-Ripple (2007) believed that three components of the KIPP Model may have contributed to the increased student achievement among the students: 1.) the extended school day, 2.) quality curriculum and instruction, 3.) positive school climate. The researchers also noted KIPP's student enrollment was much smaller than the traditional public schools and as a result has fewer behavioral problems. According to the researchers implementing the

components of the KIPP Model on a large scale may not be cost-effective to a school district such as Baltimore City Public School System. (Iver, Avele & Farley-Ripple, 2007).

Iver, Avele & Farley-Ripple (2007) recommended future qualitative studies to investigate the factors contributing to the attrition rate among KIPP students, along with providing additional interventions to help struggling students in the Baltimore City Public School System.

24 KIPP Schools Study

The Educational Policy Institute (2005) conducted a quantitative study of 24 KIPP Schools to determine its impact upon fifth-grade student achievement. The fifth grade students Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) scores were compared to the national norms. 27 cohorts tested two different time spans between fall of 2003 and the spring of 2004.

Findings

The fifth grade KIPP students had substantially greater academic gains on the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) than the national norm (Educational Policy Institute, 2005). According to researchers, a score of zero on the normal curve equivalent (NCE) is considered normal growth and the KIPP Schools who administered the test in the fall and then in the spring had an average gain of 10.1 in reading, 10.9 in language, and 17.4 in mathematics. (Educational Policy Institute, 2005). KIPP Schools that administered the SAT9s and 10s in the fall and a year later, had average gains of 7.5 in reading, 9.1 in language, and 11.6 in mathematics (Educational Policy Institute). On average, KIPP fifth grade students had 9 to 17 points increase on all three sections of the SAT: reading, language arts, and mathematics.

Recommendations:

The Educational Policy Institute (2005) recommended continued research on the teaching styles used at KIPP Schools. They also recommended future research to include matched-student cohorts and data driven comparison groups (2005).

Study done on Woodcock-Johnson Test of Achievement (Revised):

A three-year longitudinal study was conducted by researchers to determine the effects of the KIPP Model upon student achievement. Fifth through eighth grade KIPP students were tested on both the Woodcock-Johnson Test of Achievement and the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). Two KIPP classes were compared to a control group from five Houston Independent Schools with similar demographics of the KIPP students. To eliminate observer variability, the students were tested under the supervision of one experienced tester (Musher, Musher, Graviss, and Strudler, 2005).

Findings

The first year of testing, showed KIPP's mean performance was below grade level. Students who started in the KIPP School showed continuous improvement the following two years. The data showed that students'

improvement occurred at a rate that exceeded one year for each year in the program for most subject areas and for most years. Improvement was cumulative and occurred in different areas at various stages of instruction, indicating that this was not simply a honeymoon effect traceable to the initial months or year of participation and that, to be valid, studies need to be done over an appropriate time duration (Musher, Musher, Graviss, and Strudler, 2005, p. 362).

Further, to eliminate the possibility of teachers teaching the test, the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) was administered for the first time to the KIPP students and to a different group of students who had not previously taken the WJ-R. All grade levels, with the exception of the fifth grade, had means higher than the control's, all of HISD

schools, and the State of Texas (Musher, Musher, Graviss, and Strudler, 2005). According to the researchers, some attrition took place over the three year study. However, most enrollment in all grades, except sixth grade, remained stable. Mathematical scores were much higher than reading comprehension scores. The researchers attributed the increase in student achievement to the following factors: 1.) rigorous educational experience, 2.) increase hours of schooling, 3.) highly-qualified teachers, 4.) committed students, 5.) parental involvement (Musher, Musher, Graviss, and Strudler, 2005).

KIPP Delta Theoretical Framework

After reflecting upon the research question: What factors are influencing the improved academic success of previously at-risk students in literacy at the KIPP School in the Delta Region in a mid-south state, the data was analyzed under the theoretical lens that high expectations of the literacy teachers, the rigorous curriculum of the KIPP Program, relevance of the literacy lessons, and the positive, teacher-students relationships may be possible influencing the increased student achievement in literacy at the KIPP School. At the end of the study, the theory of Gene Bottoms' High School That Work Initiative: High expectations, Rigor, Relevance and Relationship equal increased student achievement will be confirmed or not according to the findings of this study.

Methods

The literature review included all of the studies that met the following criteria: 1.) relevance, 2.) scholarship, 3.) empirical nature, and 4.) quality. To assess the relevance of a study or article, a determination was made as to whether the study or article provided insight into illiteracy in the Delta Region, the history of school reform, the creation of charter schools, or the

performance of KIPP Schools on student achievement. Only articles and studies that were published between 1990 and 2012 were included in the literature review.

Also, the review was limited to research endeavors of a scholarly nature. Well-established peer-review journals, books, book chapters relating to illiteracy in the Delta Region, school reform, charter schools, and the KIPP Schools were read and analyzed.

In addition, the studies of KIPP Program that were empirical in nature, both quantitative and qualitative, were included. Only those articles, books, and monographs that were considered to be rigorous in quality according to generally accepted standards for quality in empirical research were included in the literature review. Studies were only included in the literature review if the topic, methodology, analytical strategy, and findings were well supported and related to any components of the literature review (Guarino, Santibanez, & Glenn, 2006).

Furthermore, the quality criteria for the selection of quantitative studies were based on satisfactory answers to the following questions: 1.) Did the sample strongly support the analyses performed? 2.) Did the methodology appear to be valid and reliable? 3.) Did the researchers choose the correct statistical method to measure the phenomena under study? 4.) Was the researchers' explanation of the findings justifiable by the statistical methods used? (Guarino, Santibez, & Glenn, 2006).

Moreover, the criteria for the selection of qualitative studies for review were based on satisfactory answers to the following questions: 1.) Was the method warranted? 2.) Did the study offer adequate proof to support its conclusion? 3.) Did the study make known relationships between variables that were of interest to other researchers? If the answer was yes, then the article was included in this literature review (Guarino, Santibez, & Glenn, 2006).

Study Limitations

My methodology carries with it some limitations. Since the KIPP Program is a fairly new model, there was very limited research on the topic. Because there are limited studies conducted on the effectiveness of the KIPP Schools, articles describing program descriptions of the KIPP Model were included, also.

Second, the study is only generalizable to other KIPP Studies with similar demographics in a rural setting.

Future Research Questions

Research questions have been proposed for future studies:

1. How consistent are achievement scores from one school year to the next?
2. What factors explain the variations in student achievement and to what extent is student achievement growth associated with KIPP?
3. What role does the KIPP Foundation play in supporting KIPP Schools (David, Woodworth, Grant, Guha, Lopez-Torkos, and Young, 2006).
4. How typical are the five Bay Area KIPP Schools in terms of achievement outcomes and implementation compared to other KIPP Schools?
5. What are the causes and implications of student attrition, including residual effects on students who attended for one or two years?
6. Are KIPP Schools sustainable, given job demands, teacher turnover, and high operational cost?
7. What structures and roles will KIPP National take on as KIPP Schools expand?
8. Will KIPP be successful in its long-term goals of college acceptance and completion?

(Woodworth et al., 2008).

This study addresses David et al., (2006) research question number two: What factors explain the variation in student achievement and to what extent is student achievement growth associated with KIPP? The goals of future studies include determining whether public schools can benefit from the contributions KIPP has to offer in terms of extended instructional time, culture rebuilding, the role of parents, and teacher choice (David, Woodworth, Grant, Guha, Lopez-Torkos, and Young, 2006).

Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

It was difficult to claim one variable may be influencing the increased student achievement of KIPP students. There were other variables that may be influencing the overall enhanced student achievement among the students such as the Commitment to Excellence form and the increased time in the school day and school year. Woodworth et al., (2008) posited that the five KIPP Pillars or guiding principals of high expectations, choice and commitment, more time, power to lead, and focus on results may be the contributing factors to the increased student achievement and positive student behavior.

Regardless, more longitudinal research is needed to determine whether the KIPP Schools will maintain its effectiveness in increasing student achievement over the years. Potential problems such as high teacher turn-over, high-student attrition, and less time to lead may compromise the long term results of the KIPP Schools.

CHAPTER THREE

Introductions

The purpose of this study was to discover what factors are influencing the increase in student achievement, specifically literacy, according to the perceptions of KIPP administrators, literacy teachers, and students. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews, observed literacy classes and professional development sessions, and analyzed documents in order to collect data for the study.

The researcher attempted this research as objectively as possible. However, the reader should be aware of two positions the researcher holds. First, the researcher is a product of the Delta Region and believes that all students, regardless of background, can learn if given ample amount of time, support, and assistance. Second, the researcher believes that peoples' background, race, ethnicity, religion, and culture influence how people view the world and certain "truths" or knowledge. According to Creswell (2007) stated truth or knowledge must be set within the present-day context including multiple perspectives of class, race, gender, and affiliations.

The researcher searched for best possible influences that may be promoting student success in literacy of minority students from low-income areas according to participants' perceptions. Student success was defined as being proficient or advanced on all sections of the mid-south state augmented Comprehensive Testing Assessment Accountability Program, being on grade level, and exhibiting steady improvements in literacy skills (Arkansas Department of Education, 2012). Last, the researcher presented this case study in thick, rich details and descriptions so that the reader can feel part of the KIPP literacy and reading classes without actually visiting the KIPP Schools (Creswell, 1988).

The world view that was utilized in this research was the participatory action or advocacy paradigm (Creswell, 2008). Advocacy research was designed to help those marginalized groups such as the minority and poor students who attend KIPP Schools have a political voice that is often unheard. Advocacy research addresses issues such as inequality, equity, and empowerment and has a plan of action to improve the lives of the marginalized groups (Creswell, 2008). Hopefully, after reading the results of the KIPP study, public school administrators will develop a similar plan of action to help minority students become successful in school. A plan of action may include a more rigorous curriculum, a genuine, caring, relationship among the teachers, relevance of the lessons, and high expectations of teachers as recommended by Bottoms' High Schools That Work research (Bottoms, 2005).

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in the study:

The main research question was: What Factors are Influencing the Academic Success of Previously At-Risk Students in Literacy at the Knowledge is Power Program Charter School in the Delta Region according to Administrator, Teacher, and Student Perceptions?

The second research question was: How is it possible now for the KIPP students to have very different academic outcomes on the same assessments that they scored basic or below basic a year or two ago at traditional public schools, according to student perceptions?

The third research question was: How has the KIPP Program affected teachers' practice, role, and professional development? The research design, procedures for collection of data instrumentation, and methodology were qualitative and are presented in this chapter. The population and the sample selection are also identified in this chapter. Finally, the procedures for the analysis of the data and interpretation are discussed.

Research Design

In terms of qualitative research, the KIPP School was a case study. According to Creswell, “a case study is an exploration of a bounded system or a case over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (1988, p. 61). Multiple data sources were gathered including in-depth interviews with the administrators, literacy teachers, and students who have been enrolled since the first or second year of implementation of the KIPP Program, classroom observation of teaching strategies, and analyses of documents and artifacts. A case study was appropriate because the KIPP School is an anomaly that allowed the researcher to gain previously inaccessible knowledge about the school and confirm or disconfirm the theory that high expectations, rigor, relevance, and relationships improve student achievement.

Semi-structured interview guides and observation protocols are included in Appendix F & G. The actual name of participants or the name of the KIPP Schools will not be given. Observations were taken over three weeks. Teacher behaviors that motivate students to learn were documented. These behaviors included providing assistance, intervening, scaffolding, developing caring relationships, having high expectations, and teaching a rigorous curriculum (Little Rock School District Literacy Protocol, 2009).

According to Yin (1994), it is virtually impossible to outline a universal research design or methodology for a case study. Nevertheless, Yin recommended the following steps to a research design:

- a. Define the research questions
- b. Select the case study
- c. Determine methods for data collection and analysis

- d. Prepare for data collection
- e. Collect data in the field
- e. Evaluate and analyze the data
- f. Prepare the final report

To conduct this illustrative case study and obtain a complete and accurate picture of the KIPP Schools, multiple quantitative methods were used including semi-structured interviews of administrators, literacy teachers, and students, classroom observations, and document analysis. Methods that have been used in qualitative research include interviews, field studies, and participant observations (Yin, 1994). The use of multiple sources to conduct case studies dates back to the early 1970s. According to Yin (1994), studies that only used one source to describe a case study has been heavily criticized and deemed unreliable.

Specifically, the case study was an illustrative one, describing in-depth details of the unfamiliar KIPP Schools, the learning environment, and the people within the school. Behaviors that motivated and encouraged students to excel were documented and analyzed. Behaviors that motivated and encouraged students to excel in literacy included making the lessons rigorous and relevant to the students, conferencing with the students on their writing, spelling, vocabulary, and oratory skills, and modeling the skills they need to be proficient or advanced in literacy and writing (Little Rock School District Literacy Protocol, 2009).

Research Site. The researcher chose the KIPP School because it currently was an anomaly and the only KIPP School in the state at the time. The KIPP School has also been recognized for its academic success with the students in the Delta Region (McDonald, Ross, Abney, & Zoblotsky, 2008; Doran & Drury, 2002; David, Woodworth, Grant, Guha, Lopez-

Torkos, and Young, 2006; Iver, Avele & Farley-Ripple, 2007; Educational Policy Institute, 2005).

Research Subjects. The selection of the research subjects included the Executive Director, principals of the school, literacy teachers, and selected graduates, all of whom have been at the KIPP School since the first or second year of implementation of the program. Creswell (2007) discussed the importance of selecting the most qualified participants for the study. He stressed the utilization of criterion-based sampling or critical case sampling as methods to be used by the researcher in carefully selecting the most qualified participants for the study. Creswell emphasized using those participants who are willing to honestly share their experience.

The Executive Director was a former KIPP teacher and shared his experience as both a teacher and school administrator on what he believed may be contributing to the academic success of students in literacy.

Literacy teachers shared their experiences and what they believed were influencing the improvements in literacy for the students at KIPP.

Students selected for the study were the ones who have made substantial academic gains in literacy. Substantial academic gains in this research study was defined as moving from basic or below basic to proficient or advanced status on the augmented ACTAAP examination (Arkansas Department of Education, 2012).

In the semi-structured interviews, the administrators and literacy teachers shared the instructional strategies they were utilizing at the KIPP Schools and what they believed were influencing the increased student achievement according to their professional experience and perceptions. The criteria that the student met for this case study were as follows: to have attended a regular, public school, to have improved in their academics, to have attended KIPP since its

first or second year of implementation, and were willing to honestly share their experience. Collectively, as a group, these students have a shared history and were able to give the researcher detailed information on what they perceived as making a difference at the KIPP Schools.

Researcher's Ethical Dilemma

As a minority from the Delta Region, the researcher has two biases. However, steps were made to eliminate any biases by having peer debriefings, member checks, and an audit trail. Member checks included allowing all participants to read and confirm the findings of their interview. The audit trail consisted of a paper trail back to the original sources such as interviews, observational matrixes, lesson plans, master schedules, and professional development handouts. The peer review included two professors knowledgeable of the KIPP Schools who read and confirmed the findings of the study (Yin, 1989). Ethics and privacy were obtained by using pseudonyms for the name of the school, administrators, teachers, and students. The researcher obtained permission, in writing, to interview the students. The researcher recorded and transcribed the tapes. All interviews were typed. All of the data will be kept confidential and all identifiers will be locked in a file cabinet at the researcher's home.

Human Subject Consideration

Before commencing the study, the researcher sought approval from the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB). A copy of the IRB approval letters is included in Appendix A & B. Approval from KIPP Schools to conduct the study was sought. A copy of the Approval Letter to conduct the research is included in Appendix D. Copies of the intent to participate and permission letter to participate in the study are included in the Appendix C, E, & F. Copies of the semi-structured interview forms and classroom observation matrix are also included in the Appendix G and H sections of the study.

Data Collection

Gaining Entry to the Research Site. In order to collect qualitative data on the KIPP School, the researcher followed the protocol steps from KIPP National to properly conduct research at the KIPP Schools. The researcher followed the protocol that was in place to gain entry into KIPP Schools that included filling out the application, speaking to the Executive Director, and waiting on a letter of approval from KIPP National (KIPP, 2012). Visits and telephone calls to the Executive Director and the school were made in order to collect data. Permission to interview and record the Executive Director, principals, literacy teachers, and students, and observe the literacy classes and professional development sessions were requested in writing (See Appendix C). The results of the interviews and classroom observations were transcribed and analyzed in order to identify the possible factors that may be influencing the academic achievements in literacy, along with confirming or disconfirming the theory of high expectations, rigor, relevance, and relationship increase student achievement posited by Gene Bottoms' High Schools That Work Initiative research (Bottoms, 2005), as it relates to this study.

Data Sources

Observations. More importantly, the researcher observed the KIPP Schools during summer months. Field notes of the classroom observation and professional development were recorded using the observation protocol adapted from Creswell (2009). In qualitative research, the researcher was the instrument. The researcher was a detached observer recording what she observed in the literacy classes and professional development sessions in order to understand the possible influences that may be increasing student's literacy skills (Yin, 1989). The researcher varied the times and days to observe. Some of the things that the researcher looked for in her observation included interaction, language, routines, and nonverbal communication. As the

detached observer, the researcher wrote detailed descriptions of what she observed in the classrooms. Following the observations, the researcher transcribed data from the protocol form. She looked for patterns in her observations (Creswell, 2005). According to Yin, patterns will only occur if they are seen three to five times in an observation. The researcher kept observing to clarify or disconfirm patterns. There were some observations that did not fit the pattern. In this case, the researcher readjusted the pattern (Yin, 1989).

Interviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the Executive Director, principals, literacy teachers, and students (Appendix G & H). According to Gall, Gall, & Borg, (2003), standardized open-ended interviews are the most preferred form of interviewing utilized in qualitative research, because they allow the participants to fully express themselves in the research questions being asked. The standardized open-ended interview will have the same questions for each type of participant (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). The open-ended questions will allow the participants to give as much detailed information on what factors they believe are influencing the enhanced student achievement in literacy according to their perceptions and experiences. Interviewing the students who have attended KIPP since its first or second year of implementation provided the researcher a snapshot picture of the KIPP Schools and their effectiveness in educating previously at risk-students in literacy. The students shared history provided the researcher an understanding of the KIPP Schools. A student new to KIPP may not have the same insight.

Interviews were conducted at a convenient time with the administrators, literacy teachers, and students. The researcher recorded the interviews and steadily took notes throughout the interview to ensure that she was not influencing the answers of the respondents. The researcher explained the purpose of the interviews to all subjects and explained their rights as research

subjects. Each person interviewed was required to sign a copy of the Informed Consent document (Appendix E & F). During the interviews, the researcher listened and stay focused on the KIPP Program and what factors have allowed it to be successful in improving literacy skills for minority students and students from low-income backgrounds. Afterwards, transcriptions of the interviews were conducted.

Documents. Documents such as lesson plans, professional development handouts, and master schedules were collected during the three-week observation. Documents were the third data sources used to triangulate the data and the findings of the study.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

According to Creswell (2003, 2007) data analysis and interpretation are ongoing processes in qualitative research. The researcher must make sense of what was revealed during the study. The researcher must gain an understanding of what the data means as it relates to the research question in the study. Creswell steps for data analysis and interpretation were utilized:

Step 1: Preparing and organization the data

Step 2: Coding themes and patterns

Step 3: Organizing data into charts, graphs, and discussions (Creswell, 2003).

The making sense of the data and gaining an understanding are done through a process known as coding.

Management of the Data

First, the researcher organized and prepared the data gathered in the interviews and classroom observations for analysis and interpretation. Field notes were taken during the classroom observations and professional development sessions and were reviewed immediately

while the observations were fresh. Interviews were transcribed as soon as possible, allowing for any clarifications, if needed.

Second, the researcher developed reoccurring categories or themes, which is known as open coding. Coding is the identification of common themes, phrases, expressions, and ideas given by the research participants (Creswell, 2003, 2007). According to Creswell (2003, 2007), coding is used to identify connections and patterns among categories or themes in the case study. Coding was used for both interviews and observations of classroom and professional development sessions. Previous codes that have been identified in other KIPP research included success, rewards, discipline, hard work, responsibility, fun, college, empower, and choice (Jones, 2004).

Trustworthiness

Next, the researcher developed theories among the categories or themes and suggested how they were related. According to Stake (1994) in order for final findings to be valid and reliable, several steps must be made to ensure that other researchers agree with the methodology and paradigm that the researcher conducted. In research, validity is defined as how well a scientific study actually measured what the researcher intended it to measure (Stake, 1994). Cook and Campbell (1979) defined it as whether or not the researcher's conclusions, propositions, or inferences were accurate.

Reliability, on the other hand, is defined as the consistency of the same or similar outcomes if the research is conducted again, by another researcher using the same research design. It is the repeatability of the study using the same measurement according to Cook and Campbell (1979). The researcher was aware that there are threats to validity and reliability while conducting research. However, in this research, steps were utilized to ensure validity and

reliability. Those steps included methodological triangulation, data source triangulation, member check, and audit trial.

Triangulation is defined by researchers as the confirmation of research findings through several sources. Multiple data sources of the observation and interview transcriptions were used for triangulation. Silverman (1993) defined triangulation as comparing different kinds of data, such as quantitative and qualitative data, and different methods, such as observations and interviews, to see whether they corroborate one another.

Methodological triangulation is the most common form utilized by qualitative researchers (Stake, 1995). According to Stake, in order for research findings to be valid, similar themes must emerge through multiple sources. The multiple sources that were used in this qualitative research were interviews, observations, and document analysis. These sources were used to make the researcher's argument for validity stronger.

Second, data source triangulation was utilized during the classroom and professional development analysis and interpretation. Observation of literacy classes and professional development was taken over three weeks. Data from interviews and observations were compared to determine if there are similar findings or discrepancies within the data gathered.

Third, member checks were conducted in this research. Participants were given the opportunity to review the analyses and interpretation to confirm the findings of the research. Fourth, an audit trail was conducted tracing back any inferences or conclusions to the semi-structured interviews, taped classroom observations, or documents.

Additionally, the research was written in thick, rich detail to describe the KIPP Schools, the classroom observations, professional development, and the interviews.

Next, attempts were made to be as objective as possible. However, the reader should be aware of the researcher's biases.

Lastly, two college professors who are familiar with schools that have success with minority and students from high poverty backgrounds, read over the research findings to search for any inaccuracies (Yin, 1989). These peer debriefings allowed the researcher to clarify any discrepancies within the data.

Chapter Four

Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the factors that have influenced the success of literacy in the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) students in the low-income, poverty stricken Delta Region, according to administrator, teacher, and student perceptions. Through interviews with school administrators, English Language Art teachers, and first graduates, classroom observations, and document analysis, the researcher sought to identify the factors of the program that may be contributing to the increased student achievement in literacy. Chapter four includes a summary of key findings. Three research questions were examined and the findings presented. Data for the study are organized around the three research questions.

The following three research questions were investigated:

1. What factors have influenced the increased academic success of previously at-risk students in the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) Charter School in Literacy in the Delta according to administrator and teacher perceptions?
2. How is it possible now for the KIPP students to have very different academic outcomes on the same assessments that they scored basic or below basic a year or two ago at traditional public schools, according to student perceptions?
3. How has the KIPP Program affected teachers' practice, role, and professional development?

Research site. KIPP is located in a low income, high poverty stricken Delta Region of the state. The student enrollment is approximately 700 students, with 39.6% males and 60.4% females. 17.8% of the students are eligible for reduced lunch and 67.6% of the students

are eligible for free lunch, with a combined 85.5% of the students eligible for either reduced or free lunch. 97.1% of the students are African Americans and the remaining 2.2% are Caucasian or Hispanic (KIPP, 2012). This research site was selected by the researcher because it was the only KIPP School at the time of the study and has been outperforming many other schools across the state on the literacy section of the state Benchmark examinations.

Conversational Interview. Before arriving on the KIPP campus, I had an informal conversational interview with the Executive Director over the telephone. I introduced myself, gave an overview of my research study, and asked for the protocol for submitting the proposal to KIPP National. The Executive Director informed me of the process for submitting the proposal to KIPP National. I waited approximately a month before approval from KIPP National and the local site. Although I had not met the Executive Director in person, the informal conversational interview would grant me future access to KIPP's campus that I needed to conduct my research study. I asked the Executive Director how a typical school day would be for a student at KIPP. He informed me that a typical school day at KIPP begins at 7:30 a.m. with breakfast. Students work on classroom routines and procedures upon arrival to class. At 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. core classes, such as Mathematics, English Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies begin. After lunch, core classes resume. School ends at 4:00 P.M. At four o'clock p.m., students are either in remediation or an activity period such as basketball. Additionally, he informed me there was no KIPP National Curriculum or KIPP curriculum.

In a follow-up discussion with the Executive Director, there is no KIPP National Core Curriculum for a few reasons:

The first reason is because one of KIPP's five pillars is the Power to Lead. We believe strongly that leaders need to make decisions that are best for the children they serve. Given the broad geography and demography that KIPP serves, a national curriculum would be an unpopular idea that goes against the grain of the Power to Lead pillar. That

being said, KIPP Foundation does encourage common NRT assessments. We are using NWEA MAP which gives us a way to compare KIPP Schools to one another. As for our region, KIPP Delta, we are working hard to have an aligned curriculum across our region here in the state (ADM1).

The curriculum varied from one KIPP site to another KIPP site. According to the Executive Director, there was no silver bullet or magic KIPP curriculum. Each KIPP School selects college preparatory material that matches the state standards, meets students where they are, and suits the students' academic needs and goals. At KIPP, student work consisted of a mixture of materials ranging from textbooks, work from Advanced Placement and ACT curriculums, and state standards. Teachers are expected to teach state standards and beyond. Teachers also prepare students for the Advanced Placement and ACT standards, as well. Thus, students are expected to master state standards and beyond.

Additionally, the Executive Director informed me that KIPP did not participate in the National Assessment of Public Education (NAPE). Instead, KIPP students took 4 forms of assessments: the state Augmented Benchmarks, End-Of-Course, Stanford, and Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessments. Augmented Benchmarks are administered in third through fifth grades. Students take the Stanford in grades Kindergarten, First, Second, and Ninth grades. Grades 9-12 take the End-of-Course assessments. Students also took MAP assessments administered by the Northwest Evaluation Association. The MAP assessments are administered three times a year measuring growth in Literacy, Mathematics, and Science. KIPP students are expected to show growth on each of the three MAP assessments. Students who do not show growth were given additional support in terms of small groups, after school tutoring, Saturday School, and extra assistance over the telephone with the teacher, if needed. All KIPP students are required to attend Saturday School bi-weekly from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and three weeks of summer

school. In closing, the Executive Director stated that KIPP's mantra was "KIPP does whatever it takes" (ADM1) to make sure all KIPP students are academically successful.

Gaining Access to the Interview Participants

The executive administrator was originally contacted via telephone, informed of the purpose of the study, and asked to participate. The Executive Director discussed with me the protocol for submitting the research request to National KIPP. After being accepted to conduct the research at the local site, the researcher drove to the local KIPP site during the month of July 2010. After arriving at the local site, the School Counselor had recommended adult participants and students to participate in the research study. Interviews and observations were conducted over a three week time frame. Interviews for the adults and students were made at the local KIPP site. All of the KIPP administrators agreed to participate in the research study. Several ELA teachers from the KIPP middle and high schools were recommended and agreed to participate in the research study. Teachers were contacted in person and interview times and locations were established. The researcher also asked to observe the ELA classrooms randomly during the three weeks the researcher was on site. Saturation of data was noticed by the researcher during the third interview with the administrators. Duplication or similar statements from participants were made by interview number three. For instance, similar statements from administrators and teacher which indicated saturation included the following:

- High expectations of the students
- Expectations of what we expect kids to do in terms of academics
- KIPP is very particular in what we expect in terms of academics and behavior

Similarly statements such as, “We have very high expectations of our students”, from ELA teachers further confirmed the fact that the researcher had reached saturation of data with the interviews.

Table 2

KIPP Proficiency Levels in Literacy for 2006-2011 Represented in Percentages

KIPP Proficiency or Advanced Percentages

Grades 5-8 Literacy Benchmarks and 11th Grade End of Course Examination

| Grade | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 11 |
|-------------------|----|----|----|----|----|
| Year 2006-2007 | 71 | 56 | 57 | 78 | |
| Year 2007-2008 | 68 | 53 | 60 | 82 | |
| Year 2008-2009 | 57 | 67 | 73 | 82 | 91 |
| Year 2009-2010 | 69 | 62 | 74 | 88 | 80 |
| Year 2010-2011 | 67 | 82 | 65 | 80 | 64 |

Source: Arkansas Department of Education (2011).

Table 3

Helena-West Helena School District Proficiency Levels in Literacy for 2006-2011 Represented in Percentages

Helena-West Helena School District School Proficiency or Advanced Percentages
Grades 5-8 Literacy Benchmarks and 11th Grade End of Course Examination

| Grade | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 11 |
|-------------------|----|----|----|----|----|
| Year 2006-2007 | 43 | 49 | 29 | 35 | 17 |
| Year 2007-2008 | 48 | 39 | 30 | 39 | 21 |
| Year 2008-2009 | 54 | 51 | 38 | 44 | 27 |
| Year 2009-2010 | 65 | 57 | 56 | 52 | 37 |
| Year 2010-2011 | 62 | 52 | 50 | 60 | 36 |

Source: Normes (2012).

Themes Emerging from Data

Research Questions

The first research question was investigated through a combination of interviews of administrators, English Language Art (ELA) teachers, observations of literacy classes and professional development sessions, and document analysis of lesson plans, professional development handouts, and master schedules. The second research question was investigated through interviews of the graduated class of 2010, observations of literacy classes, and document analysis. The third research question was investigated through interviews of administrators, English Language Arts teachers, observations of literacy classes, professional development sessions, and document analysis such as lesson plans, professional development handouts, and as master schedules, well. Verification of data was done through triangulation of multiple data sources: interviews, observations, and document analysis. Triangulation is defined by researchers as the confirmation of research findings through several sources. Silverman (1993) defined triangulation as comparing both quantitative and qualitative data and different methods such observations, interviews, and data analysis to determine whether or not they support one another's findings and conclusions.

Interviews, observations, and document analysis were used as the data sources for research question one. Administrators and English Language Arts teachers were interviewed. The interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher using Microsoft Office, in the summer of 2010. Observations of English Language Arts classes at the middle and high school campuses and professional development training were done over a course of three weeks during the summer of 2010. Document analysis was conducted on lesson plans, professional

development handouts and master schedules provided by the English Language Arts teachers and school administrators.

Participants. Administrators and teachers reported their professional experience in terms the amount of years they taught and the college they graduated from.

A total of four administrators, five English Language Arts teachers, and ten students were interviewed for this research study. The administrators were fully licensed by the state Department of Education. The administrators held the following degrees: two held a bachelor's degree. Two held a master's degree. None of the administrators held an educational specialist degree or a doctoral degree at the research site. Their combined educational and administrative experiences varied from eight years to fourteen years.

Teachers were either fully licensed by the state Department of Education or in the process of being licensed and were teaching English Language Arts at the research site. There were two teachers interviewed who held a bachelor's degree. Three English Language Arts teachers held a master's degree. Likewise, none of the English Language Arts teachers had an educational specialist's degree or a doctoral degree at the KIPP research site. The teaching experience of the English Language educators varied from one year to forty years.

Additionally, administrators and teachers ages were between the following ages: One participant between the ages of 21-25; two participants between the ages of 26-30; three participants between the ages of 31-35; one participant between the ages of 36-40; no participants between the ages of 41-45 and 46-50 and two participants were over the ages of 50.

Also, the participants' experience in education ranged from two years of teaching to forty years (see table 4). Anonymity for all participants was maintained by assigning abbreviated letters to each participant indicating the job title at KIPP such as ADMN for administrator, ELA

for English Language Arts teacher, and ST for student participants. The second number was a random number assigned to all participants.

Table 4

Administrator and English Language Art Teacher Demographics

| Title | Demographic Information |
|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Executive Director | Caucasian male, 14 years in education, 3 years as Executive Director, six years as School Director, Fisher Fellow, 35-40 years of age |
| High School Administrator Chief Academic Officer | Caucasian male, 9 years in education, Masters degree, 31-34 years of age |
| Middle School Administrator | African American male, seven years in education, Bachelor's degree, 26-30 years of age |
| Elementary School Administrator | African American female, 8 years in education, Masters degree, 31-34 years of age |
| Middle School ELA Teacher | African American female, 43 years in education, Master degree, over 50 years of age |
| Middle School ELA Teacher 2010 Administrator 2011 | African American female, Bachelor's degree, 5 years in education, 26-30 years of age |
| High School ELA Teacher | African American female, 44 years in education, Master's degree, over 50 years of age |
| High School ELA Teacher | Hispanic male, 2 years in education, Bachelor's degree, 21-25 years of age |
| High School Social Studies Teacher Counselor | Caucasian female 5 years in education, Master's degree, 31-35 years of age |

The nine students selected to participate in this study were graduate seniors who either started with the inception of the KIPP Program as fifth graders or as sixth grade KIPP students in KIPP's second year of inception. These students were chosen because they were able to share their lived experiences of the KIPP Program to the researcher. The student participants were the first graduating cohort of KIPP since inception. All of the student participants had been accepted into a college or university for the fall school year of 2011-2012. Even more impressive, 100% of the graduating Class of 2010 was accepted into a college or university for the fall school year, superseding KIPP's goal of 85% of its students to matriculate to a 2 or 4 year college or university. Table 5 includes the demographic data of the students who participated in the study.

Table 5

Student Demographics

| Title | Demographic Information |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Student 1 | African American male, cohort of 1 st graduating KIPP class, accepted into U.S. Naval Academy |
| Student 2 | African American female, cohort of 1 st graduating KIPP class, accepted into the University of Central Arkansas |
| Student 3 | African American female, cohort of 1 st graduating KIPP class, accepted into Phillips Community College |
| Student 4 | African American female, cohort of 1 st graduating KIPP class, accepted to Vanderbilt University |
| Student 5 | African American female, cohort of 1 st graduating KIPP class, accepted into University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff |
| Student 6 | African American female, cohort of 1 st graduating KIPP class, accepted into Hendrix College |
| Student 7 | African American female, cohort of 1 st graduating KIPP class, accepted into University of Central Arkansas |
| Student 8 | African American male, cohort of 1 st graduating KIPP class, accepted into the University of Arkansas |
| Student 9 | African American female, cohort of 1 st graduating KIPP class, accepted into Henderson State University |

Audit trail. The researcher assured all participants of confidentiality of their responses. On the final transcripts a code of letters and numbers were assigned to the participants to maintain confidentiality. The letters AD were assigned for participating administrators. The letters ELAT were assigned for participating English Language Arts teachers. Letters ST were assigned for participating. The first number represents a random number chosen. If they were the first administrator selected, they got the code AD1, for example. To explain any audit trail notation, Table 6 has been included in the study. Table 6 provides a list of all research participants' assigned codes and numbers. All identifying information from any direct quotations was replaced with non-identifying labels within the quotation.

Table 6

Audit Trail Notation for Interviews

| Notation | Participants | Site |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|------|
| ADM1 through 4 | Administrators | KIPP |
| ELAT1 through 5 | English Language Arts Teachers | KIPP |
| ST1 through 9 | Students | KIPP |

Data analysis. Data analysis was completed by hand. The researcher coded repeating terms, phrases, or concepts from the interview transcripts. According to Creswell (2003), coding is the identification of common themes, phrases, expressions, and ideas given by the research participants. The researcher read the interview transcript line by line searching for terms, phrases, or concepts that directly answered each research question. There were many instances where the researcher had to deductively code the information that was in the interview transcription, as well. The reading of line by line for terms, phrases, or concepts is known as open coding. Marshall & Rossman (2006) defined open coding as the researcher allowing themes to emerge from the qualitative data gathered through interviews, observations, and data analysis. All administrator interviews were compared against other administrator interviews and to the other data sources, such as the teacher and student interviews. Likewise, the teacher interviews were compared with the administrator and student interviews to corroborate the conclusions, lending validity to the study. Similarly, the interviews were compared against the observations and documents, further strengthening the validity and trustworthiness of the study.

As recurring terms, phrases, or concepts emerged from analysis of the interview transcripts, they were organized into themes or categories. The open codes were examined, reviewed, and summarized until the data was reduced to six prominent themes relative to the factors that administrators, teachers, and students identified as influencing the enhanced student achievement in literacy, according to their experiences and perceptions at KIPP. The six prominent themes developed among the administrators and teachers were as follows: require commitment from stakeholders, promote a culture of high expectations, provide a rigorous college preparatory curriculum, develop positive relationships, apply practices to ensure high expectations, and ensure accountability among stakeholders.

Table 7 displays the open codes and themes which emerged from analysis of the administrator, teacher, and student interviews. Across the top of Figure 4, the six reoccurring themes are displayed. Overarching themes were developed from the open codes. Only the top emerging factors which participants reported as influencing the increased student achievement were identified. Relationships developed among the themes that led to further research and triangulation through classroom observation and document analysis such as professional growth handouts, teacher lesson plans, and master schedules. Analysis of the interviews revealed the following reoccurring themes: require commitment from stakeholders, promote a culture of high expectations, provide a rigorous college preparatory curriculum, develop positive relationships, apply practices to ensure high expectations, and ensure accountability among stakeholders.

Tables 7 and 8 include the total number of participants at the KIPP site who gave responses relating to each reoccurring themes. These tables are included in the research study to provide further triangulation of the data sources.

Table 7

Emerging Themes among KIPP Administrators and English Language Art Teachers

| High Expectations within KIPP Delta | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Apply Practices to Ensure High Expectations: | | |
| <i>Require Commitment From Stakeholders</i> | <i>Promote a Culture of High Expectations</i> | <i>Provide Rigor</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to Excellence form • Student's Commitment • Parent's Commitment • Teacher's Commitment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Expectations • Teacher Expectations • Parent Expectations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College Preparatory Curriculum • Advanced Placement • Critical Thinking Skills |
| <i>Develop Positive Teacher Student Relationships</i> | <i>Practices to Ensure High Expectations</i> | <i>Ensure Accountability Among Stakeholders</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative • Team and Family | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power to Lead • Data Driven Instruction • Research Based Instructional Strategies • Professional Development • Lesson Cycle • Teacher Collaboration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students • Parents • Teachers |
| Theory Link to SREB Model - Chapter Five | | |
| Rigor | Relevance | Relationships |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a College Preparatory Curriculum • Offer Advanced Placement Classes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a College Preparatory Curriculum • Teach Critical Thinking Skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote collaboration and concept of team and family • Require Accountability Among All School Stakeholders |

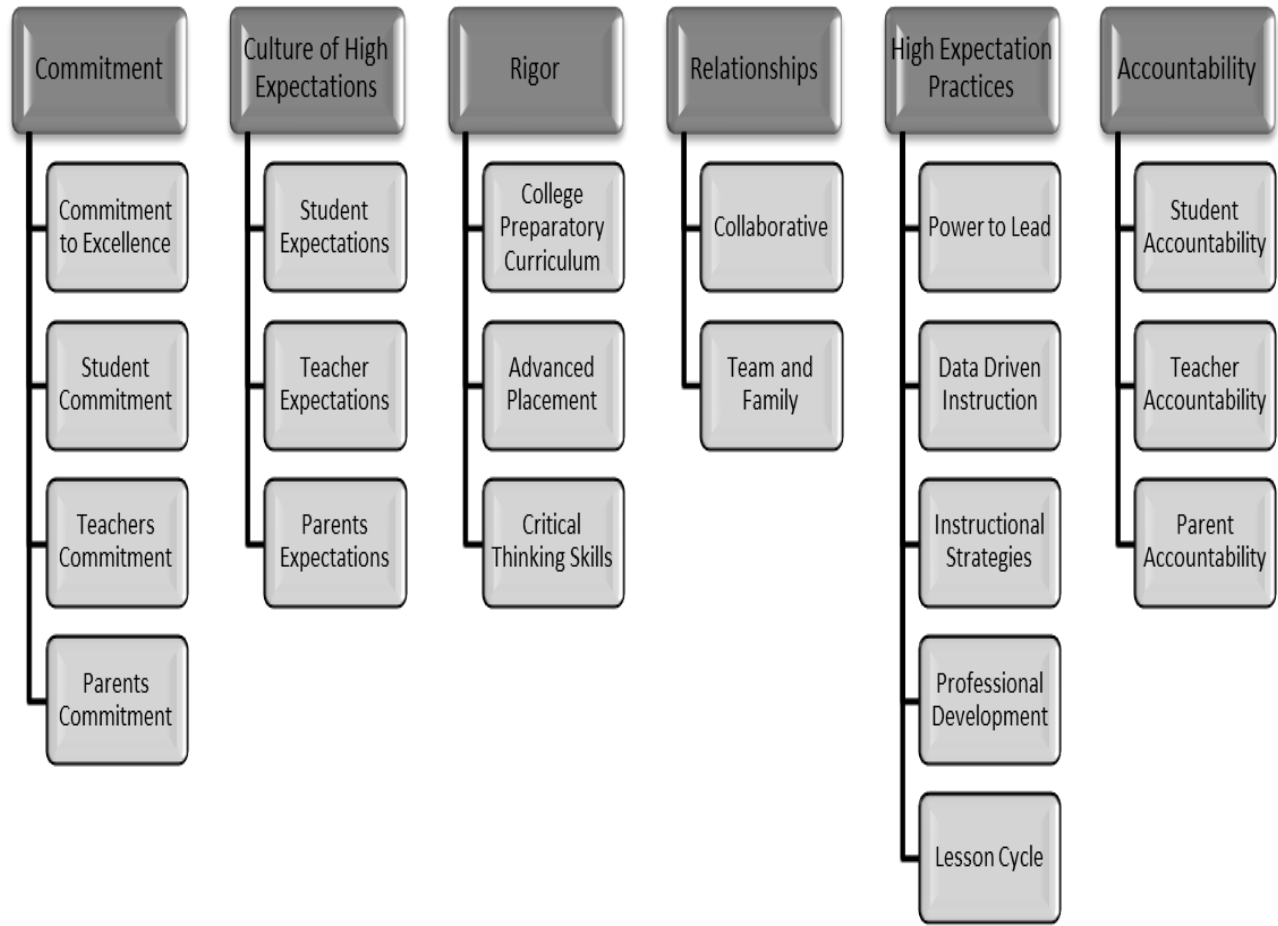


Figure 4. Schematic model for themes derived from administrator and english language arts teacher interviews.

Table 8

Distribution of Themes by KIPP Administrators and English Language Art Teachers

| Distribution of Themes Participant Codes | ADM 1 | ADM 2 | ADM 3 | ADM 4 | ELA 1 | ELA 2 | ELA 3 | ELA 4 | ELA 5 |
|---------------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Commitment | X | | X | X | X | | X | X | |
| Commitment to Excellence | X | | X | X | X | | X | | |
| Student Commitment | X | | X | X | | | | | |
| Teachers Commitment | X | | X | | | | X | X | |
| Parents Commitment | X | | X | X | X | | | | |
| Culture of High Expectations | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Student Expectations | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Teacher Expectations | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X | |
| Parents Expectations | | X | X | X | X | | | X | |
| Rigor | | | | | | | | | |
| College Preparatory | X | | X | X | X | X | X | | X |
| Advanced Placement | X | | | | X | | | | X |
| Critical Thinking Skills | | | | | | | | | X |
| Relationships | X | | | | X | X | | X | X |
| Collaborative | | X | | | X | | X | | |
| Team and Family | X | | | | X | X | X | X | |
| High Expectation Practices | | | | | | | | | |
| Power to Lead | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| Data Driven Instructions | | X | X | X | | X | X | X | |
| Instructional Strategies | | | | X | X | X | X | X | |
| Professional Development | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Lesson Cycle | X | X | X | X | | X | | | |
| Accountability | X | X | X | X | X | X | | | X |
| Student Accountability | X | X | X | X | X | X | | | X |
| Teacher Accountability | X | | X | X | X | | X | | X |
| Parent Accountability | | | X | X | X | X | | | |

Research Question One

The first research question addressed in my research was: What factors have influenced the increased academic success of previously at-risk students in the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) Charter School in Literacy in the Delta Region according to administrator and English Language Arts teacher perceptions? Administrators and ELA teachers of KIPP perceived the factors influencing the increase in student achievement to be the commitment of promoting academic excellence through KIPP's culture of high expectations by providing a college preparatory curriculum, and practices while holding all stakeholders accountable. KIPP practices include the power to lead pillar, data driven instruction and decision making, research based instructional strategies, professional development, lesson cycle, and teacher collaboration.

Stakeholder's commitment. Stakeholders at KIPP include the students, parents, and teacher's who all sign KIPP's Commitment-to-Excellence form. (PDH15)

According to all administrators interviewed, there are three signatures to the Commitment-to-form: the student, the teacher, and the parents. The KIPP administrators and teachers go door-to-door recruiting students to attend the nearby KIPP School.

Commitment to excellence form. One KIPP administrator stated,

Parents sign a Commitment to Excellence Form. It's basically like a contract between the school, the student, and the parents. Before they even sign their kids up, the parents are informed of all the things that we're expecting from the parents. We also give parents opportunities to be involved in the school. For example, we allow parents to come on field lessons with us... I think the one thing we do have that is different from traditional public school is that I think we have a unique opportunity of getting everybody on the same page at one time. (ADM3)

Student commitment. There is also a required commitment on the part of all the students who attend KIPP. Like all other charter schools, KIPP students choose to attend. Students sign the Commitment-to Excellence form stating that they will commit to KIPP in the following

ways:

- If students are bus riders, they will be at the bus stop on time for boarding.
- If students are car riders, they will arrive at school every day by 7:25 a.m.

Monday thru Friday.

- Students will remain at school until 4:00 P.M. Monday thru Friday.
- Students will attend Saturday School bi-weekly at 8:00 A.M. and remain until

12:00 P.M.

- Students will attend a month of Summer School every summer.
- Students will always do what is best for them and their peers to learn.
- Students will complete all their homework nightly.
- Students will call their teachers, if they have a problem with the homework or

problem coming to school.

- Students will raise their hands and ask questions in class, if they do not

understand.

- Students will always ask parents or teachers for help, if they have any

questions or concerns.

- Students will always tell the truth to their teachers and accept responsibility for

their actions.

- Students will always behave appropriately in class to protect the safety, interest,

rights of all students in the class.

- Students will listen to their KIPP teammates and give everyone their respect.

- Students will follow and adhere to all of the procedures and policies in the KIPP

Handbook, at all times.

- Students will follow the teachers' directions.
- Students will be responsible for their own behavior (PDH15).

Student's failure to adhere to KIPP commitments can cause them to lose various school privileges and lead to student expulsion and return back to their home school. Further, according to the Executive Director,

Students not completing work or having minor behavioral issues will lose privileges such as field lessons, special events, or the right to attend games or programs. KIPP also conduct parent phone calls and conferences. From there it might escalate to after school detention, Saturday School detention, or behavior modification plans. The behavior modification plan might include required seating, daily check-ins with the teacher and parents, additional tutoring, or monitoring during the day. If any of those do not work, KIPP students go to in-school suspensions and out of school suspensions. We also require parents to come sit with their child, which is an alternative to suspensions. During suspensions, students are still expected to complete the required work and not receive zeros on assignments. We expect them and want them to make up their work. Lastly, we have had to expel students. An expulsion is anything over ten days. In order to expel a student, the school principal has to bring this to the Executive Director. The Executive must bring the expulsion then to the Board of Directors for approval. KIPP follows state law in regards to discipline and expelling students. Historically, KIPP's expulsion rate has been well below 1% each school year. According to the Executive Director, KIPP does not ask students to return back to their home school; it is the student and parents' choice to return. More often than not, families that realize that we are serious about holding children accountable, choose to withdraw. A few recent cases have been a sixth grader who brought a knife to school. He was expelled for the semester with the option to return in January 2012. We had another case where a student put toilet water in a teacher's water bottle. The student has a long history and is now up for expulsion. The expulsion will be for the remainder of the school year with the option to return for Fall 2012. KIPP has had a few students protest the expulsions and convince the Board for a second opportunity. (ADM1)

In summary, one ELA teacher stated... "Kids are required to do homework and read every night for every subject. If we have the student invested, we're going to be successful" (ELA1).

Teacher commitment. It was a general consensus among the administrators and teachers interviewed that all teachers working for KIPP would be 100% fully committed to KIPP and the students. One administrator stated that KIPP wanted only the best teacher in the classroom. KIPP teachers were committed to the students early in the morning, late in the afternoon, every other

Saturday, and three weeks out of the summer. Additionally, KIPP teachers are very active in preparing students for college. One KIPP administrator stated,

We're expecting a level of commitment and rigor, a lot of demand on the teachers. For example, there is a real level of commitment to get kids out to visit schools. We're in the middle of the heat in the summer taking 60 9th graders to Hendrix College in Conway. You cannot start that process in 11th grade. Sometimes field lessons are not always college-based, but they're always academic-based. They might go to Vicksburg, the Civil War site, Washington, D.C., Chicago, New York, and Utah. They go on a hiking trip in Utah and visit Brigham Young which is in Utah...(ADM1)

Similarly, one KIPP ELA teacher stated,

You walk into KIPP knowing that academic achievement is first and foremost. If you are not willing to go beyond what you usually do, then that's KIPP is not for you. We motivate students to achieve and excel in their academics at KIPP through high expectations. No exceptions. We motivate students to do their very best. It's commitment to excellence. (ELA3)

One ELA teacher summarized teacher commitment best as stated,

...I refer to our statement, we do whatever it takes. The child is why we are here. I think General Electric use to have a saying that people are our business, our most important business. I just changed it around and say that working at KIPP, kids are our business. Children are our most important business. Thus, we are going to do whatever it takes such as one-on-one teaching, staying after school, small groups, and individual tutoring. We pair them with kids that they feel comfortable with. If the child is a grade ahead, we do partner teaching and tutorials. (ELA4)

Specifically, in the Commitment to Excellence form, the teacher's commitment states teachers will fully commit to the following:

- Teachers will arrive at school every day by 7:15 A.M. Monday thru Friday.
- Teachers will remain at school until 4:00 P.M. Monday thru Friday.
- Teachers will come to Saturday School bi-weekly by 8:00 A.M. and remain

until 12:00 P.M.

- Teachers will teach Summer School.
- Teachers will always give their best.

- Teachers will do whatever it takes for KIPP students to learn.
- Teachers will be available for student and parent conferences, or any

concerns they might have.

- Teachers will always protect the rights and safety of all students in the class. (PDH15)

Failure for teachers to adhere to the commitments can lead to their removal from KIPP School. According to one administrator, “Teachers are at will employees and KIPP is not obligated to keep an underperforming teacher because they are bound by a contract” (ADM4).

Parent commitment. Not only are the students and teachers committed at KIPP, but also the parents as well. One KIPP administrator stated,

If we have the parent invested, we can make it. But if the parent and student are disinterested and disinvested, it’s a tough row to hoe. People often ask if the parents have to be committed for you to be successful. The answer is no. But somebody has to want it. We either have to have the kid wanting to go to school every day or the parent wanting their child to be at school every day. If all three are working, it’s fantastic... (ADM 1)

Similarly, one KIPP ELA teacher stated that after signing the commitment, the commitment of the parents may not necessarily be demonstrated at the school site. However it was apparent that parents were involved in their child’s education and committed to their academic success (ELA1). For example, parent commitment may be in the form of

Helping their child meet the standards of KIPP, providing the required supplies they need in class, making sure their child attend school daily, and doing what is deemed necessary to be accepted into a college or university that meets his or her academic needs and career aspirations. (ELA1)

Specifically, the parents’ commitment in the Commitment to Excellence form states parents will fully commitment in the following ways to KIPP:

- Parents will make sure their child arrives at KIPP every day by 7:25 A.M.

Monday thru Fridays.

- Parents will make sure their child boards the school bus on time.
- Parents will make arrangements so their child can arrive at KIPP by 7:30 A.M.

and remain until 4:00 P.M.

- Parents will make arrangements for their child to attend Saturday School bi-weekly from 8:00 A.M. until 12:00 P.M.
- Parents will ensure that their child attends Summer School.
- Parents will help their child in the best way they know how.
- Parents will do whatever it takes for him or her to learn.
- Parents will their child's homework nightly, and let him or her call the teacher if

there is a problem.

- Parents will read with their child daily.
- Parents will always make themselves available for the school and student

conferences, and any concerns they might have.

- Parents will notify the teacher, if their child is going to

miss school.

- Parents will read carefully all school papers that are sent to them.
- Parents will allow their child to go on KIPP field lessons.
- Parents will make sure their child follows all of the procedures and policies in the

KIPP Handbook.

- Parents understand that their child must follow KIPP rules so as to protect the

rights and safety of all students in the class.

- Parents understand they are responsible for their child's behavior and action at

school, not the KIPP School. (PDH15)

Parents' failure to adhere to these commitments can cause their child to lose various KIPP privileges and can lead to school suspension and return to the child's home school.

High expectations. According to the KIPP administrators the number one perceived factor that influenced student academic achievement at KIPP was the building and maintaining of a culture of high expectations of KIPP students, teachers, and parents. Culture of high expectations was perceived to be the catalyst for student achievement to progress and thrive.

One KIPP Administrator stated,

I think that we are a good school but, some days I think we fall short. I think the mark of a good school is that they actively work to create culture within the schools. A culture of learning, a culture of discipline, a culture of respect, a culture of life skills. We put culture above everything else. (ADM1)

Similarly, another KIPP school administrator stated,

We focus on academics and on behavior. Both are important to make sure the kids will be successful in a secondary school and in college. ... We show them or tell them the reason why something is important and give them something to work towards. We set the bar high for them. Students want challenges and will work when the bar is set high for them. We try to make the learning fun and challenge students to do better day in and day out. We want to make sure our young kids are excited about learning and want to learn. We want them motivated to do it. When they work hard, then they will have a good chance of being successful in school. (ADM3)

Student expectations. Within the KIPP School are very high expectations of the students, teachers, and parents. There are specific expectations for all three stakeholders, according to the administrators and the English Language Art teachers. Student expectations are outlined and discussed with the parents and the students prior to enrollment. One KIPP administrator stated,

It is expectations. We expect our students to achieve. That's our attitude all the time. The higher you put your expectations, the further students will climb. They may not always reach the bar, but it's a heck of a lot better to aim high and miss than to shoot low and hit. Expectations, that's the thing you immediately pick up on when you walk into our school. We are expecting kids to listen and focus and track in the classroom. We are expecting

you to do your homework. We are expecting you to call your teacher if you need help. That makes a huge difference. We expect all students to do that. Not just some. (ADM1)

Yet another KIPP administrator stated, “We’re just extremely specific and particular on everything from how students organize their binders to what we look for in their work” (ADM2).

Comparably, one ELA teacher stated,

KIPP is very different from the public school system in terms of expectation for kid’s work and homework in terms of teachers’ expectations. There is consistency from teacher to teacher about the expectations for academic work, pretty much across the board. Kids are required to do reading every night for every subject. Also, they are required to write everyday but for a grade, about once a week, I’d say. But they’re writing every day. (ELA1)

Similarly, another ELA teacher stated, “I expect my students to do well. They will and they can.

It was the daily conversations that we had where I expressed to them that I care about you this much. I care that you do well on the test. I expect that you’re going to do well....my students knew that” (ELA2). As a result, in 2010, 59% of her English Language Art students scored proficient or advanced on their 6th grade state Augmented Benchmark assessment. By the end of 7th grade 74% scored proficient or advanced on the 7th grade...Likewise, in 2011, her ELA students scored 78% of her students scored proficient or advanced on the state Augmented Benchmark examination. In summary, one ELA Teacher stated, “I think kids will rise up to expectations that you have for them.... I think pushing them and having higher expectations for what they can and should be doing. I think they rise up and meet them” (ELA5).

Teacher expectations. According to English Language teachers, not only were students expected to achieve and perform well academically, but also teachers. ELA teachers were expected to be the best teacher in his or her content area. There was no excuse for being less than the best, according to one English Language Arts teacher (ELA1). Still, one ELA teacher stated,

I'm expected to know my content. I'm expected to know the pedagogy, the ideas and theories behind why I do what I do. I have to have a reason for what I'm doing. So if I'm going to give a quiz, I better have a reason for why I'm giving that quiz....(ELA1).

Yet, another ELA teacher stated, "You are expected to come in and work with students, help them achieve, to advance. And that's exactly what you are going to do here...." (ELA3).

Parent expectations. Likewise, there was a general consensus among the administrators and English Language Arts teachers, that KIPP also had high expectations of their parents, as well. One administrator stated KIPP holds report card and parent conference nights where parents are expected to conference with their child's teacher to find out how his or her child is progressing academically at KIPP. (ADM1) Another KIPP administrator stated,

What we are expecting of parents is that they are checking their kid's homework every night. We are expecting that they are responsive to teacher's concerns. We are expecting that they send their students with a minimal level of ability of getting along in the class, just in terms of working with others. I think the difference is that we try to lay out the expectations for parents on the front end. We proactively contact and try to communicate with the parents very often. (ADM 2)

Similarly, another KIPP administrator stated,

I expect them to sign their child's homework every night. I'm expecting them to read with them every night. I'm expecting them to get them here to school on time. These all are things that fall under the parents' responsibilities. Parents should be doing everything they can to make sure their child is successful in school and therefore successful in making it through a good college. But I do think that at least the contract allows us to very clear about what we expect and then to have follow-up conversations. (ADM3)

Not only did the administrators expect the parents to sign their homework every night in their agenda books, but also the teachers. Other expectations included making sure their child was at school every day ready to learn and have the resources they need to completed the assigned classwork or homework. Parents who failed to bring their child to school daily, ready to learn, with the needed resources or failed to sign homework, were called and reminded of these expectations. To summarize the expectations of KIPP parents, One KIPP ELA teacher stated it

best:

The parent's role is to be supportive of the expectations of the school, to be supportive of their child's wants and needs, physically and academically. KIPP asks that they are supportive of our rules, regulations, and especially their children and their academics. (ELA4)

Rigor. It was a general consensus among both the administrators and the English Language Art teachers at KIPP that they are preparing their entire student body to attend a college or university that meets his or her career aspirations or academic needs through a rigorous, college preparatory curriculum. According to one ELA teacher, "We expect that everyone will go on to a four-year college or university" (ELA1). She further stated it best:

100% of our kids will be college-ready. 100% will attend a rigorous college, rigorous in terms of their own academic achievement. 100% of students, that's the goal. 100% will be accepted into a type of rigorous college or university... Not everyone is going to go to an Ivy League, but we're going to find a school that's appropriate given their area of interest and their academic abilities that they have when they graduate. (ELA1)

Advanced placement. KIPP offers a variety of Advanced Placement courses that students are able to take. Students are able to receive college credit if they score a 3 or 4 on the Advanced Placement examination administered in the spring. A score of 3 or 4 on the Advanced Placement examinations are college readiness indicators to universities and colleges. KIPP also pays for the cost of the Advanced Placement examination in order that no student is denied the opportunity to receive college credit, if his or her family does not have the money to pay for the cost of the examinations.

Critical thinking skills. Additionally, higher order thinking skills from Bloom's taxonomy and critical thinking skills are taught in the Advanced Placement courses at KIPP. These skills included students being able to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate and are needed to be successful upon arrival to a college or university. An ELA teacher stated,

We teach them to be critical thinkers. Being critical thinkers are exactly what makes a person successful in college, the workplace, and life in general. If you don't know how to

critically think, you can't come up with a solution to a problem that you might have in the workplace. You won't be able to write the five page paper that you are going to have to do in college. (ELA2)

Yet, another ELA teacher stated,

There are things kids need to be able to know and do in order to do well in college. We not only spend a lot of time looking at colleges, but also spend a lot of time thinking about those skills that kids need to be able to do. They need to be able to write. They need to be able to read. They need to be able to present ideas. They need to be able to advocate for themselves. (ELA1)

“Other skills, we teach kids in ELA, include how to annotate a text, giving them lots of feedback on their writing, and showing them constant examples of what good writing looks like” (ELA1).

As a result of the student's academic success, ELA teacher stated, “We've been able to show the parents and the community the promise of sending kids to college...because of the expectations of the school” (ELA1). One KIPP administrator stated,

KIPP really works on the skills students need in order to be successful. We always want to push kids to do their best and to achieve high levels. First, we have to meet them where they are, build up their skills, and then push them to do their best. We must give them a challenge and teach them to do well. We have to take the time and teach them the skills and provide the resources they need in order to be successful. (ADM3)

Even more importantly, another ELA teacher stated, “We hold the students accountable for their critical thinking and the work they do” (ELA5).

Practices to ensure high expectations. According to the administrators and English Language Art teachers interviewed, practices that the KIPP administration uses to ensure high expectations of students' academic success include the Power to Lead Pillar of KIPP, data driven instruction and decision making, professional development, research-based instructional strategies, lesson cycle, and teacher collaboration.

Power to lead pillar. Out of all the best practices, the adult participants stated the power to lead pillar of KIPP was the most critical to the academic success of KIPP students. One KIPP administrator stated,

To me the leadership's role is critical. What it really comes down to is prioritization. The leader has to step forth and say these are our absolute priorities above everything else, such as culture, academics, and getting everyone on the same page. I think that a good leader would do everything in their power to make sure student achievement is happening, for example making sure their lessons are being taught. We are in the classrooms every day. You have to open the doors and understand that what you do in your classroom impacts the next classroom and vice versa. (ADM1)

Similarly, another KIPP Administrator stated,

We believe that the people who are closest to the school should make the decisions, or closest to the students should make the decisions that affect students. That goes for curriculum to discipline, budgets (ADM3), personnel, materials, and resources (ADM2). School directors are empowered to make decisions at the school level. Teachers are empowered to make decisions at the classroom level, also. At KIPP there's a lot more flexibility and changes that I see being made in the best interest of students. (ADM3)

Likewise, English Language Art Teachers corroborated the Power to Lead Pillar and the critical role of the school leaders at KIPP in possibly influencing the enhanced student achievement in literacy. The ELA teacher stated,

The leadership plays more of an instructional leader position than it does a supervisory position of teachers. Particularly with new teachers, the leadership is making sure that they're prepared with the things that are evidenced-based, that help kids increase their test scores or achieve more in their classes. And so, when feedback is given, it's always based on the alignment with state standards or state tests. How well our lessons are preparing our kids to take those tests and to not just do well on the tests but go above and beyond the expectations of those tests. Often the tests look for very low-level kinds of understanding of that curriculum. (ELA1)

Not only does the Power to Lead Pillar applies to school leaders, but also the classroom teachers according to the ELA teachers. According to one ELA teacher,

I'm to be a leader in terms of content in my area, making sure I'm doing what's best for my teaching and what's best for my kids' learning. I am the instructional leader of my classroom. I choose what's best for my kids. (ELA1)

Data driven instruction and decision making. One ELA teacher stated,

We have a very involved administrative staff which is not very common in most schools. Our administrative staff, however, is very much in our classes. They are working with teachers and lesson plans. They work with the students on individual needs and our administration presents a goal and makes sure that the goal is achieved by all which

includes students and teachers. They are extremely involved. They also do a lot of the data analysis which guides the school. (ELA2)

Still, one KIPP administrator stated, “We make decisions based on what our kids need. What do our kids need us to do better or be better at? And then we work hard to be better at that”

(ADM3). It was a consensus among the administrators and ELA teachers, they are constantly tracking kids who might be danger of failing classes and analyzing the data from the

assessments. (ADM3/4) Additionally, one KIPP administrator stated,

We try to constantly push the focus on the results, that pillar of KIPP. As an administrator of KIPP I view my roles as putting the data in the hands of the ELA teachers. The great ELA teachers really take the data and run with it. Sometimes, I may need to point out some things or areas of growth. It’s really the teacher’s job to figure out how to increase the areas that are deficient or leverage the areas that are strengths. I keep everyone focused on the bottom line, student learning. (ADM2)

Research based instructional strategies. Not only has the professional development possibly influenced the academic success of KIPP students in literacy, but also the implementation of research based instructional strategies. One ELA teacher stated “KIPP English Language Arts teachers use best practices and evidence-based research on what’s best for kids” (ELA1). Some of the research based instructional strategies included self-directed study groups, discussion-based seminar classes, small groups, class discussions, Harkness Table, guiding questions, debates, sharing ideas, giving feedback on student work, and utilizing rubrics for grading. ELA teacher utilized these instructional strategies to teach specific skills in reading, speaking, and writing such as answering a document based question, reading non-fiction, responding to an essay prompt, analysis of the text, answering a question around a big idea or concept, decoding, teaching vocabulary in context, and teaching root words, prefixes, and suffixes, as opposed to just learning content knowledge (ELA1).

Professional development. According to the administrators and English Language Arts teachers interviewed, the professional development may possibly be influencing the increased student success in literacy at KIPP. One KIPP administrator stated, “When we get teachers together for professional development, we’re talking about one thing and it’s academics. I think teachers coming here don’t realize how rigorous the professional development is...” (ADM1). Three weeks of professional development are completed during the summer after the students have been dismissed. The professional development last for two hours daily immediately after regular school hours. Additionally, professional development is done once a week during the regular school day during grade level meetings or department meetings. Still, KIPP teachers are able to attend content area retreats through KIPP National to learn the best instructional practices that KIPP has to offer, according to the administrators. At KIPP National, teachers learn from the best KIPP teachers in the nation. Teachers get to observe, learn, and work with some of the top teachers that have proven results in their content area, according to one English Language Arts teacher. (ELA3) One KIPP administrator stated, “Our professional development is going to start based on what our kids need. What do our kids need us to do better or be better at? Then, we work hard to be better at that” (ADM3). Not only was professional development used to increase student achievement in literacy, but also holding teachers accountable to using the training they have been taught in the professional development sessions. One ELA teacher stated,

If we learn something in professional development, then we’re held accountable for it when we go forward teaching. There are a lot of times when people go to professional development, they may or may not use it. We’re trying to choose the best professional development that’s out there for teachers. So, we have to make sure that we’re using it. (ELA1)

In summarizing professional development training for teachers at KIPP, one ELA teacher stated, “Their position as a teacher is well monitored and strengthened through staff development,

through meeting with the grade level chairs, and pairing them with mentor teachers in that same subject or academics” (ELA4).

Lesson cycle. After the professional development of the research based instructional strategies that have proven to be effective in increasing student achievement, the strategies are taught via the means of a lesson cycle, according to the administration. There was a general consensus among the administrators that the research based instructional strategies must be taught by means of a lesson cycle in order to increase student achievement. KIPP uses Harry Wong’s *First Days of School*, (ELA1). One KIPP administrator stated,

Good teachers have good lessons. Without good lessons, you’re going to have ineffective management. To me, it all boils down to the lesson cycle. Instruction guided by independent practice. Too many teachers are activity-based. Too many teachers are entertainment-based. Too many teachers are engagement-based. The real answer is student-based. The real secret is in the lesson cycle. Effective instructors have mastered the lesson cycle and every component of it. It is the most consistent, direct. Every time a teacher has used that lesson cycle religiously, they get amazing results. When it’s not used, results are up in the air...(ADM1)

Still another KIPP Administrator stated,

We have a consistent lesson plan and lesson cycle format. Of the best practices that you’ll see, we call a do now. It may be known as a bell ringer in some places. But it’s just an activity, a silent kind of warm up for students to get started on as soon as they walk into class. It comes from a solid lesson cycle. We do extensive training on how to actually teach content. We adhere very closely to a five step lesson plan that includes a hook which is just a simple question, demonstration, or illustration that any student in class can answer. Then, we move on to instruction (I do), guided practice (we do), and then independent practice (you do), and then closure for the lesson. It comes down to great instruction. (ADM2)

Another administrator stated teachers have to model the lesson for them and give the students the opportunity to try it independently. Teachers have to have a strong lesson plan, otherwise, it does not matter what teaching practice teachers use. The best practice is a strong lesson plan (ADM3).

Likewise, an ELA teacher corroborated the importance of lesson planning and making sure students have practiced and mastered the skill independently.

I think in comparison to what our kids can learn in a public school, there is a lot more independent practice and guided practice for kids. Where they might have done one example and if they got it right, they were fine. Like our kids have to do 10, 20, 30 examples to prove that they have mastered that skill. I also think because we're objective-focused and skill-focused, we are practicing the skills as opposed to the content. We are also constantly assessing to see where they are...I think it's practice. (ELA2)

Teacher-student relationships. Another possible factor that may possibly be influencing the increased student achievement in literacy according to administrators and teachers was the concept of team and family, simply put developing positive, teacher-student relationships.

Collaborative. One KIPP administrator stated,

We are extremely collaborative and open to sharing. That's probably one of the biggest levers to increasing teacher effectiveness is that they can easily go to the person next door or down the hall and ask them "Hey how did you teach this content or do you have anything from last year that can help me or do you have a resource that I might look at?" The collaborative nature and the helpful nature of all the teachers here...(ADM2)

Team and Family. Similarly, one ELA teacher stated,

KIPP talks about itself as a team and family. I think we consider everyone, kids and adults, teammates in the sense that as a teammate needs help, we make sure we help them. If someone is struggling, then you make sure they get what they need in order to be equal to the team you're on. The family in the sense that the kids in my advisory, the kids in my homeroom are my kids. I would do the same things my parents would have done for me or I would do for them as if I had kids. That means I'm calling if they're not showing up for school. I'm going to their house and picking them up if they all of sudden leave campus. If a kid doesn't have something, if they can't afford a belt for their uniform, that I'm going to go buy it.... (ELA1)

Yet, another ELA teacher stated,

I think mostly it's done through building relationships with students and building a classroom where they trust you and trust your judgment. When that happens, they're willing to take risks for you, and those risks are often doing things they think are going to be difficult or challenging. Where some kids might shut down, they won't because you taught them with your help they can do it. They believe you. (ELA5)

In summary, one KIPP ELA teacher stated,

At KIPP we have a very close knit staff and close relationships between students and teachers. The teachers form relationships here with their students. These relationships not

only build trust amongst teacher and student, but it also helps achieve student learning. (ELA2)

Accountability. Another possible factor that may be influencing the positive academic student achievement in literacy was accountability. According to one ELA teacher “KIPP differ from the public schools in terms of accountability” (ELA1). It was a general consensus among all of the staff participants interviewed that everyone was held accountable at KIPP including the students, teachers, and parents.

Student accountability. One KIPP administrator stated,

On day one, we give an assignment, and day two there are inevitably some kids who come back with the assignment and some don't. That moment, we have a choice. We give those kids a zero and let them know, hey this is like any other school. Or say, hey, your work is not done. We take this seriously. You are going to stay today and we're going to conference with your parents. We're going to meet during lunch and you're going to get this right, etc. Absolute pursuit to say this work is important. You can do it and we're not going to give up on you. Those are the three messages they hear all the time. There's follow-through... But it's those three messages. We have to give credit to John Saphier.... He summarizes it nicely by saying. This is important. You can do it. And I'm not giving up on you. (ADM1)

Similarly, another KIPP administrator stated,

We are high on accountability. Anytime we assign homework, first thing in the morning we check it to see that it's done. Then we'll go over it again in class to check for its accuracy. We're creating the accountability on the homework. (ADM2)

Comparably, an ELA Teacher stated,

I think it's holding kids accountable and making sure they're doing the work. I don't think there's any kind of secret recipe. I think it's just that.... We're going to make sure they do it, and if they don't know how to do it, then we're going to keep trying. It might mean that I find a different teacher to try to show it a different way because the kid still doesn't have it. (ELA1)

Another ELA teacher stated, “.... We're able to hold students after school. We get them to come in early. We get them to stay late. We work with them on Saturdays” (ELA5).

Teacher accountability. Not only are students held accountable at KIPP for the quality of work they produce; but also teachers, according to the administrators and teachers interviewed.

One KIPP administrator stated,

.... All the teachers have real accountability. We'll support the heck out of them, but if they... don't get results, they put themselves out on a limb. And they learn from it and make a better decision...they might get better results than we've ever had. It happens both ways. Those are valuable lessons. We are going to hold you accountable, and we're serious. (ADM1)

Similarly, an ELA teacher emphasized the significance of teacher accountability at KIPP.

I think the biggest thing to is that teachers are held accountable....We have certain goals. We have this system in place. We have ways of checking to see where students are in meeting those goals and checking to see where certain teachers are. Our teachers can move students throughout the year...We have assessments that can tell us which students are on track to make progress. And then we can hold teachers accountable for the students who are not on track, the students who scored proficient last year and haven't made any progress....(ELA1)

Parent accountability. Unlike traditional public schools, at KIPP parents are held accountable, according to the administrators and ELA teachers. One ELA teacher stated, "If kids don't have their work done, we have sent them home until their parents can meet with us and the homework is done. If the homework is not done in the morning, we get the parent here" (ELA1). In most cases, however, the student would be required to do the assignment by a new deadline, most likely after school (ADM4). In summarizing parent accountability, one KIPP administrator stated, "We have follow-up conversations with parents to hold parents accountable" (ADM3).

Research Question Two

The second research question addressed in my research study was: How is it possible now for the KIPP students to have very different academic outcome on the same assessments that they scored basic or below basic a year or two ago at traditional public schools, according to student perceptions? According to the nine students of the first graduating class interviewed a

very positive academic outcome was possible at KIPP Schools because of the high expectations of the teachers and administrators, a rigorous curriculum, caring teacher relationships, relevance of the lessons, and extension of time as a scaffold to address any academic deficits students may have. The interviews, observations, and document analysis were used as the data sources for research question two. Students from the first graduating class of 2010 were interviewed. The interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher using Microsoft Office, in the summer of 2010. Also, observations of literacy classes and professional development training were done over a course of three weeks during the summer of 2010. Document analysis was conducted on lesson plans, master schedules, and professional development sessions provided by the English Language Arts teachers and school administrators. Across the top of Figure 5, the five reoccurring themes are displayed. Table 9 included the emerging themes that developed among the student participants. Analysis of the interviews revealed the following reoccurring themes: high expectations, a rigorous, college preparatory curriculum, relevance, relationships, and extended time.

Table 10 includes the total number of participants at the KIPP site who gave responses relating to each reoccurring themes. These tables are included in the research study to provide further triangulation of the data sources.

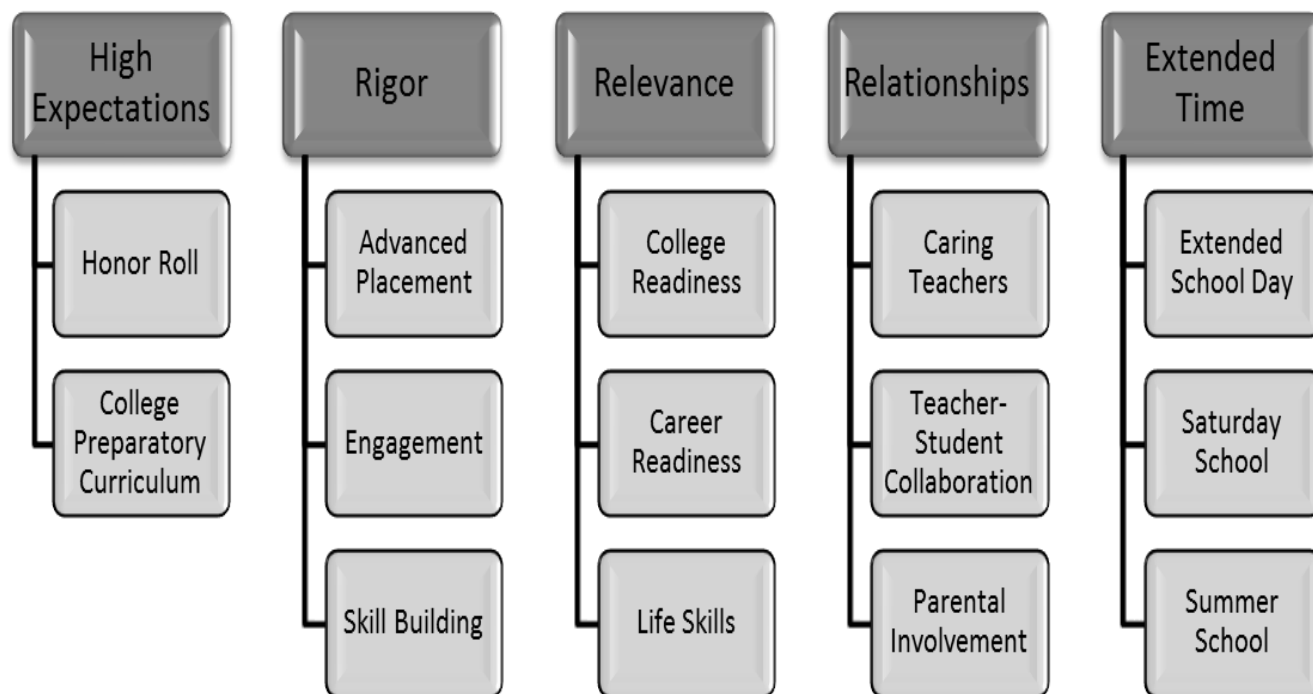


Figure 5. Schematic model for themes derived from student interviews.

Table 9

Emerging Themes that Developed Among the Students

| High Expectations within KIPP Delta | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Five Methods to Ensure High Expectations: | | |
| <i>High Expectations</i> | <i>Rigor: Implement a College Preparatory Curriculum</i> | <i>Relevance</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honor Roll • College Preparatory | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer a Rigorous • Advanced Placement Program • Create Engaging Classrooms • Offer a Skill-based curriculum | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College Readiness • Career Readiness • Life Skills |
| <i>Relationships</i> | <i>Require Extended Classroom Time:</i> | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caring Teachers • Teacher-Student Collaboration • Parental Involvement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After School • Required Bi-Saturday School • Mandatory Summer School | |
| Theory Link to SREB Model - Chapter Five | | |
| Rigor | Relevance | Relationships |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a College Preparatory Curriculum • Required Extended Classroom Time | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a College Preparatory Curriculum • Offer a Skill-based curriculum | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage Collaboration and Parental Involvement • Require Accountability Among All School Stakeholders |

High expectations. According to the KIPP students interviewed, the number one perceived factor to enhance their academic student achievement at KIPP was the high expectations the English Language Arts teachers and school administrators placed upon them. Unlike traditional public schools, students stated that all the teachers at KIPP had high expectations of all students, regardless of their backgrounds. According to the students interviewed, all students were expected to complete the required class and homework, and graduate from KIPP and a college or university. Students believed that teachers at traditional public schools only had high expectations of a “select few” from middle class backgrounds or students perceived as “Gifted and Talented”. One ELA student stated,

....They want to see everyone really put in time and effort in whatever they’re doing. They have high expectations of everyone. They would say I know that you can do better than that. I think it’s because they really just push you. They pushed for grades, so you should study. They weren’t always just pushing me, but everyone. (ST8)

Similarly another student stated, “KIPP require hard work that prepares you for the real world and college. The required work was harder....KIPP made sure students did the required work. Teachers pushed you to complete your work and excel....” (ST2). Additionally, student stated KIPP raises you from where you start to the highest level you can be. The teachers challenged the students. Students were pushed to succeed and convinced that there was no excuse for them not to succeed (ST6). To sum it up best, one student DF stated, “ KIPP is a program built on excellence and helping kids strive for the best” (ST5).

Honor roll. KIPP students were expected to excel in their academics. These high expectations were stressed through students maintaining the honor roll as well. Students who made all A’s or a combination of A’s and B’s were eligible for the Honor Roll. Honor Roll assemblies were done every nine weeks, according to the students. One KIPP student stated,

We had to be on the honor roll all semester to earn extracurricular activities... We couldn't be in activities if we didn't make good grades. Therefore, I pushed myself to make better grades in order to be on the step team. (ST3)

In summary, one student stated, "Teachers at KIPP were more concerned with our academics. They pushed us to make better test scores" (ST5).

College preparatory curriculum. Another perceived factor that enhanced student achievement in literacy at KIPP was a rigorous, college preparatory curriculum. At KIPP, there is a belief that every student was college bound, which was another form of high expectations placed upon the students, according to the students interviewed. One KIPP student stated, "As early as fifth grade we went on field lessons where we visited many colleges to get the feel of what college life felt like" (ST1). It was a consensus among the student interviewed that the academic work at KIPP prepared them for college and the real world.

Within this college preparatory curriculum was rigor, engagement, and skill building. Additionally, the college preparatory curriculum at KIPP was taught through flexible pedagogical styles of the teacher, such as small groups, class discussions, individual and group projects.

Rigor. It was a consensus among the students interviewed that the lessons at KIPP were more rigorous and challenging at KIPP than at the regular public schools. Students described the work at traditional public school as requiring very low-level thinking skills such as rote memorization, knowledge and comprehension; the bottom levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. In contrast, higher order thinking skills of Bloom's Taxonomy such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation are taught and emphasized at KIPP.

Advanced Placement Curriculum. Further, students stated they took Advanced Placement (AP) classes and exams in the Spring for college credit. Student who passed the

Advanced Placement examinations with a score of 3 or 4 received college credit. Scores of 3 or 4 on AP examinations are one of the college readiness indicators by universities and colleges.

Students stated the work in AP classes was like college work. A 500 word paper was due weekly and a 1,000 word paper was due monthly, according to (ST7). Classes offered at KIPP included Anatomy, Physiology, Biology, and Chemistry according to (ST5). One student stated that KIPP students take advanced level mathematics early in their academics (ST3). For instance, in eighth grade KIPP students take Algebra I, as oppose to Pre-Algebra in regular public schools. A few KIPP students take Geometry in 8th grade as well. Algebra I is not offered until ninth grade, unless students are in the Gifted or Honor Program in the traditional public schools. Ninth grade students take Algebra II and 10th grade students take Pre-Calculus or an alternate math class. Eleventh grade students take Trigonometry and Advanced Placement Calculus. In 12th grade, students take AP Calculus AB and BC. Similarly, in 9th grade students take Biology for science. In 10th grade students take Chemistry. In the 11th grade, KIPP students take Physics and in 12th grade, students have the option to take Environmental Science, Anatomy, Physiology, or AP Physics. One KIPP student stated, “KIPP introduced more materials on a college level. In tenth grade, we were studying World History from a college textbook. We wrote papers over and over until we wrote them excellently” (ST6).

Engagement. It was a general consensus among the students interviewed that KIPP English Language Art teachers engaged students through flexible pedagogical styles such as acting, role playing, debating, flipping scenes, and class discussions. (ST2) Additional flexible pedagogical styles included group projects, hands-on-activities, mnemonics devices, and teaching through chants and songs. Students stated that their favorite literature lessons were those lessons were the teacher made the lesson “exciting, fun, and

humorous” (ST2). Students described Othello, Hamlet, The Song of Solomon, and A Street Car Named Desire as some of their favorite lessons. Students were able to act out various scenes and characters and compare the novel to the movie. Students stated after reading the book, acting out the various scenes, and comparing the books to the movies, they better understood the literary elements and concepts that were being taught for the lesson (ST8).

Relevance. Relevance was described as how the lesson could be applied in future settings such as on a job. Relevance included college readiness and life skills that students needed to be successful in college, in a career, or in their personal life. One student stated, “Everything we did in class would end up on the semester exam; therefore, we had to pay attention in class” (ST7).

College readiness. Students stated that teachers emphasized the importance of listening writing, and participating in all class discussions and activities. The students interviewed believed that the required listening, writing, and classroom participation prepared them for college. They believed all the required weekly and monthly writing assignments prepared them for writing college essays and research papers and writing on future jobs and careers.

Additionally, the students stated KIPP teachers assisted them with writing college entrance essays and completing college applications. Students stated KIPP held parent conferences on how to complete college applications, fill out scholarships, and financial aid applications. One student stated KIPP conducted mock interviews to prepare them for college and job interviews (ST8). Also, students were taught the etiquette of a college and job interview that they can later apply in life.

KIPP also conducted field lessons taking students to visit colleges and universities throughout the United States, such as Brigham Young University in Utah, as early as fifth grade. One student stated, “We visited many colleges to get the feel of what college life

felt like” (ST7). With the parent conferences, mock interviews, and college field lessons, students at KIPP will be prepared for college interviews. Thus, college interviews for graduating seniors will not be a surprise.

More importantly, students stated that all students at KIPP sit for the ACT examination and felt they were prepared for the ACT examination. The ACT examination is one of the predictors of college readiness. A composite score of 19 or higher on the ACT is considered to be “college ready” by the universities and colleges. The graduates of 2010 whom the researcher interviewed had an average ACT score of 22.7 superseding both the state’s ACT average score of 20.3 and the United States’ average of 21.0. As a result, the KIPP School in the Delta Region was ranked second in the state for college and university readiness, according to the Washington Post High School Challenge Index (Maranto & Shuls, 2011).

Life skills. Not only were the skills taught at KIPP applicable to college, but also life in general. One KIPP student stated,

KIPP taught principles we could use in life. They taught us the valuable aspects of communication like looking someone in the eye when you speak and how important it was to be professional....(ST6)

Similarly, another KIPP student stated, “They taught me to be a responsible person and to take care of business. They pushed me to keep going so that I would be a successful person in the future” (ST8). Still, another KIPP student stated,

KIPP taught the lesson that...nothing comes free in life. Yet, everything must be earned through hard work and being nice...From the respect, yes sirs, and the firm handshakes that were required daily from KIPP, I believe this allowed me to rise to the top tier of the U.S. Naval Academy, along with the education KIPP focused on. KIPP taught respect, open-mindedness, and to look a person in the eye. (ST1)

Relationships. Positive, life-long relationships were described by KIPP students in the form of caring teachers, student collaboration, and parental involvement and support. These

relationships are perceived to have also influenced the increased student achievement in literacy according to the students interviewed.

Caring teachers. Students perceived that KIPP teachers cared about them and their academic success. Students stated “KIPP English Language Arts teachers were always willing to help no matter what” (ST7). It was a consensus among all of the students interviewed that KIPP ELA teachers were willing to assist them on anything they needed help on in their classes. Students stated that teachers would come early and stay late to help them understand and master the material they needed to pass the examinations. Students stated that teachers were available even on the weekends. One KIPP student stated it was not unusual “...to drive past the school at 9 o’clock P.M., and you’ll probably see teachers’ cars outside...” (ST8). Yet, another KIPP student described KIPP’s as a “revolving door. It opened anytime someone needed help. There was more teacher involvement and support than in public schools”, according to the students interviewed. (ST1) Another KIPP student stated,

If I would have made a bad grade I would have worked on bringing it up. I know the teacher would have helped me as well. They worked with you to make sure you get your grades up. ...If we made below... a 70%, we could make it up. (ST7)

Similarly, another KIPP student stated,

...They encouraged us to do our best...and go at a pace we can handle...To bring up my grades, my teachers would sit down and explain to me what I did wrong and would recommend that we look over our work to see what mistakes we made. Then we would write the correct answer and explain why it was correct and write the answer we put down and explain why they were wrong. That method helped us to get a better understanding of the material and could be a great help to other exams in the future. My teachers actually sat down with me and explained my progress, what I was doing well or needed to improve. (ST1)

To further support that KIPP teachers cared about the success of all students, one student stated, “Teachers at KIPP pushed you to complete your work and excel” (ST2). “Teachers would buy us things that we needed, also” (ST3). One student summarized the positive teacher-

student relationships best as

A learned slogan from KIPP that rings true is you can't make it through life alone, you have to depend on someone and KIPP focuses on establishing those types of bonds for lifetime achievement. My teacher encouraged me daily, by helping me if I needed help. Teachers stayed after school or even came to school to assist you in any way they could. (ST1)

Student collaboration. Not only were positive teacher-student relationships created at KIPP, but also positive student relationships. These positive student relationships were developed through student collaboration in the form of small groups, teams, and study sessions. Students perceived that the student collaboration also positively influenced student achievement in literacy at KIPP. One student described the student collaboration as a “family structured environment which inspired achievement through respect and teaching...” (ST1) Yet another student stated,

It wasn't just the teachers there either that helped you. Your teammates which are your classmates would help you too. They weren't just trying to get their grades up. They were willing to help you too if they felt like you needed help. If they saw you struggling they would come check up on you. (ST7)

Still, another KIPP student stated, “...Students helped each other. We compared notes and discussed what others read. We also had study halls” (ST2). In closing, one KIPP student contrasted the positive student relationships and collaborative nature of student learning to public schools. “I got teammates to help me and teachers would help me to get an understanding than like before at the public schools”. (ST5)

Parental involvement. Another perceived factor that positively influenced student achievement in literacy, according to the consensus of the students interviewed, was the increased student parental involvement and support at KIPP. One KIPP student stated, “When you weren't doing well with your work teachers would call home. Even if you were doing well they would call just to tell your parents how you were doing” (ST7). One

student contrasted parental involvement by stating, “at regular public school I delivered notes or messages to my parents”; teachers did not take the time to call home (ST5). Thus, with the increased student parental involvement and support, there was not a time that parents did not know the academic status of their child at KIPP in literacy, rather good or bad.

Extended class time. Another big factor that students perceived influenced student achievement in literacy was the extended time given to them to complete lessons and master the skills needed to be proficient or advanced on assessments. Extended class time included after school, bi-weekly Saturday Schools, and mandatory three weeks of Summer School.

After school. According to students the best time for them to complete lessons and to work on mastery of a skill was after school. However, teachers were available before school and on their lunch breaks. One KIPP student stated, “Another great thing is how the teachers are available to talk to you before, during, and after school”. (ST6) Likewise, another KIPP student stated, “I stayed after school for teacher to explain things on my level. Things, I could not pull out of the book...” (ST8) Yet, another KIPP student DF stated, “KIPP has longer hours. Sometimes we would stay after school to make corrections and be with her and read what we didn’t understand together with her. She would explain it...” (ST5). Comparably, another student stated, “...I stayed after school reading the required materials and also to read ahead. This strategy helped me on quizzes. If I made a bad grade on a literacy exam, I was given additional time to re-examine the material...” (ST1).

Required bi-weekly Saturday school. Not only were students given extended time to complete lessons and master skills after school, but also every other Saturday. Every student at KIPP is required to attend Saturday School bi-weekly from 9:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. One student

stated, “They would use their time to help you, weekends included” (ST7). Saturday School focused on remediation and independent practice to master skills.

Research Question Three

Lastly, the third research question of the study was: How has KIPP affected teachers’ practice, role, and professional development? After teaching at KIPP, teachers described their roles as more professional, more effective, more committed, more collaborative, and more accountable. The major themes developed were professionalism, effective, committed, collaborative, and accountable. The interviews, observations, and document analysis were used as the data sources for research question three. Administrators and English Language Art teachers were interviewed for research question three. In the summer of 2010, the interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher using Microsoft Office. Observations of literacy classes and professional development training were done over a course of three weeks during the summer of 2010. Document analysis was conducted on lesson plans, professional development handouts, and master schedules provided. Analysis of the interviews revealed the following reoccurring themes for research question number three: professional, effective, committed, collaborative, and accountable. The themes that emerged after analyzing the data from research question number three was that teachers were more professional, effective, committed, collaborative, and accountable as a result of working for KIPP Schools in the Delta Region. To clarify, audit trail notations for the observations and document analysis have been included in Table 11.

Table 11

Audit Trail Notation for Observations and Documents

| Notation | Observation or Document | Site |
|----------|--------------------------------------|------|
| CRO | Classroom Observation | KIPP |
| PDO | Professional Development Observation | KIPP |
| PDH | Professional Development Handouts | KIPP |
| LP | Lesson Plan | KIPP |
| MS | Master Schedule | KIPP |

Professional. According to one KIPP administrator,

We truly see ourselves as professionals. We think we are professionals just like any other profession, and we have to work hard to become better at what we do. That's what we do. We work hard. We see it as a skill you can get better at. We feel it's a skill where we can practice, study, learn, and become better. I think that's the biggest thing. You're not a natural born teacher. Everybody has natural talents. You're not born a teacher. You just need to get better. (ADM3)

Comparably, an ELA teacher stated,

I'm to be a leader in terms of content in my area, making sure I'm doing what's best for my teaching and what's best for my kids' learning. We're kind of changing the definition of what it means to teach. It's also because I am the instructional leader of my classroom. I choose what's best for my kids. (ELA1)

Effective. According to one KIPP ELA teacher

If you look at teachers in Teach America, I will definitely say that I became a better teacher faster here at KIPP. It's because I worked with some of the top teachers that showed me their best practices. I watched them. I observed them. I learned from them. KIPP also sends you to programs where you can develop yourself. Every year I go to a literacy conference. I learn best practices from different KIPP teachers in the nation that had results. I'm also going through a teacher leader program where I'm going to learn the best practices of leadership so that I can be a better leader for my eighth grade team. The teacher leader program prepares me to be able to manage adults and be a part of the solution. The teacher leader program is through KIPP. (ELA2)

Likewise, another ELA teacher stated, "I would say I've become a better teacher much faster because of the demands that KIPP has" (ELA5). In summary, one KIPP ELA teacher stated "KIPP affords teachers the opportunity to attend a program or whatever deems necessary for them to become an effective teacher" (ELA4).

Committed. Also, it was a consensus among the administrators and ELA teachers, that ELA teachers were more committed as a result of working at KIPP. According to one KIPP administrator, "It's a real commitment....making sure their lessons are being taught....We'll show up 3 times a day, pop into their classroom. They all say, boy, that's more than any administrator came into my classroom last year. That's the truth" (ADM1).

Another administrator stated,

I believe our teachers take much more ownership over their students and how much their students learn or what people might be use to. That's why they go above and beyond. That's why they come early and stay late. That's why they will keep students after school even when they have been teaching all day. That's why they will call home or even visit the house in order to get the support that the child needs to learn. (ADM2)

Accountable. Once the teachers have received the data on the student's weaknesses and the professional development on the best teaching practices to increase student achievement in literacy, teachers are held accountable to the implementation of the best teaching practices, according to all administrators and teachers interviewed. Some ELA teachers contrasted KIPP accountability as being more than they ever had been at a traditional public school. According to one KIPP administrator, "I think teachers coming here don't realize how accountable they are. We are going to hold you accountable, and we're serious. We want to make sure we're teaching good lessons" (ADM1). Comparably, a KIPP ELA teacher stated,

The issue of accountability is big. We were never held as accountable as I am here for my kids' learning and their work and behavior. There is also material organized by best practice and evidence-based research that folks are doing. It's unfortunate that other people don't have access to it. I think it's different in that we're. The people that we're relying on for professional development are fairly well-versed in the research on what's best for kids, and we try to use it. So if we learn something in professional development, then we're held accountable for it when we go forward teaching. There are a lot of times, when people go to professional development, they may or may not use it. (ELA1)

As mentioned earlier, at any time, a KIPP ELA teacher may be let go by the administration, if he or she was perceived as ineffective in the literacy classrooms.

Collaborative. According to one KIPP administrator

...I think in terms of our practice as teachers, we are extremely collaborative and open to sharing. That's probably one of the biggest levers to increasing teacher effectiveness is that they can easily go to the person next door or down the hall and ask them "Hey how did you teach this content? Do you have anything from last year that can help me? Do you have a resource that I might look at?" The collaborative nature and the helpful nature of all the teachers here is, I think, one of the biggest ways that KIPP affects their practice and teacher development. (ADM2)

Observations. Classroom observations were conducted in KIPP Middle and High Schools. The observations were done in the classrooms of the teachers who agreed to participate in the study over a three week period during the summer of 2010. Visits to the classrooms were random and unannounced. Each classroom observation lasted from one hour to ninety minutes. Observations were done after each interview to triangulate the data the ELA teachers had given in the interviews. Figure 6 on the following page shows the observation protocol used in this study. Similar themes emerged from the classroom observations that emerged from the interview transcripts. The themes that emerged were high expectations, a rigorous, college-based curriculum, relevance, and relationships. Similar themes emerging from the observations of the ELA classrooms and professional development sessions also emerged in the document analysis, further strengthening the validity and reliability of the research study.

| | |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Documentation of high expectations: | Specify activity and give examples of high expectations. |
| Documentation of rigor: | Specify activity and give examples of rigor. |
| Documentation of relevance in curriculum: | Specify activity and give example of relevance. |
| Documentation of relationships: | Specify activity and give example of positive student relationships developed. |
| Additional Comments: | |

Sketch of Classroom:

Screen Chalkboard Chair Desk Overhead projectors
 Students Teacher

Figure 6. Observation protocol.

(adapted from Creswell, 2007, p. 137).

High expectations. After visiting the classrooms and gymnasium and reading the bulletin boards, there were posters throughout the building with KIPP phrases such as: “There are no shortcuts”. “Work Hard”. “Be Nice”. Also, there were non-negotiables posted in front of the classroom on the white boards in each ELA classroom. The non-negotiables were as follows: silently enter and exit classroom, be respectful, always track the speaker, and every student speaks. High expectations of students attending a college and university were evident throughout the building, also. For instance, in every classroom were college pennants of where the ELA teacher graduated. Likewise, on a bulletin board inside the gymnasium was a map of the fifty states, college and university banners. Under each college pennants was a photocopy of college acceptance letters of the first KIPP Delta graduates, the class of 2010. I was informed that the teachers referred to each class as the expectant year they would graduate from KIPP and enter college. College pennants were mainly from colleges in the Southeastern sections of the United States such as Arkansas, Tennessee, Mississippi, North Carolina and Maryland. Two of my higher education institutions were represented: Hendrix College and the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. Acceptance letters were from Rhodes College, Vanderbilt University, Spelman College, Xavier University, and North Carolina Central University. Further impressive were two acceptance letters from the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. Both students had all expenses paid to attend the Naval Academy. The same applied to the students attending Vanderbilt University in Louisiana. All expenses were paid in full through a combination of academic scholarships and financial aid.

Rigor. After observing the ELA classrooms, the college-based curriculum theme also emerged. For instance, in the 9th grade ELA classroom, students were reading a short story

entitled “A Good Man is Hard to Find” and associating evidence with abstract ideas. Students completed a T-chart and wrote specific details from the text as evidence on the left side of the T-chart and associations of abstract ideas on the right side of the chart.

Next, students were also graded on their participation in the group discussion of the short story. All of the students were given a rubric for the group discussion. Each score had a criterion the student had to meet. For each criterion, a student could score 0, 1, 2, 3, or 4. All together students could earn a total of 24. A score of 21-24 was an A. A 20 was a B. An 18 was a C. A 17 was a D. Anything below a 17 was an F. Students were being graded for the following criteria on the rubric: identification of specific details as evidence, association of details with abstract ideas, participation, respect of teammates, attentiveness and awareness, and persistence and initiative towards understanding. The ELA teacher reviewed the requirements to receive a 4 on the rubrics as follows:

- a. Identification of specific details as evidence- student always speaks insightfully about the evidence in the image or text. Student responses are precise.
- b. Association of details with abstract ideas- student always speaks insightfully about the abstract association created in the image or text. Student connects these associations to evidence and fully explains how the evidence brings out the association.
- c. Participation- student always seeks to participate and encourages others into conversation.
- d. Respect of teammates- student always acknowledges disagreement with teammates and/or offers criticism to their ideas in a way that is positive and respectful.
- e. Attentiveness and awareness- student always follows conversation and is on task. Student references other teammates’ comments and ideas.
- f. Persistence and initiative towards understanding- student always pushes conversation towards deeper understanding and asks questions to monitor own learning. (CRO3)

Similarly, for a student to receive a 3 on the rubric for the group discussion always was replaced with most of the time students possessed that specific skill.

Relationships. The theme of developing positive, teacher-student relationships developed as a result of observing the ELA classrooms, also. For instance, one ELA teacher was standing outside of his classroom each class change to greet and welcome the students upon arrival to class. Another example of an ELA teacher attempting to develop a positive relationship with her students was when she led the discussion on the concepts of fear, risks, and consequences. The teacher read a story where the main character faced a risk in the short story. She asked them guided questions from the short story first to make sure everyone comprehended the story. Later, she related fear, risks, and consequences to her personal life. She stated as a teacher, her greatest fears were the following: not being successful, not teaching the students well enough, not preparing the students for high school and college and not preparing them for benchmarks. Her fears as a teacher generated additional fears shared by the students (CRO1).

Research-based instructional strategies. Giving students a rubric on class discussions and projects are one example of best practices. Students are aware of the criteria for the grade prior to the grading of the assignment, when the criteria are explained to them. With a rubric, students are able to actually grade themselves prior to turning in the assignment. The rubric eliminates the subjectivity of grading. All of the requirements are there in black or white. Student either completed the requirements or they did not.

Accountability. After observing ELA classes, accountability emerged as another theme. For instance, on one quiz, the students who did not pass their ELA quizzes had to stay after school, read the short story, and retake the quiz to make a higher grade. The ELA teacher praised the students whom had kept up with their readings and passed the quiz. The ELA teacher

stated, “There was no excuse for not being prepared. They could have called him on his cell phone over the weekend, if they needed any assistance on the reading” (CRO3).

Another example of how ELA teachers held students accountable was through a Daily Behavior Report on which the teacher records students daily behavior as either unacceptable (U), missing homework (HW), behavior problem (B), or excellent behavior (E) for the class (CRO1). Again, students who missed their homework stayed after school to complete it and their parents were notified. According to the Executive Director, students who misbehaved in class have a range of consequences at KIPP.

In general, consequences for misbehaving in class range from student warnings to expulsion. These options could include paycheck marks, phone call homes, time outs, after school detention, loss of field lessons, loss of extra-curricular participation, parent conference, in-school suspension, and out of school suspension. We try to manage discipline on the front end so that we don’t have big issues down the line. It is quite rare that we have to expel a student. The “Porch” was something that Houston used. We used this in our first year, but not since then. It is basically a time out from the team. The students attend class but are not allowed to communicate and participate until behavior improves. (ADM1).

Lesson cycle. After observing the ELA classrooms, another theme that emerged and corroborated the interviews was the importance of the lesson cycle. On every ELA classroom agenda were the six components of the lesson cycle. The six components of the lesson cycle at KIPP were do now, the hook, new material, guided practice, independent practice, and a closing. All of the ELA teachers, whom were observed by the researcher, followed those six components of the lesson cycle in their lessons.

Professional development. Also, the researcher got the opportunity to observe the professional development training held after school daily in the summer for two hours. Administrators conducted the professional development sessions. The sessions the researcher observed were conducted by the Executive Director and the school leader of the middle school.

At that session the Executive Director emphasized the importance of building positive relationships with the students on the first day school. For instance, the Executive Director modeled how teachers should greet students on the first day of school. He had all of the teachers to line up outside of the classroom, called each student by their last names such as Ms. Brown, and shook everyone's hand. As a classroom teacher, I don't recall every shaking students hands or calling them by Mr. or Ms. and their last name.

Further, the Executive Director had the objective posted on the whiteboard for the professional development training. The objective was for the teachers to model every step of the lesson cycle. He wrote the components of the lesson cycle on the whiteboard. The components were do now, word for the day or idiom, hook, instruction, guided practice, independent practice, and closure. The book they were using for the professional development session was *Teaching with Love and Logic* by Jim Fay and David Frank. Teachers had to write a complete lesson for the day and share with the group. Teachers had to evaluate whether or not the students mastered the skill for the day, according to the lesson they had written during the professional development session (PDO1).

On another day of professional development training teachers had to write out complete classroom procedures and explain how each would be implemented in the classroom. For instance, teachers had to write out procedures for attendance, picking up homework, distributing classroom assignments, going to the restroom, and completing and turning in assignments. Teachers modeled the daily procedures they were expected to implement the first weeks of class in the Fall. After observing the professional development training sessions, the requirement of all teachers using the six components of the lesson cycle assures consistency and continuity among the classes, regardless of the discipline.

Document analysis. Documents were analyzed to corroborate the themes that emerged from the interviews and the English Language Art classroom observations. The documents that were analyzed were the lesson plans, professional development handouts, and master schedules. The themes that emerged from the documents include the following: high expectations, rigor, relevance, and relationships.

Lesson Plans. Copies of English Language Arts lesson plans were obtained from several of the participants in the study. A total of 10 English Language Arts lesson plans were obtained for this study. Every ELA lesson plan obtained had a consistent format that the teachers followed. Each lesson plan had a kid-friendly objective listed first. Some also had the state standard listed as well. However, the state standard was not specified on each lesson plan that I received. Each lesson plan had detailed components of the lesson cycle: do now, hook, instruction, guided practice, independent practice, closure, and exit ticket. Within the lesson plans were rigorous objectives. Examples of rigorous objectives include the following:

- Students will be able to analyze historical texts using the APPARTS strategy.
- Students will be able to write an Advanced Placement US free-open response question using factually accurate, specific evidence.
- Students will be able to analyze passages from the Gas Masks and League of Nations, using APPARTS strategy first along with writing their explanations of analysis into essay form.
- Students will be able to present a pictorial representation, such as powerpoint or movie maker, of the Rwandan genocide to illustrate the severity and brutality of the Rwandan genocide.
- Students will be able to analyze Act III of *Othello* to evaluate Desdemona's comments

about Cassio.

- Students will be able to describe the setting of The Bluest Eye by identifying evidence from the text and explaining why those details matter.

- Students will be able to analyze the diction Arthur Miller uses to create the characters of The Crucible.

- Students will be able to brainstorm several ideas for topics that are viable options for the History That Hasn't Been Told Yet Project. (LP1-7)

Some of the History that has not been told yet project students completed included the following:

1. How Nat Turner's religious revelations were influential in his thinking about slavery
2. American Indian's perceptions of the role imposter American Indians played in the massacres of the West

3. A Father's Influence: Booker T. Washington's Influence on Portia Washington and her quest for freedom as a women

Within the lesson plans were a form of rubrics called Criteria for Success. The Criteria for Success outlined the specifics of what students had to complete in order for their writing or project to be deemed successful. The Criteria for Success for the Advanced Placement US free-open response question using factually accurate, specific evidence included the following:

- I have underlined what the question is asking me to do.
- I have created a plan for writing the essay.
- I have used specific and factually accurate evidence to respond to the question I am being asked.

- Using my plan and evidence, I have developed a strong thesis statement.

- I have double-checked to make sure I have ATDQ and DIDW. (LP6)

Similarly, the Criteria for Success for the Rwanda powerpoint presentations included the following:

- I can create a new PPT presentation and save it to my KIPP account.
- I can insert a theme into a PPT presentation.
- I can add additional pages to my PPT presentation.
- I have created at least a 5-slide presentation (with 1 title page and 1 bibliographic slide) with information that discusses my answer to the topic: Was the Rwandan genocide a genocide?
- The organization of my slides is logical and allows for easy transitions from slide to slide.
- I have included information from newspaper articles and primary source documents to support my presentation. (LP1)

The rubric for the Rwanda genocide presentation included the following:

- Layout and Organization- aesthetically pleasing, organization makes sense, is easy to see from audience, 20 points
- Information Pages- answers the question, provides 5 pictures, and contains support for your answer, 20 points
- Bibliography-has at least 5 citations in correct MLA format, 20 points
- Presentation- both partners share equally in the presentation, presentation answers the question, has a thesis support, conclusion, and is practiced, 40 points
- Total-100 points (LP1)

Not only were objectives within the lesson plans rigorous, but the rubrics used within the

lesson plans were examples of best teaching practices. Prior to grading, students know the high expectations the teachers have made in order for the writing or presentation to be deemed successful at the KIPP Schools. In a lot of the ELA lesson plans I received, the teacher used Advanced Placement standards which are more rigorous and challenging than normal state standards. As mentioned earlier, a score of 3 or 4 on an Advanced Placement examination is a one of the college readiness indicators for universities and college admissions.

Professional development handouts. During my research study, I had the opportunity to observe KIPP professional development conducted by the Executive Director and middle school administrator. I collected nineteen professional development handouts. At KIPP, professional development was strictly centered around helping teachers become more effective teachers in teaching students the content and skills they need in order to be successful. According to the Executive Director, good instruction was the main focus of all of the professional development sessions. Good instruction involves teachers planning in depth lessons with specific content, skills, and objectives the students will master. The lesson objectives should be tied to Common Core State Standards, should require students to demonstrate their learning, and be properly assessed. On the first day of professional development, teachers were expected to write out clear mastery objectives. As an introduction, the Executive Director stated,

Too often we pour our energies into discipline, management, and motivational techniques in lieu of writing great lesson plans. If your school or classroom is going to be a success, good instruction needs to be at the core of it. Good instruction is good instruction regardless of grade level or subject matter. The skills we are teaching are applicable everywhere (PDO1).

Additionally, the professional development documents corroborated the culture of high expectations that emerged as a result of the staff interviews at KIPP. At every professional development teachers are reminded of KIPP's norms and high expectations. The number one

expectation was for teachers to focus on student achievement at KIPP, and to demonstrate the desired outcomes of the professional development. Teachers are expected to keep the environment supportive and professional at all times, further enhancing student learning. Additionally, professional development and expectations are for KIPP teachers to be highly engaged at all times, along with being present, starting and ending meetings on time.

Furthermore, teachers spend professional development on learning how to teach all of the components of the lesson cycle. According to the Executive Director, each new skill taught deserves its own lesson cycle. Each new skill has a do now, hook, instruction, guided practice, independent practice, closure, and exit ticket. Students wrote what they had learned and what they wanted to know more about on the topic in order to exit the classroom. The exit tickets were used as part of the evaluation of the class for that day. From reading the exit tickets, teachers either re-taught or further explained the concept in the following class.

Professional development documents also supported the relationships theme that emerged from the staff interviews. At each professional development session, there was a 10 minute team builder activity on the agenda and a twenty five minute block designated for staff collaboration and work time. During the collaborative time, delineated roles and responsibilities of the collaborative teams are assigned. Teams work with their assigned partners to determine the next plan of action to improve MAP, Benchmark, and End of Course examinations. To further build relationships, teams shared two successes and “shout outs” for jobs well done (PDH1-4).

Additionally, the data-driven instruction and decision making under the research based instructional strategy was corroborated. Time was designated for staff to disaggregate the data from student assessments at professional development sessions. For instance, one objective stated, “Teachers explore NWEA’s website, focus on data and groupings, utilize

Descartes in order to create an action plan outlining steps teachers will take to support KIPP students in meeting their Spring MAP test goals” (PDH2-3).

Lastly, the accountability theme that emerged in the staff interviews was supported in the professional development handouts. KIPP teachers had to complete exit tickets documenting the planned course of action they had determined to improve MAP, Benchmark, and End of Course examinations. Teachers also reported their planned course of action to the whole group.

Master Schedule. The researcher collected one master schedule from each school: primary, middle, and high school, a total of 3 master schedules. The master schedule corroborated the extended time theme that the students perceived influenced their increase in student achievement in literacy. During the regular school session, ninety minutes are designated for the English Language Arts block at the middle school. At the high school, sixty two minutes are designated for the ELA block. These blocks of instruction for all of the grade levels are documented on KIPP master schedules, which were provided to the researcher by the administrators. (MS1-3)

Additional time was given for instruction in English Language Arts in the summer sessions. ELA classes at both the middle and high school campuses during the summer are ninety minutes. The researcher’s observations and field notes of the ELA classes also corroborated the extended time of instruction given to the students during the summer months. Similarly, ninety minutes of instruction are set aside for ELA classes in Saturday School, as well. Ninety minutes of instruction for Saturday School are documented as well on the master schedule. (MS1-3) The researcher, however, did not observe any Saturday classes.

Summary of document analysis

Lesson plans, professional development handouts, and master schedules were analyzed to triangulate the themes that emerged from the interviews. The themes that emerged from the documents included high expectations, rigor, relevance, relationships, and extended classroom time which also emerged as themes in the interviews of the participants further corroborating and strengthening the validity and reliability of the research study.

Summary

This research study used three methods to collect data: participant interviews, classroom and professional development observations, and document analysis. Triangulation among the three data sources ensured validity, reliability, and credibility of the research study. The data sets that were used for triangulation were administrator interviews, ELA teacher interviews, student interviews, classroom observations, professional development observations, and document analysis from lesson plans, professional development documents, and master schedules. The data were analyzed and refined into prominent categories and themes. The six major categories that emerged from the perceptions of the administrators and teachers were as follows:

- Require commitment from stakeholders
- Promote a culture of high expectations
- Provide a rigorous, college preparatory curriculum
- Develop positive teacher-student relationships
- Apply practices to ensure high expectations and
- Ensure accountability among stakeholders

The emerging themes created the framework that answered the research questions. Overall administrators and teachers believe that KIPP Schools increased student achievement in literacy by requiring a commitment from all stakeholders, promoting a culture of high expectations by providing a rigorous, college preparatory curriculum, developing positive relationships, applying practices to ensure high expectations, and ensuring accountability among all stakeholders. Similarly, students believed KIPP School increased student achievement in literacy by providing high expectations of a rigorous curriculum, providing relevant ELA lessons, building positive teacher-student relationships, and scaffolding lessons with extended time needed to master the content and skills. Chapter five discusses the findings of the research study as they relate to Gene Bottoms' (2005) theory that high expectations, rigor, relevance, and relationships increase student achievement. Additionally, recommendations will be made to the local KIPP School, national KIPP, and the state in Chapter five.

Descriptions of Themes Emerging from Data

The following descriptions are provided to guarantee an understanding of the themes that emerged throughout the study.

Commitment to excellence form: a signed commitment by the student, parents, and teacher agreeing to abide by the KIPP's expectations concerning each stakeholder.

Student's commitment: a commitment by the student that he or she will abide KIPP's expectations

Parent's commitment: a commitment by the parents that they will abide by KIPP expectations

Teacher's commitment: a commitment by the teacher that he or she will abide by KIPP's expectations

Culture of high expectations: an atmosphere of very high standards and academic excellence

High expectations: very high standards of curriculum matter, skills, and knowledge

Student expectations: specific expectations of KIPP students

Teacher's expectations: specific expectations of KIPP teachers

Parents' expectations: specific expectations of parents of KIPP students

Rigor: a strenuous and challenging curriculum

Engaged: exciting classroom with total participation from the students in the lesson

Skills-building: emphasis placed upon students mastering skills such as reading and writing

Power to lead: the pillar that gives the school leader the power and autonomy to act in the best interest of the KIPP School

Data driven instruction: instruction driven by the deficits in the assessments

Research-based instructional strategies: proven best practices that have research behind

them to show the instructional strategies as effective in increasing student achievement

Professional development: teacher training to develop the skills of the teacher in order to make him or her a more effective teacher

Lesson cycle: includes the following components: do now, hook, instruction, guided practice, independent practice, closure, and exit ticket

Collaboration: teachers working together to increase student achievement or students working together

Relationships: development of positive, teacher-student relations, student relationships, and parent relationships

Team and family: concept that promotes unity and collaboration at KIPP

Accountability: to be held responsible for increasing student achievement according to student assessments

Student accountability: holding students responsible for learning

Teacher accountability: holding teachers responsible for teaching students the standards and skills they need in order to be successful.

Parent accountability: holding parents responsible for reinforcing student learning.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions and Recommendations

Chapter five revisits the finding of the research study, the three research questions, and how they relate to the findings. The researcher makes recommendations and suggestions for future studies on the KIPP Program in the Delta Region to conclude chapter five.

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to identify the possible factors that may be influencing the increased student achievement in literacy at the KIPP School in the Delta Region of a mid-south state according to administrator, teacher, and student perceptions. The school selected for this research study was the only KIPP School in the state at the time the study was conducted.

Previous research by David, Woodworth, Grant, Guha, Lopez-Torkos, and Young found KIPP teachers and administrators in the San Francisco Bay area had very high expectations of students in terms of student achievement and student behavior. “KIPP Schools expect their student to achieve at high levels academically in a rigorous, college preparatory program and demonstrate the desire, discipline, and dedication necessary to succeed at KIPP and beyond”. (2006, ES-1). The research study was a three year case study of five KIPP Schools in the Bay area and their effect upon student achievement.

Similarly, Ross et al., (2007) conducted a four year mixed-method, quasi-experimental study and found high expectations as one of the contributing factors to KIPP Diamond’s academic success in Memphis, Tennessee.

Lastly, Musher, Musher, Graviss, and Strudler (2005) conducted a three year longitudinal study to determine the effects the KIPP Model had upon student achievement. The researchers contributed the increase in student achievement to the following factors: 1.) rigorous educational

experience, 2.) increase hours of schooling, 3.) highly-qualified teachers, 4.) committed students, 5.) parental involvement.

Discussion

Recently, KIPP School in the Delta Region has been recognized as one of the top school districts in the state (Office for Education Policy, 2010). In 2002, KIPP School began as a single class of sixty five 5th grade students. The following years, KIPP added a grade level. By 2005, KIPP served grades five through eight. In August 2008, they opened their high school serving grades nine through twelve. The following school year, August 2009, they opened the elementary school serving grades kindergarten and currently first and second grades. They will eventually have grades three and four in the upcoming school years. Thus, the KIPP School in the Delta Region has grown from one class of sixty five to 577 students. In the future, KIPP plans to expand to twelve schools in four cities in the state.

Students who attend KIPP are more likely to be female, African American, and are from low-income and high poverty backgrounds. According to the researchers at the University of Arkansas, 90% of the KIPP student body in 2009-2010 were eligible for free or reduced lunch, as compared to 60% of students across the state of Arkansas. (Office for Education Policy, 2010). These students entered KIPP at academic levels lower than the average student performance in mathematics across the state. For instance, students entering KIPP scored in the bottom 30% of the state's distribution in mathematics prior to KIPP entrance. However, they scored slightly higher than their classmate who remained at the traditional public school. For example, 46% of KIPP students were proficient or advanced in mathematics compared to 35% of their peers who remained at the traditional public schools. "However once at KIPP these students outperformed other students with a similar record of academic performance within the state." (Office for

Education Policy, 2010, p.7)

Many critics have accused the KIPP Schools of creaming the best and brightest students from the traditional public schools. The researchers at the University of Arkansas found that KIPP students were “slightly more successful than their prior peers, but are no means the best and brightest upon entering KIPP.” (Office for Education Policy, 2010, p. 3) Similarly, KIPP Schools had been accused of creaming through their attrition and returning those students who are not likely to be the best and brightest or those students who are discipline problems back to their former public school. The University of Arkansas found that on average 15% of KIPP students leave each year, with 17% leaving after fifth grade. They found that KIPP students who left were more likely to be a male, black, white or Hispanic, and from higher poverty backgrounds than their peers who remained at KIPP. They also found that although the students who chose to leave KIPP were not performing as well as the KIPP student who remained. They however had improved tremendously upon entering and studying at KIPP and as a result were doing as well as the average student in mathematics upon the KIP School in the Delta Region. For example, 38% of the students who left KIPP were in the 50th percentile of state’s distribution on the math assessments. Likewise, 45% of those students who left KIPP scored in the upper half on the literacy assessments. (Office for Education Policy, 2010)

Findings Review by Research Questions

Research Question One

What factors have influenced the increased academic success of previously at-risk students in the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) Charter School in Literacy in the Delta according to administrator and teacher perceptions?

In research question number one, the researcher wanted to know what factors did

the KIPP administrators and ELA teachers perceived to be positively making a difference in the literacy success of the students in the Delta Region. In other words, what were the ELA teachers doing in the classrooms that appeared to be enhancing student literacy at the KIPP School in this area of the state that is known for its high illiteracy rate? The school district had been receiving a lot of public attention for its high academic test scores and had gained the interest of other educators in the state. The data collected in this research study suggest that administrator and ELA teachers believed that the commitment of promoting academic excellence through KIPP's culture of high expectations, developing positive teacher-student relationships and providing a college preparatory curriculum while holding all stakeholders accountable positively impacted student achievement in literacy. For example, one participant discussed the significance of the commitment by stating:

Parents sign a Commitment to Excellence form. It's basically like a contract between the school, the student, and the parents. I think the one thing we do have that is different from traditional public school is that I think we have a unique opportunity of getting everybody on the same page at one time. (ADM3)

Another participant discussed the significance of KIPP culture of high expectations by stating:

We put culture above everything else. It is expectations. We expect our students to achieve. That's our attitude all the time. The higher you put your expectations, the further students will climb. They may not always reach the bar, but it's a heck of a lot better to aim high and miss than to shoot low and hit. Expectations, that's the thing you immediately pick up on when you walk into our school. (ADM1)

Still, a participant discussed the positive teacher-student relationships developed at KIPP Schools by stating:

The teachers form relationships here with their students. These relationships not only build trust amongst teacher and student, but it also helps achieve student learning (ELA2).

Yet another participant discussed the significance of a college preparatory curriculum by stating:

We expect that everyone will go on to a four-year college or university. 100% of our kids will be college-ready. 100% will attend a rigorous college, rigorous in terms of their own academic achievement. 100% of students, that's the goal. 100% will be accepted into a type of rigorous college or university... Not everyone is going to go to an Ivy League, but we're going to find a school that's appropriate given their area of interest and their academic abilities that they have when they graduate. (ELA1)

Last, another participant discussed the role of accountability at KIPP School "KIPP differ from the public schools in terms of accountability" (ELA1). It was a general consensus among all of the staff participants interviewed that everyone was held accountable at KIPP including the students, teachers, and parents.

In summary, administrators and teachers truly believed that the commitment, the culture of high expectations, the positive teacher-student relationships, a rigorous college preparatory curriculum, and accountability among all stakeholders significantly impacted student achievement in literacy at the KIPP School. Figure 7 illustrates the multiple factors enhancing student achievement in literacy in the Delta Region according to KIPP administrator and English Language Art teacher perceptions.

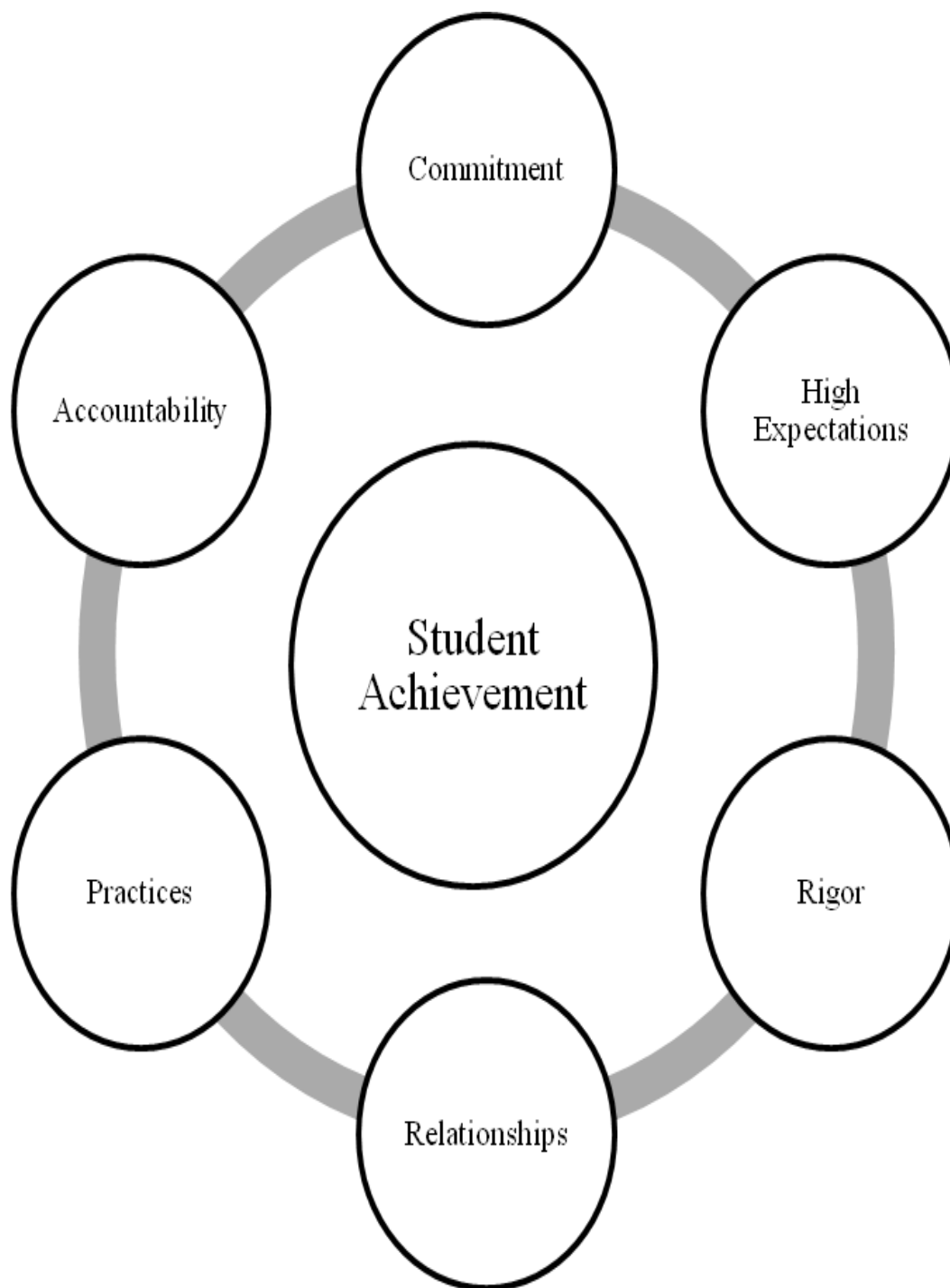


Figure 7. Factors enhancing student achievement according to administrator and english language art teacher perceptions.

Research Question Two

How is it possible now for the KIPP students to have very different academic outcome on the same assessments that they scored basic or below basic a year or two ago at traditional public schools, according to student perceptions?

In this question, the researcher sought the perceptions of what the students believed to make a difference with them at the KIPP Schools. In other words, why did they perform better at KIPP than they did at their regular public school? What did the students perceive to motivate them to do better academically at KIPP than previously? The students interviewed stated high expectations of the teachers and administrators, a rigorous curriculum, caring teacher relationships, relevance of the lessons, and extension of time as a scaffold to address any academic deficits motivated them to achieve. In reference to high expectations, one participant stated, “They have high expectations of everyone. They would say I know that you can do better than that. They weren’t always just pushing me, but everyone” (ST8).

In regards to a rigorous college preparatory curriculum, one student participant stated, “KIPP introduced more materials on a college level. In tenth grade, we were studying World History from a college textbook” (ST6).

Yet another participant stated in reference to developing positive teacher-student relationships, “My teacher encouraged me daily, by helping me if I needed help. Teachers stayed after school or even came to school to assist you in any way they could” (ST1).

Further, in reference to the relevance of lessons, another student participant stated, “KIPP taught principles we could use in life. They taught us the valuable aspects of communication like looking someone in the eye when you speak and how important it was to be professional....”(ST6).

Last, students discussed the importance of the extension of classroom time as an opportunity to master, remediate, or catch up on any missed assignments or skills. One participant stated, “Sometimes we would stay after school to make corrections and be with her and read what we didn’t understand together with her. She would explain it....” (ST5). Figure 8 below shows an illustration of the multiple factors impacting student achievement in literacy in the Delta Region according to student participants.

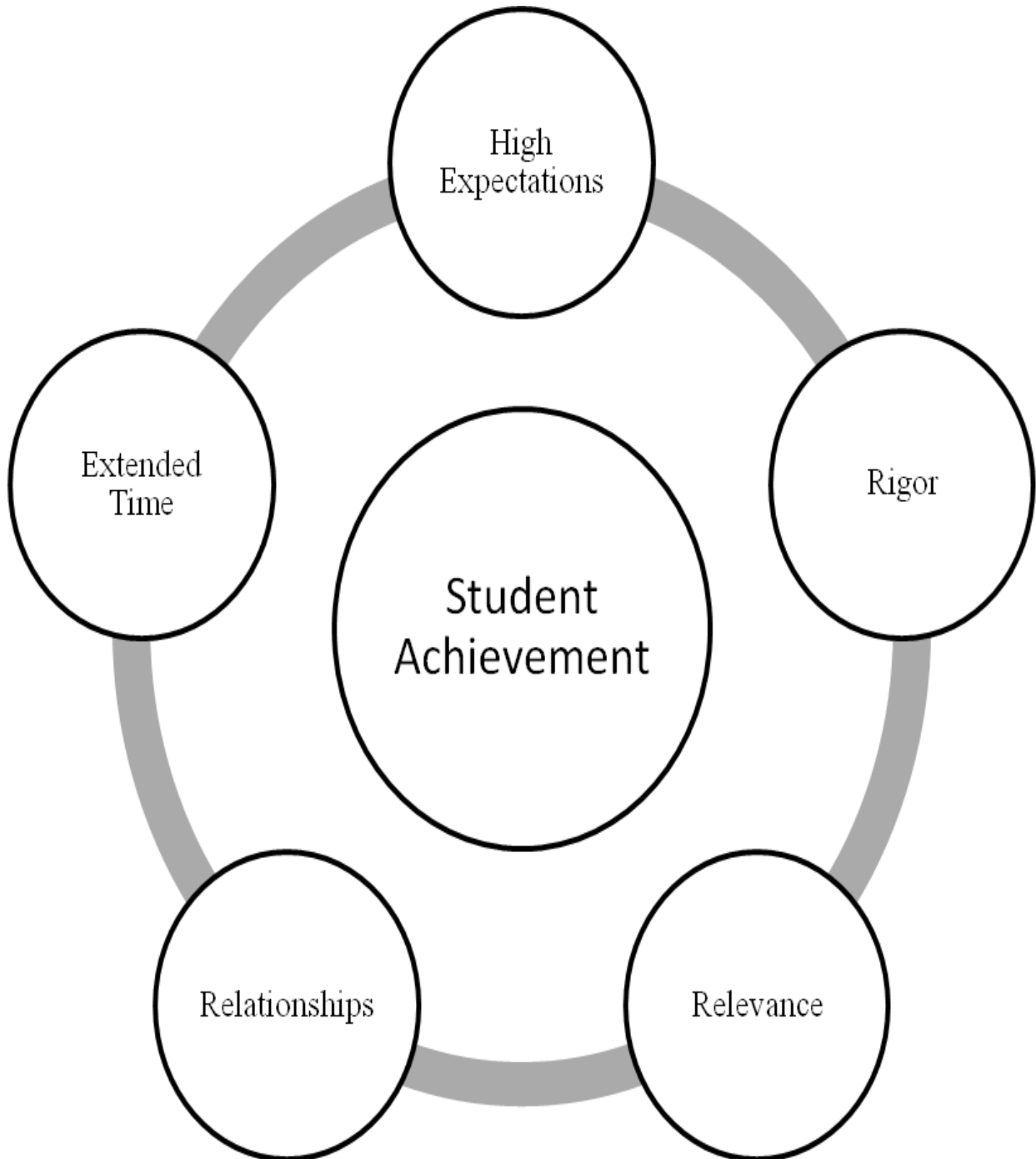


Figure 8. Factors enhancing student achievement according to student perceptions.

Research Question Three

How has KIPP affected teachers' practice, role, and professional development?

This research question sought answers from administrators and teachers in how they believe KIPP has changed them as a professional since working for the school. Participants stated as an educator at KIPP they are now more professional, more effective, more committed, more collaborative, and more accountable. In regards to teachers being more professional as a result of teaching at KIPP one participant stated,

We think we are professionals just like any other profession, and we have to work hard to become better at what we do. That's what we do. We work hard. We see it as a skill we can get better at. We feel it's a skill where you can practice, study, learn, and become better. (ADM3)

Further in reference to teachers being more effective, one participant stated,

I will definitely say that I became a better teacher faster here at KIPP. It's because I worked with some of the top teachers that showed me their best practices. I watched them. I observed them. I learned from them. (ELA2)

Also, teachers stated that they are more committed as a result of working for KIPP

Schools. One participant stated,

I believe our teachers take much more ownership over their students and how much their students learn or what people might be use to. That's why they go above and beyond. That's why they come early and stay late. That's why they will keep students after school even when they have been teaching all day. That's why they will call home or even visit the house in order to get the support that the child needs to learn. (ADM2)

Still, another participant stated that teachers are also more collaborative as a result of working for KIPP.

...I think in terms of our practice as teachers, we are extremely collaborative and open to sharing. That's probably one of the biggest levers to increasing teacher effectiveness is that they can easily go to the person next door or down the hall and ask them "Hey how did you teach this content? Do you have anything from last year that can help me? Do you have a resource that I might look at?" (ADM2). The collaborative nature and the helpful nature of all the teachers here is, I think, one of the biggest ways that KIPP affects their practice and teacher development. (ADM2)

Lastly, there was a consensus between the administrators and ELA teachers that teachers are held more accountable for increasing student achievement in literacy than they ever had been before teaching at KIPP. One participant stated, “I think teachers coming here don’t realize how accountable they are. We are going to hold you accountable, and we’re serious. We want to make sure we’re teaching good lessons” (ADM1).

Theory Link

The theoretical framework driving this research study was Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships plus High Expectations Theory by Bottoms (2005). Bottoms and the Southern Regional Educational Board believe the combination of rigor, relevance, relationships, and high expectations of students increase and sustain student achievement. According to Bottoms (2005) over one thousand schools are using this theory of rigor, relevance, relationships, and high expectations to raise student achievement. High Schools That Work (HSTW) are using this theory to increase student achievement, specifically teaching a rigorous college preparatory curriculum, having high expectations, making lessons relevant to students’ interest and career choices, implementing best teaching practices, providing interventions, along with providing instructional leadership and professional development to sustain the increased student achievement. (Bottoms, 2005)

This theory was applicable in this research study. The adult and student participants identified rigor, relevance, and relationships along with high expectations as factors increasing and sustaining student achievement at the KIPP Schools. The students also identified extension of classroom time as an opportunity for remediation and mastery of skills and content. Thus, the extension of classroom time was a modification of Gene Bottoms’ theory (2005): rigor, relevance, relationships, and high expectations increase student achievement.

Although the Correlates of Effective Schools' theory advocated by Lezotte and other researchers in the mid-1970s was not used as the theoretical framework for this research study, findings from the KIPP School closely match the Correlates of Effective Schools' theory. Those findings included an effective instructional leadership, clear and specific mission, effective instructional strategies and teaching methods, high expectations of all students, regardless of background, and frequent monitoring of student achievement. Extended time, accountability and a safe and orderly environment did not match in the study, however.

Recommendations

One potential problem that may negatively impact the KIPP School ability to sustain its positive academic momentum long term is its attrition rate of 22% since 2002 and currently 15% for the 2011-2012 school year. The attrition rate is measured yearly by using the enrollment on October 1 of each school year to determine the amount of students who did not return. KIPP's goal is to retain a minimum of 85% of the students each school year. The beginning of 2011 school year had 84.6% of its students return. KIPP highest mobility rate was in 2003 with a 28% attrition rate and in 2006 with a 27% attrition rate. Figure 9 shows the percentage of students leaving KIPP from inception to August 2011 school year.

Also, public school administrators may want to replicate those components of the KIPP model that are cost-effective and feasible such as having high expectations, implementing a rigorous, college preparatory curriculum, developing positive teacher-student relationships, teaching relevant and practical lessons, and holding all stakeholders accountable. According to KIPP stakeholders, these factors when implemented collectively significantly impact student achievement.

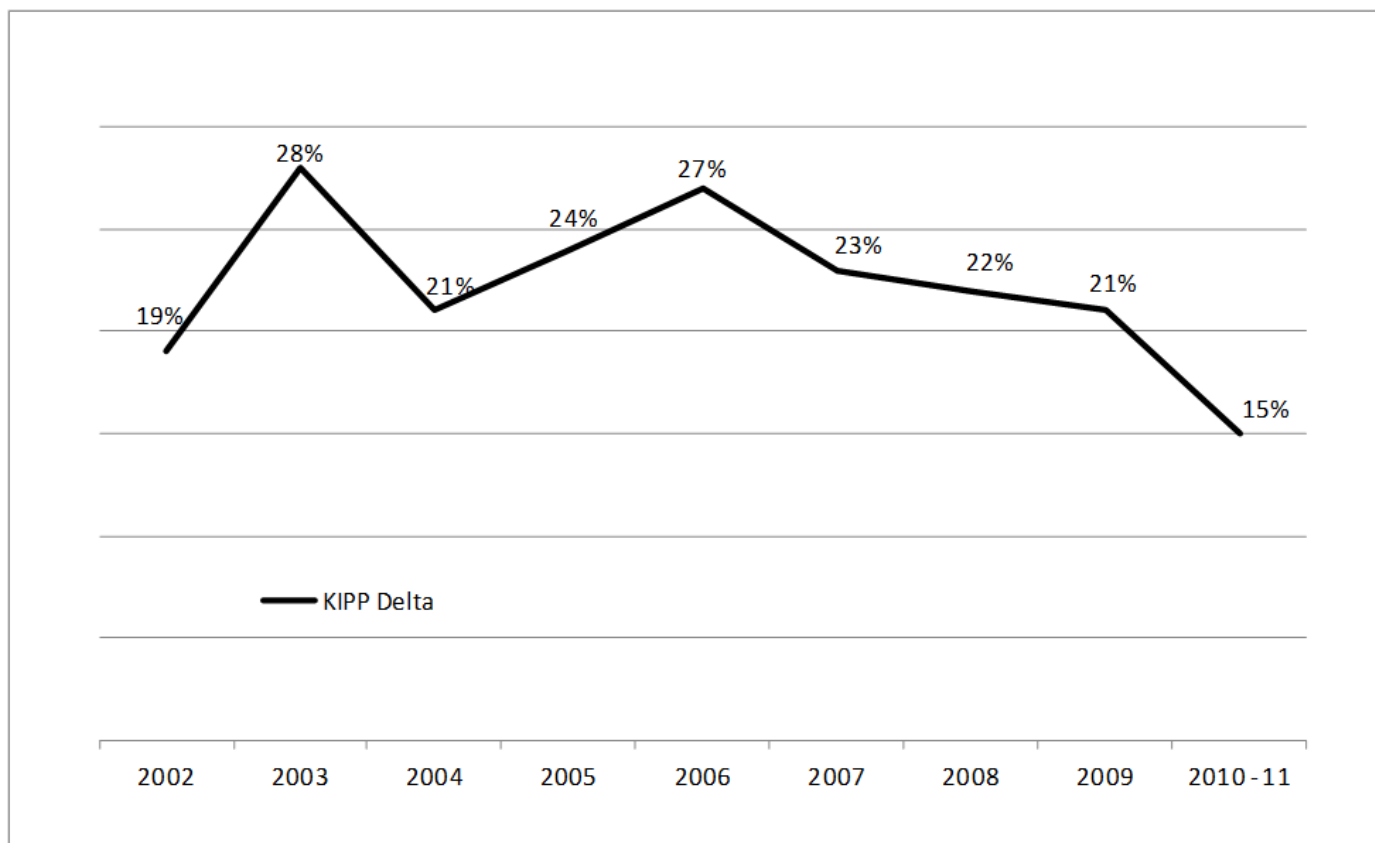


Figure 9. KIPP attrition rate from 2002- 2011.

(KIPP Schools, 2012).

Suggestions for Future Research

KIPP may want to explore the factors contributing to the high student attrition rate among the students and develop a plan of action to prevent this mobility of students leaving KIPP after a year or two at the school. Factors may include the reasons or causes the students or parents identified in their exit conference. If KIPP does not have an exit conference to gather this information they may want to implement one to gather additional information from the students and parents and also ask for suggestion on what they can do to improve or rectify the problem, if it is something that the school feels is feasible. They may also want to revisit the interventions they have in place for the struggling students who chose to leave. Again, in the exit conference, the school may want to ask the students or parents what interventions could they implement or improve on to help the students become more successful academically at KIPP. This information should be gathered and presented to the staff. A plan of action by the KIPP School exploring the causes, effects, and implication of the high attrition rate is recommended by the researcher.

Since a high student attrition rate may negatively impact KIPP, future research studies may include examining the causes and effects of student attrition upon student achievement of KIPP students. What effect, if any, is student attrition affecting student achievement from one year to another? How consistent is student achievement, if the schools are not testing the same students each year? Lastly, what long term residual effects does KIPP have upon students who chose to leave and return to the traditional public schools?

Conclusion

It was difficult to claim one factor such as high expectations alone may be influencing the increased student achievement of KIPP students. This researcher found that not only were high expectations influencing student achievement at KIPP, but also additional factors such as a

rigorous college preparatory curriculum, relevant lessons, positive teacher-student relationships, and the extension of classroom time are working and influencing the overall enhanced student achievement among the students at the KIPP School in the Delta Region. Similarly, Woodworth et al., (2008) posited that the five KIPP Pillars or guiding principles of high expectations, choice and commitment, more time, power to lead, and focus on results were the contributing factors to the increased student achievement and positive student behavior at KIPP Schools.

Regardless, more longitudinal research is needed to conclude that the KIPP Schools will maintain its effectiveness in increasing student achievement over the years. Potential problems such as high student attrition may stifle the long term results of the KIPP Schools.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter

Research Support and Sponsored Programs
Institutional Review Board

June 1, 2010

MEMORANDUM

TO: Kimberly Brown
Carleton Holt

FROM: Ro Windwalker
IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 10-05-652

Protocol Title: *What Factors Have Influenced the Improved Academic Success of Previously At-Risk Students in Literacy at the Knowledge is Power Program Charter School in the Delta Region According to Teacher and Student Perceptions: Case Study*

Review Type: EXEMPT EXPEDITED FULL IRB

Approved Project Period: Start Date: 06/01/2010 Expiration Date: 05/31/2011

Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Compliance website (<http://www.uark.edu/admin/rsspinfo/compliance/index.html>). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

If you wish to make *any* modifications in the approved protocol, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 120 Ozark Hall, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

Appendix B

IRB Approval Letter Continuation

Research Support and Sponsored Programs
Institutional Review Board
May 20, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: Kimberly Brown
Carleton Holt

FROM: Ro Windwalker
IRB Coordinator

RE: PROJECT CONTINUATION

IRB Protocol #: 10-05-652

Protocol Title: *What Factors Have Influenced the Improved Academic Success of Previously At-Risk Students in Literacy at the Knowledge is Power Program Charter School in the Delta Region According to Teacher and Student Perceptions: Case Study*

Review Type: EXEMPT EXPEDITED FULL IRB

Previous Approval Period: Start Date: 06/01/2010 Expiration Date: 05/31/2011

New Expiration Date: 05/31/2012

Your request to extend the referenced protocol has been approved by the IRB. If at the end of this period you wish to continue the project, you must submit a request using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. Failure to obtain approval for a continuation on or prior to this new expiration date will result in termination of the protocol and you will be required to submit a new protocol to the IRB before continuing the project. Data collected past the protocol expiration date may need to be eliminated from the dataset should you wish to publish. Only data collected under a currently approved protocol can be certified by the IRB for any purpose.

This protocol has been approved for 18 participants. If you wish to make *any* modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change. If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 210 Administration Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

Appendix C

Interview Cover Letter

Dear Madame or Sir:

This study is being conducted by Kimberly Brown of the College of Education at the University of Arkansas in order to best understand the phenomena of the Knowledge is Power Program schools. The research will help administrators and educators to better understand how and why these schools are successful in educating minority students who were previously failing in the traditional public schools. In the fall of 2010, I plan to distribute results of this study that focus upon the progress the KIPP schools are making.

I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to interview and observe your class. Your participation is crucial to the success of this study. The research study of the Knowledge is Power Program School will focus on the progress the school has made since inception of the program. The gathering of data such as interviews, classroom observations, and analysis of documents will last approximately one semester.

Please be assured that your responses will be held in the strictest confidence. Data gathered throughout the study will be kept in a secure place. Participants in the study will remain anonymous. If the results of this study were to be written for publication, no identifying information will be used.

The expected benefits associated with your participation are the replication of the program in order to transform academically failing schools into high achieving schools, and the opportunity to be part of a very important research study.

Last, hopefully this study will provide important information to educators to help minority students be successful in traditional public schools. Participants will have the opportunity to receive feedback regarding the study results in a power point presentation by the researcher.

Contact information.

If you have any questions about this study, you can contact the person(s) below:

Kimberly Brown
XXX-XXX-XXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX

Dr. Carleton Holt, Academic Advisor
Assistant Chair of Department of Leadership
Graduate Education Building, Room 233|
Fayetteville, Arkansas 72701
479-575-5112
cholt@uark.edu

Appendix D

Revised Non-Identifying KIPP Approval Letter

December 7, 2009

Ms. Kimberly J. Brown

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Dear Ms. Brown,

Thank you for your research submission to KIPP Schools. We are pleased to inform you that your proposal has been reviewed by both KIPP National and and has been approved. We look forward to sharing information with you, opening our doors to you, and being a resource to you as you complete your research.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, feel free to e-mail me at or contact me by phone. Thanks and, again, we look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Executive Director

Appendix E

Informed Consent for Administrators and Teachers

Title: What Factors Have Influenced the Improved Academic Success of Previously-At Risk Students in Literacy at the Knowledge is Power Program Charter School in the Delta Region According to Teacher and Student Perceptions: Case Study

Researcher:

Kimberly Brown,
Graduate Student
University of Arkansas
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Faculty Advisor:

Dr. Carleton Holt
Associate Professor of Educational Leadership
University of Arkansas
223 Graduate Education Building
Fayetteville, AR 72701
(479) 575-5112

Description: The purpose of this study is to investigate the practice of KIPP School and discover the possible factors that may be influencing the academic success of previously-at risk students in literacy in the Delta Region according to teacher and student perceptions. Through interviews and classroom observations, factors which are influencing the success of previously at-risk students in literacy will be researched.

As a participant, you will be asked to answer questions in a private tape recorded interview session.

Risk and Benefits: The benefits of this risk include contributing to the knowledge bases of effective programs for minority students and students from poverty-stricken backgrounds. The only risk to you in participating in this study is that the final report will be seen by the remaining participants excluding the students.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in the research is completely voluntary. There are no payments for participating.

Confidentiality: All responses will be tape recorded anonymously. Tape recordings will be transcribed anonymously. Only study site and whether you are an administrator, instructional coach, literacy teacher, or student will be identified on the recording and the interview transcript. All tape recordings will be maintained in a locked file cabinet to which only the researcher has access. Transcriptions of the tape will also be kept in a locked file cabinet.

Right to Withdraw: Your participation in the research is voluntary and you may withdraw from the research at any time without any explanation. Your decision to withdraw will not bring any negative consequences or penalty to you for not participating in the study.

Questions or Concerns: If you have questions or concerns about this study, you may contact Kimberly Brown or Dr. Carleton Holt at (479)-575-5112 or by email at cholt@uark.edu. For questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact Ro Windwalker, University of Arkansas Compliance Coordinator, at (479) 575-2208 or by e-mail at irb@uark.edu.

Informed Consent: I, _____, have read the description, including the purpose of the study, the procedures to be used, the potential risks, the confidentiality, as well as the option to withdraw from the study at any time. Each of these items has been explained to me by the investigator. The investigator has answered my questions regarding the study, and I believe I understand what is involved. My signature below indicates that I freely agree to participate in this study and that I have received a copy of this agreement from the investigator.

Signature

Date

Appendix F

Informed Consent for Students

Title: What Factors Have Influenced the Improved Academic Success of Previously-At Risk Students in Literacy at the Knowledge is Power Program Charter School in the Delta Region According to Teacher and Student Perceptions: Case Study

Researcher:

Kimberly Brown,
Graduate Student
University of Arkansas
XXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX

Faculty Advisor:

Dr. Carleton Holt
Associate Professor of Educational Leadership
University of Arkansas
223 Graduate Education Building
Fayetteville, AR 72701
(479) 575-5112

Description: The purpose of this study is to investigate the practice of KIPP School and discover the possible factors that may be influencing the academic success of previously-at risk students in literacy in the Delta Region according to teacher and student perceptions. Through interviews and classroom observations, factors which are influencing the success of previously at-risk students in literacy will be researched.

As a participant, you will be asked to answer questions in a private tape recorded interview session.

Risk and Benefits: The benefits of this risk include contributing to the knowledge bases of effective programs for minority students and students from poverty-stricken backgrounds. The only risk to you in participating in this study is that the final report will be seen by the remaining participants excluding the students.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in the research is completely voluntary. There are no payments for participating.

Confidentiality: All responses will be tape recorded anonymously. Tape recordings will be transcribed anonymously. Only study site and whether you are an administrator, instructional coach, literacy teacher, or student will be identified on the recording and the interview transcript. All tape recordings will be maintained in a locked file cabinet to which only the researcher has access. Transcriptions of the tape will also be kept in a locked file cabinet.

Right to Withdraw: Your participation in the research is voluntary and you may withdraw from the research at any time without any explanation. Your decision to withdraw will not bring any negative consequences or penalty to you for not participating in the study.

Questions or Concerns: If you have questions or concerns about this study, you may contact Kimberly Brown or Dr. Carleton Holt at (479) 575-5112 or by email at cholt@uark.edu. For questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact Ro Windwalker, University of Arkansas Compliance Coordinator, at (479) 575-2208 or by e-mail at irb@uark.edu.

Informed Consent: I, _____, have read the description, including the purpose of the study, the procedures to be used, the potential risks, the confidentiality, as well as the option to withdraw from the study at any time. Each of these items has been explained to me by the investigator. The investigator has answered my questions regarding the study, and I believe I understand what is involved. My signature below indicates that I freely agree to participate in this study and that I have received a copy of this agreement from the investigator.

Student Signature

Date

Parent Signature

Date

Appendix G

Interview Guide for Administrators and Teachers

1. Background Information:
2. Tell me about KIPP School Delta.
3. How does KIPP School Delta differ from the public school you previously taught at or attended as a student yourself?
4. Describe the leadership's role in increasing student achievement at KIPP Delta.
5. How do teachers motivate students to achieve and excel in their academic studies at KIPP Delta?
6. As an instructor at KIPP Delta, please explain the best teaching practices utilized at this school.
7. What interventions does KIPP Delta have in place to prevent KIPP students from failing or falling through the cracks?
8. What is the role of parental involvement at KIPP Delta?
9. Compare and contrast the parental involvement at KIPP Delta versus public schools.
10. How does KIPP Delta prepare students to be successful in high school, college, and the workplace?
11. What literacy strategies does the school teach students to increase their literacy skills such as reading comprehension, vocabulary, and writing skills?
12. How is it possible now for the KIPP students to have very different academic outcomes on the same assessments that they scored basic or below basic a year or two ago at traditional public schools?
13. How has the KIPP Program affected teachers' practice, role, and professional development?

Appendix H

Interview Guide for Students

1. Describe your old school.
2. What grades did you make at your old school?
3. What grades do you make at KIPP?
4. Why did you enroll at KIPP?
5. Describe your teachers at your old school.
6. Describe your teachers at KIPP.
7. Describe your friends at your old school.
8. Describe your friends at KIPP.
9. What do students have to do to be successful here at KIPP Delta?
10. What are your future goals?
11. Do you believe you are being prepared for the skills to be successful in college or the workplace at KIPP? Explain.
12. What skills do you learn in your literacy classes?
13. How do your teachers teach these skills?
14. Compare your literacy class to your old school.
15. If you were the principal of KIPP now, what changes would you make to the school and why?
16. What would you keep the same as the principal and explain why?
17. Is there anything you want to share that I may not get from reading journal and newspaper articles and TV reports about the KIPP schools?
18. Do you have any questions for me concerning my research study on KIPP Delta Preparatory College?