A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY OF ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED HIGH

ACHIEVING MINORITY SCHOOLS

by

Stefanie Marie Barnes

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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APPROVED BY:

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this collective case study was to discover the characteristics that defined a high achieving minority population within a high, middle, and elementary school setting. The theoretical ideas included those of Dewey, Piaget and Payne. The central research question was: What are the unique characteristics of a high, middle, and elementary school with a high achieving minority student population? The characteristics were identified and examined through contemporary practices, observations, focus group discussions, interviews, surveys, and data analyzed. The participants in this research were the teachers, administrators, and students at various high, middle, and elementary school sites. The data collected from the different tools mentioned used commonalities by means of diligent coding methods, triangulation, and rich data description. The results included themes that existed across the various bounded systems, including: (a) an explicitly designed improvement plan tailored for each site, (b) a safe and secure environment with accountability in place for all involved, (c) the recognition for the need for positive relationships among all participants, (d) the importance of professional development that emphasized the curriculum content, and (e) the use of effective teaching practices to improve academic achievement. The theoretical and empirical findings confirmed the significance of administrators' leadership abilities and teacher relationships being the cornerstone for student achievement in a minority economically challenged environment.

Keywords: high achieving, minority, characteristics, middle school, high school, elementary school

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I thank primarily, Jesus Christ, through whom all things are possible. This journey took a considerable amount of time and effort. I appreciate the patience that both of my committee members, Dr. Billie Jean Holubz and Dr. Kathleen Yarbrough, maintained during this very long process. I especially want to thank my Chair, Dr. Elizabeth Ackerman, who was very prompt with answers and encouraged me to continue. There are too many friends and family members to name but I wanted to acknowledge my son, Jalen Robinson, who refused to let me give up and motivated me to continue the journey.

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List of Abbreviations

Accelerated Placement (AP)

American Recovery Reinvestment Act (ARRA)

Class Wide Peer Tutoring (CWPT)

Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)

College Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI)

Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT)

Department of Exceptional Services (DES)

English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Georgia High School Graduation Test (GHSGT)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)

Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS)

Principal Instructional Management Rating System (PIMRS)

Professional Learning Community (PLC)

Race to the Top (RTT)

Socioeconomic Status (SES)

Teacher Alternative Preparation Program (TAPP)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Today's new millennium classrooms face many challenges. Students who arrive to kindergarten are less prepared than they were two decades earlier (Curry, Reeves, & McIntyre, 2016; Fairlie, Hoffmann, & Oreopoulos, 2014; Pungello, Iruka, Dotterer, Koonce, & Reznick, 2009). Statistics continue to demonstrate that whether grade point averages, state tests or national comparisons were used, there has been a significant deficit between minorities, specifically African Americans and Hispanic/Latinos (Aud, Wilkinson-Flicker, Kristapovich, Rathbun, Wang, & Zhang, 2013; Hill, Moser, Shannon, & Louis 2013; Stillwell & Sable, 2013). Even after years of "reform," the United States still had an achievement gap between Caucasian and Asian students on one hand, and Hispanic/Latinos and African Americans on the other (Chenoweth 2009). Unfortunately, like homelessness and air pollution, some pessimistic communities have viewed the achievement gap as a condition that cannot be helped (Noguera & Wing 2006). The fundamental question that exists for educators includes whether they have overcome the influence of social class and decreased the educational gap between African Americans and Hispanic/Latinos (Morales, 2010).

Education has proceeded along a continuum and has adjusted to societal needs. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) legislated in 1965 stood as the preamble to the most important piece of educational legislation in the 21st century, No Child Left Behind. The ESEA was an answer to what many perceived as a decline in achievement results, specifically a decrease in college entrance exam scores (The National Commission of Excellence, 1984). These statistics were unacceptable, given the United States is considered to be a superpower. The ESEA ensured that all students, regardless of their social or economic status, received a fair

and equitable education. It foreshadowed the admittance by the dominant race in the United States, Caucasian, that a disparity in academic achievement results existed among lower income Hispanic/Latinos and African Americans and their Caucasian and Asian counterparts (The National Commission of Excellence, 1984). The importance of education followed a gamut; the one end had an abundance of resources and excellent educational practices while the other end endured ineffective strategies and scarce resources. The reality of education and its significance was clear in the wake of a recession and the disintegration of the way of life that most Americans enjoyed. The rouse of accountability and the overall educational pedagogy was under heavy scrutiny and continued to undergo significant reforms. President Obama's words about the state of the educational system and the responsibility of students resonated clearly:

> You can't drop out of school and just drop into a good job. You've got to work for it and train for it and learn for it. And this isn't just important for your own life and your own future. What you make of your education will decide nothing less than the future of this country. What you're learning in school today will determine whether we as a nation can meet our greatest challenges in the future. (President Obama's "Back to School Speech," 2009).

The idea that the future of an entire nation rested with students who entered kindergarten was not just rhetoric, but a reality. This idea was why it was imperative that educators, legislators, stakeholders, parents, and students take a stance and realize that the future of education was vital regarding America's continuation as a dominant global power (Kissinger, 2011). The United States was responsible for the assurance that an equitable education is attainable for all. It was an effort that had to be realized by every citizen. Its achievement ensured that effective practices were used, quality leaders were present both in the educational, business, and political scenes;

and that there continued to be an emphasis on meeting the diverse needs of all who embraced America as their permanent domicile (Payne, 2013; Wagner, 2006).

Current literature that addressed the achievement gap cited various reasons and noted the effective practices that essentially minimized the problem (Bubon-Burns, Brunner, & Kansteiner, 2016; Harbour, Sweigart, & Hughes, 2015; Hardesty, McWilliams, & Byrd, 2014; Reeves, 2009; Schmidt & Ralph, 2016; Schmoker, 2011). There were limited data that included both elementary and secondary academic sites (Chenoweth, 2009; Schmoker, 2006;). This literature review utilized past studies through analysis, synthesis, and articulation of the findings that occurred concurrently throughout the kindergarten through 12th-grade academic experience. This type of information advanced our educational system and provided a solid foundation of work and career ready citizens for the future.

Background

The Elementary and Secondary Educational Act of 1965 was the U.S. government's response to what was perceived as a decline in America's status. The launching of Sputnik by the Soviet Union in 1957 propelled American bureaucrats to initiate an overall reform, beginning with the educational system. The Elementary and Secondary Act was legislated to ensure the United States held firm to its superpower status (Jennings, 2011; Kissinger, 2011; Parker, 2005). Moreover, the Elementary and Secondary Educational Act attempted to narrow the achievement gap. It was the first acknowledgment by the government that there was such a discrepancy between the still dominant Caucasian race and the two major minority groups, American Hispanic/Latinos and African Americans (Elementary and Secondary Educational Act, 1965). Financial assistance to local agencies for students of lower income families began when the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 passed.

This Act also gave other types of educational institutions resources, training, and other general provisions to increase achievement (Jennings, 2011; Parker, 2005;). The Act consisted of several different components. The sections began with Title I, which offered financial assistance to local educational agencies, mainly school districts, with a high percentage of low-income families. Typically, a school had to have 40% of the school's population that qualified under the U.S. Census' definition of low income in order to receive Title I funds. Title II dealt with school library resources, textbooks and other instructional materials, and ensured localities received these resources. Title III originally provided matching grants for supplementary education centers. Title IV was for educational research and training for personnel within the educational setting, whereas Title V provided grants that strengthened state departments of education (Elementary and Secondary Educational Act, 1965; Jennings, 2011; Kissinger, 2011; Parker, 2005,). All sections of the Act concentrated the improvement on what was determined as a faltering, didactic educational system.

Title I was the most prolific section of the ESEA. Most minority-based schools qualified for Title I funds. The research indicated a direct correlation between poverty and minority groups, specifically African and Hispanic/Latino Americans (Aud et al., 2013; Hill et al., 2013; Morales, 2010; Williams, 2003). This information was the catalyst alongside reports that highlighted a drop in the educational soundness of the present curriculum. Title I enabled schools to acquire additional resources that included teachers, textbooks and any other assets specifically intended to decrease the achievement gap developing between the majority and minority communities. The idea was if additional allocations were acquired, it would "level the playing field" (Elementary and Secondary Educational Act, 1965; Jennings, 2011; Kissinger, 2011; Parker, 2005).

To also help "level the playing field," the implementation of the Head Start program was initiated (Education and Secondary Act, 1965). Based on various reports, one of the factors that existed in poverty-ridden backgrounds was inadequate childcare provision. Consequently, Head Start was a comprehensive program that involved health, nutritional, social and educational services to both parents and their children. The Head Start program required significant parental involvement. This program had publicized fewer students who otherwise entered kindergarten as at-risk students, which was still a major component of early intervention for children (Ludwig & Phillips, 2008; Smith, 2012). The program's enrollment has increased 42% in the past five years, which has led to research to improve parent-teacher relations (Ginchuru, Riley, Robertson, & Park, 2015). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act was the first of many mandates that addressed the achievement gap among minorities within the educational system.

There were major initiatives that led to what was considered one of the most comprehensive and game changing mandates in educational history, No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001). After the passing of The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965) there were several other commissions and findings, such as Nation at Risk and Goals 2000, which continued the identification of the widening gap of achievement and the overall decline of American education (The National Commission of Excellence, 1984). After much debate, NCLB was legislated in 2002. The legislation required:

- The narrowing of the achievement gap among different minorities.

- The placement of highly qualified personnel and the professional learning components that ensured their success.

- A viable curriculum that was based on standards and measured by an annual test given to all students in the same manner (Marzano, 2004, 2009; NCLB, 2002).

The legislation also had consequences for school districts that failed to demonstrate success; one action included reorganization of the staff leading to state control. The strong mandates and requirements of NCLB (2001) yielded a high-stress era like none other in educational history. Accountability was high, and results were needed immediately. There were many critics of NCLB, which cited unrealistic expectations and hindrances to the entire educational system. These critics stated that the new methods forced teaching to a set of skills and also led to possible cheating tactics (Harris, 2007). The controversy of NCLB finally led to the demise of its usage after a decade of high accountability and schools that had reorganized due to their lack of adequate yearly progress.

In 2009 the Obama administration enacted the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), which provided nearly 100 billion dollars toward education (Kolbe & Rice, 2012; Lytle, 2012; McGuinn, 2012). This Act aided state budgets that had been previously cut due to the recession. Even though there were significantly large grants available to states on a competitive basis, there were also specific parameters in ARRA. The ARRA highly publicized as the Race to the Top (RTT, 2009) initiative, included many limits such as no caps that implemented charter schools, connected student achievement to teacher productiveness, and a longitudinal data compilation for students to name (Vileritti, 2012). Another accomplishment of ARRA was that many states opted the adoption of a common core curriculum (Anderson, Harrison, & Lewis, 2012; Brown & Kappes, 2012; Watt, 2011). The ARRA distinguished itself from NCLB because of its "voluntary" status and its adoption of internationally benchmarked standards and assessments (Kolbe & Rice, 2012; McGuinn, 2012; Weiss, 2014).

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was re-authorized in December, 2015. ESSA departed in substantial ways from prior federal policy, giving states more discretion to design and implement their own policies regarding the use of funds from Titles I and II-A. The Act also

targeted several factors, including the overall increase in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) over the past decade, the implementation of common core standards since the 2013-2014 school year in most states, the demise of the 100% proficiency mandate on state assessments, the increase in higher order thinking questions on Language Arts assessments and the revamping and implementation of new teacher evaluation instruments (Troppe, Milanowski, Westate, Gill, Ross, & Johnson, 2017). The consensus for these changes was to allow for less federal accountability and more flexible guidelines for states to address their population as needed.

Situation to Self

"Education in the United States appears to be at a crossroad between ineffectiveness and greater production" (Quigley, 2013, p. 43). Therefore, teachable moments were very rare. As an educator, I found myself increasingly concerned about getting all the curriculum content completed within the mandated timeframe. The impeding curriculum deadlines and mandates were why I realized the importance of effective and efficient teaching practices within a conducive learning environment. Yet, it seemed impossible except for those exceptional schools mentioned (Chenoweth, 2009; Dufour & Marzano, 2011; Harris, 2007).

I worked in economically disadvantaged minority elementary schools for my entire career. As a female African American, it was a calling from God to be a role model to minority students. Therefore, even after I have received my doctorate, I will serve in some capacity in an economically diverse school. It was essential that young children realized there were options, such as college or a career trade, despite their environment.

Conducting a qualitative case study meant that I studied a current case in progress where I gathered information that would not be lost by the passing of time (Creswell, 2013). This type of

study allowed me to be a non-participant observer, despite my first-hand knowledge of students with disabilities both at home and in the classroom. I had a Master's degree in special education and experienced living with a son diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome. The insights and skills gained from personal contact with my son's diagnosis qualified me to understand the needs of students identified as at risk. The strategies and techniques designed for students with disabilities, including those who were learning-disabled or had attention-deficit disorder, would also enable me to be successful with at-risk students.

The ontological view for me emerged because, as a parent of a minority male with Asperger's, I brought bias. My bias was rooted in my personal experiences with my child who was identified with Asperger's Syndrome. Given my knowledge, training, and teaching experience in special education, I had certain expectations for the care of students who exhibited specific qualities. Even though I had the experiences in the raising of my child with Asperger's, I ensured my objectivity prevailed. All students, even those who were not designated as disabled, would benefit from the strategies or techniques prescribed for disabled students. From a teacher-leader perspective who served as a grade level Chair of teams for several years, I realized the importance of teamwork and the pressures of accountability for other adult individuals. The training and experience received through hands-on observations and leadership trials and tribulations empowered me to separate my personal experiences from professional evaluations.

The epistemological approach lessened because I took classes to improve my observational skills. The improvement of my observational skills led to what was termed as a succinct yet thorough "walk through," which targeted effective practices demonstrated by the teacher and cited in the literature review.

The axiological perspective brought my values and ethics to the forefront based on my prior experiences and knowledge base. As a female African American, struggles included racial discrimination in both the academic and work arena. Ineffective teaching practices were experienced at an early age in the mathematical field and left an indelible mark and disdain for math all the way up to my college years. I did not necessarily contribute these ineffective teaching practices to racism, but rather to the lack of use of Gardner's multiple intelligences theory, which primarily occurred in the beginning stages of my elementary school experience (Helding, 2010). Therefore, I became an advocate for effective teaching practices because I experienced the effects of poor teaching practices firsthand. The same variances in perspective existed for both educators and administrators. This perspective is discussed in more detail in Chapter Two.

Problem Statement

The achievement gap between African Americans, Hispanic/Latino Americans, and Caucasians continues to exist. Research indicates that post-secondary opportunities are diminished among minorities, especially Hispanic/Latino and African American. Students of minority backgrounds are less likely to receive a bachelor's degree, with 28% of African Americans and 14% of Hispanic/Latino Americans obtaining a bachelor's degree, in comparison with their Caucasian counterparts at 69% (Aud et al., 2013). These disparities exist in large measure because of backgrounds, family income, neighborhood support, social capital, school conditions and teacher effectiveness (Henfield, Washington, & Bird, 2014; Noguera, 2012). The achievement gap does not just apply to an "urban" setting or poor setting; studies indicate that middle class minorities consistently score lower than their Caucasian counterparts (Aud et al., 2013; Hardesty, McWilliams & Plucker, 2014; Hill et al., 2013). Fundamental questions that

exist for educators include whether minorities could overcome the influence of their cultural and economic backgrounds that would serve to decrease the educational gap (Gichuru et al., 2015; Morales, 2010;). Several studies by researchers such as Kinold, Cornell, Shukla, and Huang (2016) and Schmoker (2006, 2011) addressed excellence in schools despite statistical challenges such as economic depravity, high minority population, and limited community or parental support. These studies did not specifically delineate the correlations that existed within the elementary and secondary pedagogies. The current study analyzed each school separately and then cross-analyzed their commonalities within the three schools. This rich descriptive data will inform future researchers in the use of the data and methods regardless of the educational classification of elementary, middle, or high school.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this collective case study was to discover the characteristics that defined high achieving schools (elementary, middle, and high) within an economically disadvantaged minority population. The definition of high achieving included schools that performed at 80% or better on the mandated state test, the Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) for elementary and middle schools or the Georgia High School Graduation Test (GHSGT) in high school (Georgia Department of Education, 2013). This percentage was determined based on research completed by Chenoweth (2009), Reeves (2003, 2009), and Schmoker (2006, 2011), which defined high achieving as 80% or higher on designated state mandated tests.

Another purpose of the study was to increase the understanding of how the dynamics of these characteristics would create the kind of cooperation that fuels a school's momentum toward achievement. Lastly, the study developed a framework for replication that would enable low achieving schools with similar demographics to become transformed into high achieving

schools. The study focused on administrative personnel, staff members, and students at each of the three locations. The characteristics were defined as those practices (including their underlying beliefs and attitudes); artifacts, observations, interviews, and focus group discussions that appeared to increase or enhance student achievement within each site.

This research expanded upon the current findings, which clearly stated that historically, there was an overrepresentation of Hispanic/Latino and African Americans in special education programs, and conversely, students of color were underrepresented in gifted programs (Barnard-Brak, McGaha-Garnett, & Burley, 2011; Gerhart, Hart, & Harris, 2011; Henfield et al., 2014; Stull, 2013).

It was important to have a consistent understanding of what defined a minority or economically disadvantaged population. For this study, the percentages for minority populations were at 80% or more, which meant the percentages of Hispanic/Latino Americans and African Americans combined were at 80%, with free and reduced lunch percentages also at 80%. This high percentage pointed to the extreme deficiencies that were usually prevalent in this type of environment. The characteristics of a high achieving, high minority, and low socioeconomic status were examined in the three school sites chosen. The set characteristics included "a focus on academic achievement, clear curriculum choices, frequent assessment of students with multiple opportunities for improvement, an emphasis on non-fiction writing and collaborative scoring of student work" (Reeves, 2003, p. 2).

This research provided an in-depth analysis of the vital components necessary to assist in closing the achievement gap. This was accomplished by synthesizing the elements that existed in all of the bounded systems that enabled all three to be high-achieving, yet economically

disadvantaged minority schools. Differences among the three schools included student age, curriculum and other variables that make elementary, middle, and high schools unique.

Significance of the Study

This study provided an analysis of three schools that demonstrated characteristics such as style of leader, positive school culture, effective teaching practices, and quality of staff and students. The research reviewed stated that the variables listed had the most profound influence on student achievement (Gerhart et al., 2011; Meng-Chun-Chin, 2007; Reeves, 2009; Schmoker, 2011). Moreover, the study could have a significant impact on future educational leaders, counties and states. This study also may enable other schools, districts and states to replicate the factors used (style of leader, positive school culture, effective teaching practices, quality of staff and students), which led to the development of a more comprehensive and effective educational system. The three schools involved in the study demonstrated success by consistently obtaining 80% overall scores, specifically in Reading and Math on the CRCT for elementary and middle school in the benchmark grades of third, fifth and eighth, or 80% pass rate on the graduation test in the junior year of high school. True leadership, as defined by Dufour and Marzano (2011), involves a shared vision, where there are no monologues, but dialogues; instead of presentations, more conversations. A shared vision from a true leader stems from a position of serving others instead of being served (p. 201). The quality of improvement for education at all schools in every community was the goal. This research assisted in the development of a comprehensive blueprint for schools that had failed. Schools that demonstrated comparable success with high percentages of pass rates on mandated state tests, along with high minority and poverty rates, served as new models for education.

Research Questions

The research questions assisted in developing a central focus for the study. Each question ensured the participants were thoroughly studied and the phenomenon addressed. The initial question began with an overview and proceeded to three other questions.

Central Research Question

What are the unique characteristics of schools (high school, middle, elementary) with high achieving minority student populations? There are several studies that identified specific factors that can enable any school to be successful, especially those that are deemed minority economically disadvantaged environments. Some of the factors discussed include, but are not limited to: (a) a viable curriculum, (b) professional development for teachers, (c) an organized environment, and (d) equal opportunity for all students (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Dufour & Marzano, 2011; Morales, 2010; Stull, 2013; Wiggan, 2014).

Other studies added that more research should be conducted to devise a template for the future generation of schools that evolve into diverse economically challenged learning communities. Moreover, I dispelled the negative stereotypes of low-income urban communities, by increasing either the longitudinal or ecological data collection for publication (Gerhart et al., 2011; Peck, 2010; Reeves, 2009; Robertson, 2008; Schmoker, 2006). I identified the factors that existed within each of the schools researched, and then I cross-analyzed the themes that they all had in common. This offered solid evidence that further supported the identified variables and their effects on high achieving economically disadvantaged minority schools.

Guiding Question 1

What was the role of teachers in schools with high achieving minority students?

Various studies pointed out the significance of the teacher in student achievement (Anyon, 2007; Harris 2007; Hill, 2013; Ozkan, 2016; Walter, 2015). Consequently, it was very important to continue to examine the effect that teachers have on minority economically disadvantaged students (Konstantopoulos, 2009; Martinez-Garcia & Slate, 2011; Powell & Kalina, 2009; Schmoker, 2011). The current study utilized surveys, observations, and interviews that targeted these qualities as established in the literature reviewed. After a determination through coding and analysis, the essential characteristics of a viable curriculum, professional development, and an organized environment with an equal opportunity for all students were found to be present within the three schools utilized in the research study.

Guiding Question 2

What was the role of administrators in schools with high achieving minority students?

The history of the role of administrators has been controversial. Some researchers insisted that the administration was essential to the success of a school (Gerhart et al., 2011; Mehdinezhad & Mansouri, 2016; Schmoker, 2011), while other researchers maintained that the administration only had minimal impact on student achievement (Kotze & Venter, 2011; Putney & Morris, 2011). The current study surveyed administrators to determine which findings from the literature boded true for the three high achieving economically disadvantaged minority schools included in this research endeavor.

Guiding Question 3

What was the role of students in schools with high achieving minority students?

Students in the new millennium face a more rigorous curriculum and a diverse workplace; therefore, it is essential that students enter kindergarten with school readiness. Yet, research indicated that students of color who experienced challenges such as socioeconomic

issues, single parent homes, or parent(s) who had not completed a high school education were three times more likely to be identified as at risk by their kindergarten year (Aiken & Barbarin, 2008; Kotz, 2016; Smith, 2012). Despite these alarming statistics, high achieving schools have reported students who were engaged, motivated, and excelled regardless of their home environment or other obstacles (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Morales, 2010; Wiggan, 2014; Williams & Portman, 2014). The current study implemented student interviews and student focus groups to ascertain the motivation and desires that set these students apart from the statistical averages that existed in the literature. These findings may provide the support and resources needed to improve overall student achievement at other schools that have similar demographics as those involved in the study.

<div align="center">**Research Plan**</div>

The definition of a case study involves understanding the meaning of the findings, looking at the consistent and recurring themes, and making sense of what the data mean (Ary et al, 2006; Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). This qualitative collective case study looked at schools that closely aligned with the uniqueness of a high minority population, a combined 80% population of African American and Hispanic/Latino; a low socioeconomic status, based on the nation's Title I standards (i.e., 35% receiving free or reduced lunch); and elevated standardized achievement scores. The three schools were chosen due to their high minority populations and an average of 80% student achievement gained on the state mandated state test (CRCT) for the third, fifth, and eighth grades, and 80% on the high school graduation test for juniors. Research from Leyba (2005) suggested that most minorities identified as Hispanic/Latino, Native American, African American, and others not identified as Caucasian felt discrimination over a continuous period and developed a sense of insecurity and ambivalence toward the dominant

group. The current study included an analysis of how this phenomenon was handled in these settings to generate information to hopefully reverse this trend. Whitaker (2012) emphasized the importance of effective leadership and all it entailed, whether it was the hiring of a great teacher, the handling of various mandated policies and procedures, or the dealing with everyday disciplinary concerns that exist within a building. Although Chenoweth (2009) looked at multiple sites throughout different states that ranged from elementary to high school and rural to urban settings, his study was limited to a diverse minority population with a concentrated population of both Hispanic/Latino and African American students. The schools included in the current study had a majority minority population, which meant African American students comprised a minimum of 80% of the student population and Hispanic/Latino made up at least 5% at each school.

The methodology of the current study included data collection involving interviews, focus groups, pertinent document analysis, surveys, and observations. The data collection was analyzed with use of a multi-staged process of organization, synthesis, interpretation, and writing of data (Ary et al, 2006; Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). Solid trustworthiness and reliability standards such as triangulation, member checking, and an audit trail were implemented. After the collection of data some relationships and recurring themes emerged, such as effective strong collaboration among staff members, a focused goal-oriented school atmosphere, and a strong commitment to a viable curriculum (Dufour & Marzano, 2011; Schmoker, 2011; Whitaker, 2012; Wiggan, 2014;).

Delimitations and Limitations

It was important to identify variables that enabled the data to be skewed; therefore, the following information specifically defined the delimitations that impaired the results of the

study. Per Title I criteria, a school must have a minimum of 35% of the student population to be eligible for free and reduced lunch based on income data completed at the beginning of the school year. This percentage made the schools eligible for additional resource funds for teachers, curriculum materials or other appropriate resources for improvement of an at-risk population. The minority population was defined with a minimum of 80% African American students and a Hispanic/Latino population of 5% or more. High achieving was defined as Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) scores or (GHSGT) test percentages of 80% or higher.

Delimitations present in this study included the analysis of test scores limited to the benchmark grade levels of third, fifth, and eighth grade, and the graduation test scores of juniors in high school. These grade levels were emphasized because they were benchmark grade levels, which meant students in these grade levels were required to pass the state mandated test(s), CRCT/GHSGT, in order to continue to the next grade level. These test scores were significant because both teachers and students, in theory, put forth their best effort to be successful. The graduation test was not mandatory to pass in the junior year; however, most students preferred to complete this major hurdle before their senior year. Other delimitations included the concentration of female staff members who were interviewed and included in the focus groups. This occurred because females dominated the elementary and secondary educational settings.

Limitations included personal, teacher, or administrative bias that hindered the overall objectivity of data collected. Although every effort was made to ensure a majority (80% or more) participation in the study, there was the possibility that participants were among the most cooperative in the building, which may have skewed the data that targeted effective practices and quality leadership. Another limitation was the experience and education of the teachers and

administrators assigned to the three schools used in this study. This was unavoidable and is addressed in the results.

Definitions

1. *Title I*— A section under the Elementary and Secondary Educational Act of 1965 that offers financial assistance to local educational agencies, mainly school districts, with a high percentage of low income families.

2. *High achieving*— in this study, defined as students who perform at a high level, 80% or above, on state-mandated tests in the core content areas of Reading/Language Arts and Math (Chenoweth, 2009; Reeves, 2009; Schmoker, 2011).

3. *Minority*— people of African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian or Native American descent (Aud et al., 2013; Faitar, 2011; Georgia Department of Education, 2013).

4. *Economically disadvantaged*— those who live below poverty (as deemed by the government institutions) or the working poor who, despite holding a job, still need federal assistance (Baker & Johnston, 2010; Georgia Department of Education, 2013; Ludwig & Phillips, 2008)

5. *High achieving*— those students who are successful on a standardized test given at a state level in a said district (Chenoweth, 2009; Reeves, 2009; Schmoker, 2011).

6. *Achievement gap*— measured by the national test score differences between racial and ethnic groups based on the National Assessment of Educational Program (NAEP) and SAT results (Achieve et al., 2012; Aud et Al., 2013).

7. *Socioeconomic status*— influences comprised of one's income, education and occupation (Morales, 2010; Robertson, 2008).

8. *Educating the minority*— alternative educational opportunities that improve minorities'

   academic achievement (Angrist, Harrison, & Lewis, 2012; Clark, Scafidi, & Swinton,

   2012; Davis & Oakley, 2013; Goldring & Smrekar, 2002).

9. *School climate*— involves the beliefs, attitudes, social norms, and interactions of the

   teachers in relation to students and vice versa (Aldridge & Ala'l, 2013; Bradshaw & Leaf,

   2008; Sailes, 2008; Smith & Kearney, 2012).

10. *School leadership*— the role administration plays in the provision and maintenance of a

    successful school environment (Branch, Hanuschek, & Rivkin, 2013; Kouzes & Posner,

    2007; Meng-Chun, 2007).

11. *Curriculum*— a set of standards and goals that are deemed developmentally appropriate

    for a specific grade level/age (Anderson, Harrison, & Lewis, 2012; Brown & Kappes,

    2012).

12. *Teachers' attitudes and beliefs*— Research explicitly links the attitude and overall

    practices of teachers to minority success (Costigan, 2008; Hyun-Jun et al., 2008;

    Nadelson et al., 2012; Sosa & Gomez, 2012).

13. *Effective practices*— Strategies, techniques, technology, collaborative group settings and

    performance based projects where new innovative opportunities are allotted to students

    who have not responded well to lectures, discussions, and other traditional methods of

    teaching (Brown, 2011; Greenwood & Kim, 2012; Zollman, 2009).

Summary

This study provided schools districts and states with a blueprint that enables all educational institutions the opportunity to develop and implement a system designed for a multi-

ethnic population's education. In turn, it prepares competitive citizens in our globally diverse society.

The continual upgrade of the law demonstrated America's commitment to maintain their worldwide influence. Lawmakers and policy analysts within the core fields realized that education was our primary concern in continuing to lead our nation. The introduction of the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 up to the America Recovery Reinvestment Act of 2009 demonstrated the country's cognition that there was a shift in the way our educational content was disseminated. Districts and states remained steadfast to hone and tweak their programs, and safeguarded students were provided with the best education.

This country was founded on its distinctiveness. It is only fitting the educational system guarantees that all persons, no matter their background, receive an equitable pedagogy. This collective case study permitted gathered data that compiled an in-depth analysis of administrators, teachers, and students on the attributes that they felt made their schools successful. This study examined elementary, middle, and high school levels and targeted their commonalities for student success. This study has the potential to transform the educational system.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This literature review examines many journal articles that pertain to the research questions introduced. The focus of the review is the discovery of the factors that permit a minority economically disadvantaged population to consistently exhibit gains in student achievement. Various studies have explored the phenomenon of high achieving minority schools; however, most studies only investigated one educational level, such as a high school, middle school, or elementary school, in isolation. This review evaluates the totality of the specific characteristics that reach across all elementary and secondary settings. Furthermore, the study probes the relationships that exist between teachers, students, and administrators that enable the environment to be academically effective.

This literature review has a theoretical framework based on the theories of John Dewey's progressive education (Dewey, 2009; Fleener, 2000; Glanz, 2008), Jean Piaget's cognitive views (Powell & Kalina,2009; Schmidt & Houang, 2012), Ruby Payne's groundbreaking framework of poverty (Payne 2001, 2013), and the constructivist theory (Boghossain, 2006; Iran-Neiad, 2001). These cornerstone theories laid the groundwork for the research developed. The theoretical section creates a comprehensive discussion enabling a design to emerge for a high achieving minority student population.

Past literature stated that success was predicated on specified curricula, cultural leadership, and effective teaching practices (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008; Baker & Johnston, 2010; Bird & Markle, 2010; Boykin & Noguera, 2011). Georgia particularly implemented the CCRPI (College and Career Ready Performance Index) that combined many of these effective resources, tools, and strategies and mandated that schools had a comprehensive plan carried out. The plan

was new, but it required schools to obtain a certain amount of points in several successful areas (Georgia Department of Education, 2013). The following factors were researched and analyzed:

- Achievement Gap

- Socioeconomic Status

- Educating the Minority

- Teachers' Attitudes and Beliefs

- School Climate

- School Leadership

- Curriculum

- Effective Practices

- Parent Involvement

This literature review allows schools, districts and counties to delve into various studies on the researched topic and allows the reader to gain a deeper understanding of the impact that the aforementioned factors have on the development of an economically disadvantaged high achieving minority school.

Theoretical Framework

The various theories of Dewey, Piaget, constructivism, and Payne represent a shift in today's pedagogical hierarchy. Wagner (2011) called for seven survival skills for careers, college, and citizenship in the 21st century in a global society: (a) critical thinking and problem solving, (b) collaboration across networks, (c) leadership by influence, agility, and adaptability; (d) initiative and entrepreneurship, (e) effective written and oral communication, (f) access and analysis of information, and (g) curiosity and imagination (p. 41). It was important to revisit the theoretical theories that already existed. These past theories have allowed current educators and

administrators to implement plans to develop and sustain productive future citizens. Integrating Wagner's seven survival skill attributes may enable America to become competitive in the academic arena once again (Kolbe & Rice, 2012; McQuinn, 2012; Wagner, 2011). America's global success and dominance depends on our adaptation to a diversified society.

John Dewey

When one studies the teachings of Dewey, one notices a distinct correlation between the currently mandated 21st century classroom and the teachings of the great philosopher of 70 years ago. John Dewey, born October 20, 1859, was one of America's greatest philosophers. He became one of the 20th century's great educational reformers. His writings and beliefs evolved into what was the expectation of a highly functional educational environment. One of Dewey's beliefs was that an educator/teacher considered students' unique differences and their personal experiences when presenting the curriculum (Dewey, 1922, 2009). This belief kept him from embracing the educational arena, which he felt at the time was contrived and stifled students' creativity with its traditional approach to the school curriculum (Glanz, 2008).

One of Dewey's early works, *Experience and Education* (1922), described his fundamental philosophy, which stated that everything occurred within the social environment. He believed learning began with knowledge and the teacher organized that knowledge into logical pieces, then knowledge progressed into the integration of the already known with information learned, with the teacher serving as a facilitator (Dewey, 1922, 2009). This belief was the groundwork that may be found within most school improvement plans and is now a staple recipe for most Title I schools (Anyon & Greene, 2007). Dewey's beliefs are representative in the fabric of most modern-day school settings.

Another essential belief of Dewey's was that education was a social process. Dewey (1922, 2009) felt strongly that this process increased in the school setting. He encouraged the cultivation of social relationships that in turn, encouraged the connection between mature and immature individuals (Glanz, 2008). If properly maintained, these unions and the other aspects of the educational factions, increased in strength and durability (Fleener, 2000). In today's diverse classrooms, this principle merited extensive follow-up. Dewey (1922) also recognized the importance of one's experiences as the key to intelligent problem solving, which enables one to experience life aesthetically. In other words, one thinks critically through real world experiences, which should not be hindered by a curriculum. This ideal was the prelude to constructivism, another learning theory that is prevalent in many effective school plans of today.

Jean Piaget

Piaget was a constructivist, and his theory combined individual knowledge with learning at one's own pace (Powell & Kalina, 2009). Piaget identified four primary stages of development: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational and formal operational. The sensorimotor stage took place from birth to the appearance of speech. The preoperational stage included language ability, limited logic, and rational development and usually appeared from age four-nine years (Schmidt & Houang, 2012). The concrete operational stage happened when one experienced two or three dimensions simultaneously instead of successively. Finally, the formal operational stage occurred when the child formed hypotheses and possible consequences (Ojose, 2008). Piaget noted that these stages happened sequentially and all individuals went through each stage. This theory postulated that one had to be developmentally ready for the grasping of academic concepts (Ojose, 2008; Powell & Kalina, 2009). Piaget's theory was in line with the current expectations for a classroom, which was the idea that teachers accommodated and balanced the needs of individual students, yet kept pace with the curriculum for that grade level.

Teachers received professional development that aligned with the theories of Piaget and this meant that someone with the new common core curriculum introduced skills at an age appropriate level (Schmidt & Houang, 2012). Although these efforts were made, there was still a need for accountability and testing measurements to be put in place, which sometimes contradicted the efforts of age appropriateness. The educational sector evolved continuously to meet the needs and expectations deemed essential for American society.

Constructivism

Constructivism combined Piaget and Dewey's theories along with hands-on experiences that occurred when a student was progressively ready (Boghossain, 2006). The constructivist classroom contrasted with the direct instruction model. "In constructivism learning is a process of individually self-organizing knowledge" (Sheer, Noweski, & Meinel, 2012, p. 2).

Constructivism mandated that teachers focus on a reflective role in students in hopes of encouraging the evolution of students' problem solving and critical thinking skills (Iran-Neiad, 2001; Nagowah, 2009). Moreover, constructivism replaced the teacher as the center of knowledge, and learners used their experiences and understanding to guide the educational process (Boghossian, 2006). Constructivism provided a classroom that used cooperative learning groups, manipulatives, graphic organizers, and other student-centered strategies to improve progressive learning (Marzano, 2009). Constructivism was what teachers, principals, and the diverse educational system were implementing to increase success (Ultanir, 2012).

Ruby Payne

It is sometimes difficult to understand the complete dynamics of educating minorities. Ruby Payne, an educator and well known author, wrote several books that discussed, dissected, and suggested recommendations that assisted in the acceptance and education of children of poverty, which usually overrepresented minorities (Aikens & Barbrin, 2008; Baker & Johnston,

2010). Payne (2001) suggested that poverty was more complex than not having money, but was a completely different mindset of how daily activities were approached. If one wanted to educate children in a poverty-stricken environment, it was essential that the individual empathize with their constituents. This was only achieved with a basic understanding or framework, as Payne put it, as to another's way of life. Payne elaborated on how those who were deemed economically disadvantaged had altered rules, relationships, and overall values in comparison with those who were considered middle class or even wealthy. These divergent approaches toward thinking impaired the way children of poverty interpreted the rules and procedures of a school environment where the rules were based on a middle-class rules system. Consequently, there had been a middle ground where middle class values existed with some understanding of the economically disadvantaged mindset (Chenoweth, 2009; Marzano, 2004; Reeves, 2003; Schmoker, 2011). Payne did an excellent job of bringing this type of thinking to the forefront of education, which has revolutionized the new millennial classroom.

Related Literature

Although there was no doubt an overwhelming admittance by researchers, stakeholders and others in the educational community that there were specific concerns regarding both the achievement gap and the burdens of socioeconomic status (Reeves, 2009; Robertson, 2008; Sailes, 2008; Schmoker, 2011; Smith & Kearney, 2012), one may realize that the current strategies and techniques used at successful minority schools acknowledged the challenges in front of them. Not only did they not use the challenges as excuses, but they knew these were mere obstacles to overcome. It was obvious, as discussed in this literature review, that leaders, teachers, students and parents are accountable for our future. When researchers discussed the multiple complexities of a potentially successful academic minority setting, it became clear that there were various characteristics that worked in concert with one another and developed a solid

foundational structure that withstood multiple challenges (Stetson, 2013; Sudo & Shaunessy-Dedrick, 2013; Whitaker, 2012). Therefore, it is imperative that in an American society that grows more diverse daily, someone takes heed of this intricate blueprint and ensures that the American way continues into the next century.

Achievement Gap

America is a diverse country. This diversity encompasses the multiple complexities that contribute to the education of minority students. These complexities lead to what is often identified as the achievement gap. National test scores based on the National Assessment of Educational Program (NAEP) and SAT results measure the achievement gap that exists between racial and ethnic groups (Achieve et al., 2012; Aud et al., 2013). The statistics used establish a disparity between Hispanic/Latino, African American, and their Caucasian counterparts on mandated SAT/ACT scores and other state mandated reading and math tests (Farlie et al., 2014; "Naep 2012 trends," 2012). After the passing of the historic Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, the government freely admitted that there were inadequacies between the education of minorities and their Caucasian counterparts. Following this Act, there was a push to improve the educational system and a "leveling of the playing field" began with several other Acts aimed at the improvement of the available resources for minorities that increased educational opportunities, including Head Start and Title One programs. However, even after the implementation of the most comprehensive reform plan in educational history, No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2002), the statistics continued to show a gap in achievement for minorities (Stillwell & Sable, 2013). Specifically, there was a disparity of 16 points in reading among African American and Caucasian students and a difference of nine points for Hispanic/Latino and Caucasian students since 1971, yet these differences varied depending on the age of the students. Since 1971, the gap between 17-year olds in reading for African American students

has narrowed by 27 points and by 20 points for Hispanic/Latino students. Conversely, in math, Caucasian students continually scored 25 points higher than African American students, even though the gap has narrowed by 10 points. The gap for Hispanic/Latino students did not change even though they showed a 32-point gain since 1973 ("NAEP 2012 trends," 2012). Another study reported the achievement deficit remained substantially large, with gaps between five tenths and one standard deviation (Lee, 2002). Interesting enough, one study stated that advantaged parents had the expectation that their child would attend college, whereas children of less advantaged parents did not have this expectation (Baker & Johnston, 2010). Robertson's (2008) research indicated that by 2019, Caucasians would be twice as likely as African Americans and three times more likely than Hispanic/Latino Americans to hold college degrees. This type of information reinforced the idea that the achievement gap was a multilayered complication. One of the components of the multilayered obstacles regarding the achievement deficit was socioeconomic status.

Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic status (SES) is a major contributor to the achievement gap (Anyon & Greene, 2007; Aud et al., 2013: Davis & Oakley, 2013). The socioeconomic status of any population plays a vital role in that population's well-being. The fact that the socioeconomic status of many minorities is less than desirable has been well documented (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Faitar, 2011; Hill, Shannon, & Louis, 2013; Konstantoupoulos, 2009). Merriam-Webster (2013) defined *socioeconomic* as related to or involved in a combination of social or economic factors. Those influences include one's income, education, and occupation, (Morales, 2010; Robertson, 2008). Unfortunately, statistics continuously correlate low SES with low academic achievement, especially among minorities (Boykin &Noguera, 2011; Curry et al., 2016; Dufour & Marzano, 2011; Harris, 2007; Hill, Shannon, & Louis, 2013; Leyba, 2005). This trend may

then lead to lower graduation rates from high school, fewer minorities entering college, and even fewer who complete college and enter high demand jobs, such as those in the mathematics and science fields (Fairlie et al., 2014; Noguera, 2012; Wagner, 2011; Williams, 2003). Consequently, the cycle of continuous poverty has been repeated.

Studies have correlated a limited language skill acquirement with an economically disadvantaged environment (Aiken & Barbarin, 2008; Baker & Johnston, 2010). Language fails to develop in low poverty homes due to limited literature exposure, (e.g., books, magazines, newspapers) that are not present in the home (Payne, 2013). In addition, children who live in poverty are usually spoken to in command form most of the time. This means that most interactions consist of specific imperative statements that require minimal responses for children (Faitar, 2011). This lack of language communication decreases the acquisition of phonemic awareness, a basic requirement for reading skills (Leyba, 2005). Moreover, literacy practices vary in different cultures and may not correlate with school based practices that are implemented (Curry et al., 2016). In higher income educational environments children are spoken to implicitly, meaning that children are encouraged to explore language sounds. More time is spent acquiring basic phonemic skills in these environments (Pungello, et al., 2009).

SES has been identified as a major contributor to students of color who have not been "school ready." There are programs such as Head Start that combat such concerns. Head Start has been very successful in both the children's preparation for the transition to kindergarten and the identifying concerns, such as behavioral or emotional challenges, that hinder a child from being successful in kindergarten (Ludwig & Phillips, 2008). Staff in Head Start assist with such concerns and support parents in the accommodation of their child's needs before school begins (Malsch, Green, & Kothari, 2011). The cost of Head Start, $9,000 per child per year, in comparison to their overall success, is nominal (Murray & Naranjo, 2008). Children who attend

Head Start are more likely to complete high school and not be arrested and continue on to

college. Some studies even boasted a decrease in childhood obesity due to the program (Ludwig

& Phillips, 2008; Smith, 2012). Therefore, Head Start is a significant component in the battle

against poverty and its educational consequences (Gichuru, 2015; Malsch et al., 2011).

Although millions of students qualify for the Head Start program or a comparable pre-

kindergarten program, many do not attend (Baker & Johnston, 2010; McBay, 1989), which may

lead to students who enter kindergarten at-risk. Seedorf (2014) defined at-risk as in a state or

condition marked by a high level of susceptibility. In education, this translates to students who

have difficulty based on a test given at the entrance to a grade level. If a child takes the test and

scores within the range needed for qualification, early intervention program (EIP) services are

available in the areas of reading and math. The criteria needed for quality EIP services are

dictated by the benchmarks established for the specific grade level the child enters. EIP services

are available to students when they do not meet the county checklist criteria in kindergarten

through second grade and when students score below 800 on the CRCT test in reading and math

in grades three through five. The support provided in a small group setting takes place either

within the classroom or outside of the classroom (Georgia Department of Education, 2013). EIP

is another important element that aids in the reduction of the achievement gap and does not

enable SES to become a detrimental variable in a student's academic future (Chenoweth, 2009;

Marzano 2004, 2009).

SES is a factor in the success of students, specifically minorities. In the academic

setting, there are many programs that are in place that ensure the achievement gap narrows

(Hord, 2008). Head Start and other pre-kindergarten programs are available for parents of

students who meet the criteria leveled income requirement. Moreover, there are also school

programs that vary from county to county for early intervention in both math and reading.

Although EIP is not a program specifically geared for students who are economically disadvantaged, statistics have indicated that most students who have qualified were those who were on free or reduced lunch and were a minority (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008; Aud et al., 2013; Bird & Markle, 2012). These programs have been in place for several decades and have produced mixed reviews regarding their success in bringing students up to grade level (Greenwood & Kim, 2012). There are many who believe that the way to increase minority student achievement is through use of an explicit method, technique, or model. The education of minority students has several variables involved.

Educating the Minority

There are many models that have been used for minority education in a more effective environment. Some of these models include charter schools, magnet schools, and access to a rigorous curriculum. Charter schools emerged on the scene within the last two decades and in recent years have increased their existence substantially. In 1997-2002, there were around 2,000 charter schools; 10 years later more than 100 communities had at least 10% of their public-school students enrolled in charter schools (Almond et al., 2012). A featured characteristic of charter schools is their majority existence in urban dominance, which means most are located in urban areas. These urban charter schools' populations consist of minorities, specifically African Americans (Almond et al., 2012; Buendia, 2011; Hubbard & Kulkarni, 2009; Lee & Ready, 2009). The charter school phenomenon is popular with parents because they offer an alternative academic setting that typically includes a decrease in behavioral interruptions and increase in student motivation.

When one visualizes what is considered an urban area, there may be images of overcrowding, high poverty rates, and high crime rates. These images may be erroneous, but these are the pictures that the media and word-of-mouth descriptions disseminate to the

community and those who live outside of the community. Consequently, it may become a self-fulfilling prophecy for some who become adversely influenced by their environment, that in turn may affect their educational opportunities (Bird & Markle, 2012; Daily & Halle, 2011; Davis & Oakley, 2013). This complex environment, along with lack of parental support, increased class size, scarce resources, and limited empathy or understanding from administrators and teachers, lowers the chance for students to reach academic realization (Betters-Bubon et al., 2016; Dufour & Marzano, 2011; Morales, 2010; Payne, 2013; Reeves, 2009; Schmoker, 2011). There are many reasons why minority parents find the idea of charter schools alluring, since most offer alternative solutions to the aforementioned concerns.

Charter school definitions usually include some common characteristics. Davis and Oakley (2013) described a charter school as follows: "…They are usually organized by parents, school administrators or other organizations whose primary goal is to improve learning conditions for children regardless of the state of the neighborhoods that surround them" (p. 89). Charter schools usually have a more focused curriculum, reduced class size, and extended days or years (Angrist et al., 2012; Davis & Oakley; Lee & Ready, 2009). These characteristics help to eradicate the achievement gap that exists for minorities. Another quality that is appealing to parents, stakeholders and the community is the accountability factor for charter schools. The student outcome determines their success. If the outcome is bleak, so is the future of the school. Unfortunately, the bleak outcome at public schools continues in many instances, and there has been little change for many schools (Stetson, 2013).

There have been several very successful network charter schools noted in the literature. A network charter school operates like any other charter school except they are replicated in multiple urban areas. One of the most effective network charter schools is the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP). The KIPP design trains its principals and teachers and uses its own

curriculum. Although KIPP boasts about achievement gains, there is some skepticism, where researchers have stated that minority students chosen for the program would have been successful anyway (Angrist et al., 2012).

Charter schools are viable options, especially for those who live in an urban setting. Charter schools provide parents with a choice of a utopian setting where they envision lower class size, rigorous curriculum, and teacher leader professionals. This type of environment for parents, stakeholders, and community activists is needed for students to be more successful. The promises of a rigorous environment, smaller class sizes and teacher leader professionals are the very reasons charter schools are as popular as they are despite some discrepancy in the statistics (Georgia Department of Education, 2016). Thus, charter schools are one model used to help achieve minority success (Kolbe & Rice, 2012; McGuinn, 2011; Weiss, 2014).

Magnet schools are another alternative for academic success among minorities. Magnet schools came into popularity in the 1970s and established an increase of racial diversity while improving scholastic standards (Goldring & Smrekar, 2002; Hardesty, McWilliams, & Plucker, 2014;). Magnet schools, like charter schools, vary in their appearance and structure. Most magnet schools have characteristics such as a theme-based component, and an emphasis in math, science, technology or fine arts. Unlike charter schools, magnet schools are usually more diverse and have an elevated academic component, meaning that students are expected to maintain a certain GPA in exchange for continuation in the program. Moreover, most magnet programs have an underlying college preparatory curriculum (Hendrickson, Lohmeier, & Raad, 2012). Magnet schools also have a selection process that either requires students to be randomly chosen or to be involved in certain criteria, such as demonstrated talent or high scores on standardized tests. These schools in today's times are considered providers of excellence (Taggart & Shoho, 2013).

Magnet schools necessitate an emphasis in a specific area. The teachers recruited are usually veterans and are highly qualified in their area of expertise. Therefore, high expectations are the norm and parental involvement is expected (Bush et al., 2001; Hardesty et al., 2014). Administrative leadership at a magnet school is usually an individual who has had considerable success at other academic facilities and has likely been a pioneer in the academic field. Consequently, administrators are well prepared and have vast knowledge regarding how to keep staff, students, and parents motivated in order to ensure all students are ready for the next level (Goldring & Smrekar, 2002).

The students who attend magnet schools are typically motivated individuals who have a proven record of accomplishment in a highly focused academic career. Students are dedicated to their studies and take both a substantial workload (i.e., more than the required math or science courses) and advanced placement classes. Students also participate in community and extracurricular activities that prepare them for a college environment (Suldo & Shaunessy-Dedrick, 2013). The students selected for magnet schools are those who have a past record of excellent attendance at school and have had some type of parental support that has aided in their overall success in the program (Taggart & Shoho, 2013). It is important that students receive the support and resources needed to complete their program (Suldo & Shaunessy-Dedrick, 2013).

It is evident that magnet programs are a compelling alternative to a stellar education for minorities. Most who complete the program are successful in college and go on to graduate (Bush et al., 2001; Goldring & Smrekar, 2002; Suldo & Shaunessy-Dedrick, 2013). The teachers and administrators at magnet schools are veterans and highly qualified in their area, which guarantees a rigorous environment. Parents are actively involved and ensure that students are capable and motivated in their program (Bush et al., 2001). All of these factors make magnet

schools a viable option for improvement in the minority plight in education (Bush et., 2001; Hardesty et al., 2014; Taggart & Shoho, 2013).

Another way students increase their readiness for college and career opportunities are accelerated placement (AP) classes. AP courses originated in 1956 in only 104 schools; now there are 17,000 schools nationwide that offer AP classes (Suldo & Shaunessy-Dedrick, 2013). AP courses are defined as classes in certain subject areas that offer a more rigorous or "accelerated" course. They provide college credit to students who obtain a specified score on the AP exam taken at the end of the course (Clark et al., 2012). The AP course is weighed on a five-point scale, which gives students a boost in their GPA when taken with other high school courses.

AP courses are significant since students are selected to participate in them. The selection process for an AP course is simple, as it is usually based on teacher recommendations and previous class achievements. As a privilege and not a right, it is important for students to take this opportunity seriously. Researchers agree that students who take AP courses are more likely to maintain a "B" average their first year in high school (Clark et al., 2012; Walstad, 2013). Conversely, other studies have indicated that minorities are underrepresented in AP classes (Flowers, 2008; Hill 2013; Lee, R., 2002; Lee V., 2009). Initially, AP classes were only offered in magnet based or college preparatory schools, yet recently the disparity that existed among urban versus affluent schools and their AP course offering has diminished within the last decade (Suldo & Shaunessy-Dedrick 2013). AP classes enable minorities to attain the same advantages as their Caucasian counterparts. The criteria for selection for an AP class remains stringent and motivates students to continue their drive for excellence (Cattanack, 2013).

Positive long-term effects of the use of AP courses include the requirement that students must be avid learners. The bar is heightened, and expectations increased. Teachers are also held

to a higher standard. They are trained in a specific subject area in addition to having high qualifications. Administrators are also interested and motivated in more students who score well on the AP exam, which earns their school credit for a competitive and rigorous coursework standard (Aud et al., 2013; Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Dufour & Marzano, 2011). All of these factors ultimately lead students, especially minorities, to increase their success in college and thus their future wage earnings (Clark et al., 2012; Flowers, 2008; Suldo & Shaunessy-Dedrick, 2013; Walstad, 2013).

AP courses are often accessible within competitive high school environments that highlight college preparatory curricula. AP courses have been shown to benefit minority students, who in turn improve their overall academic goals. It is vital that all schools, especially those with high poverty and minority populations, continue to offer AP courses in the core subjects of math and science. These options lend opportunities for future wage-earning potential and college possibilities. AP courses are another component that grow the educational advancement of the minority student.

Teachers' Attitudes and Beliefs

Teachers' attitudes and beliefs are significant in the success of minority students. Research explicitly links the attitudes and overall practices of teachers to minority success (Betters-Boubon, Brunner, & Kansteiner, 2008, 2016; Hyun-Jun et al., 2008; Nadelson et al., 2012; Sosa & Gomez, 2012). Teacher attitudes were found to be correlational to beliefs that they had in regard to various minority groups. These beliefs led to lower expectations, prejudices based on stereotypes, or apathy due to lack of knowledge that regarded multicultural experiences and practices (Douglas, Lewis, Douglas, Scott, & Garrison-Wade, 2008; Nadelson et al., 2012).

It is difficult for teachers who are a non-minority to understand or empathize with a population that they have or have not encountered in their lifetime. As the minority population

has increased in most urban settings, development of a teacher workforce that has the skills and background knowledge is imperative to a conducive learning environment (Nadelson et al., 2012; Sosa & Gomez, 2012). Favorable academic environments include multicultural training as a top priority. Studies have indicated that students' self-efficacy improved significantly if a genuine teacher-student rapport was developed, which increased students' chances of self-resilience against various obstacles within and outside of school (Morales, 2010; Murray, 2008; Nadelson et al., 2012; Payne, 2013; Pickett, 2012; Sosa & Gomez, 2012).

Educators have significant influence over students and their overall academic gains. One avenue of influence is when educators form a rapport with students. This can begin when students complete an interest inventory at the beginning of the school year. Most student interest inventories include questions such as hobbies, favorite teams, extra-curricular activities, etc. (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Dufour & Marzano, 2011; Quigley, 2013). The building of rapport has been utilized as a building block for teachers' clarification of what motivated and interested students they educated and nurtured for a minimum of 180 days. A relationship of bonding between a minority student and teacher can increase their success in both classroom academics and overall self-resilience (Costigan, 2008; Nadelson et al., 2012; Sosa & Gomez, 2012). When educators are aware of the importance of establishing a relationship with students who demonstrate apathy toward their academics, teacher awareness can lead to a more productive learning environment (Bird & Markle, 2012).

Since the majority of teachers are not persons of color, the question remains what is the solution that will enable them to become more knowledgeable and empathetic toward minority students? Moreover, research has indicated that along with the economic disadvantages, a teacher's personal epistemology may be detrimental to a student's academic potential (Douglas et al., 2008). One way to ensure a teacher's epistemology did not interfere was to include

multicultural classes within teacher education training programs at various colleges and universities (Nadelson et al., 2012; Sosa & Gomez, 2012; Quigley, 2013). Early exposure to different cultures by preservice teachers assisted in preparing them for diverse learning environments.

Although professional development opportunities may be integral in shaping teachers who are more sensitive to students of color, there also needs to be follow-up observations and feedback to ensure these teachers are consistently using the strategies, techniques and practices learned. Additional resources such as social workers, counselors, and parent liaisons are also key components for creation of an optimal academic setting (Betters et al., 2016; Marzano, 2009; Nadelson et al., 2012; Reeves, 2009). Studies are clear; consistency is needed for students to increase their overall academic and long-term life goals (Achieve et al., 2012; Anderson et al., 2012; Hallinger & Murphy, 1987; Lee & Ready, 2009).

Teacher attitudes and beliefs have a significant effect on minority students' overall success in school (Angrist et al., 2012; Baker & Johnston, 2010; Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2013; Koth, Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2008). This information has influenced colleges and universities to include multicultural classes in their teacher education programs. Moreover, there is a concerted effort to recruit teachers of color because research has shown that this may be the best way for minority students to become academically successful by seeing someone who resembled themselves in front of the classroom (Lieberman et al., 2005; Martel, 2009; McBay, 1989; Noguera, 2012; Pickett, 2012). Despite best efforts, the ratio of minority teachers to the number of minority students serviced is not high, especially in urban environments (Aud et al., 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Not only do professional development opportunities need to be available, but administrators need to be cognizant of the needs of their staff. Other areas where professional development opportunities are needed include parent workshops such as

parenting classes for younger adults experiencing parenting challenges, or strategies and

techniques that are used at home to prepare students for standardized testing (Aikens & Barbarin,

2008; Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Cattanach, 2013; Jasis &Ordonez, 2012; Malsch, Green, &

Kothari, 2011). Principals need to develop forums where questions and concerns may be shared

within a comfortable environment for both parents and staff member (Nadelson et al., 2012;

Quigley, 2013). As schools become more diverse, hopefully the paradigm shift will continue the

assurance that all students are considered to be valuable human beings with unique attributes.

School Climate

There are multiple attributes that encompass an effective academic environment. One

variable that is often overlooked, but vitally significant, is school climate or culture. For the sake

of this literature review, culture and climate have the same definition. School climate is defined

generally as the beliefs, attitudes, social norms, and interactions of the teachers in relation to

students and vice versa (Aldridge & Ala'l, 2013; Bradshaw & Leaf, 2008; Sailes, 2008; Smith &

Kearney, 2012). Moreover, school climate has been shown to directly correlate with student

achievement (Osman, 2012). Research has shown that if students were comfortable with high

self-efficacy and positive teacher relationships, then the school climate was found to be positive

(Hord, 2008; Hyun-Jun Ssang-cheol & Sung-soo, 2008).

Multiple components are necessary to ensure a positive school environment. Several

studies have concluded that one key component of a healthy school environment was the

principal (Koth et al., 2008; Mehidinezhad & Mansouri, 2016; Osman, 2012). The principal is

responsible for the measure of the cultural needs of his/her school. For example, Handford and

Leithwood (2013) noted that the hiring of a parent liaison involved the community, as well as the

parents in the day-to-day activities of the school. Other researchers noted that the principal

wanted to ensure parents' access to newsletters and other media coverage in their native

language when a concentrated minority population existed (Osman, 2012; Sailes, 2008). Other studies have shown that the principal was instrumental in the creation of a professional learning community where collaboration was encouraged, teacher autonomy was promoted, and overall positive relationships were sustained (Koth et al., 2008; Smith, 2012). In each of these studies these factors were all set in motion by the school administrator.

Research has shown that it is evident that principals were extremely important in the development of the school climate; however, the teacher sets the climate in the classroom (Konstantopoulos, 2009; Peck, 2010). The teacher is the initiator of how a student feels about school and their success in school. As stated earlier, it is important that students with a minority background have some type of connection with their teachers (Aldridge & Ala'l, 2013). Students need to feel like they matter and that the teacher empathizes with their background and experiences, despite their own ethnic and cultural upbringing. Sosa and Gomez (2012) found that these feelings of familiarity and empathy were found when teachers' attitudes and beliefs played a crucial role in the development of student self- efficacy. Sosa and Gomez, along with other researchers, found that student self-efficacy directly correlated to student potential for academic achievement (Douglas et al., 2008; Nadelson et al., 2012; Sosa & Gomez, 2012). Research findings have indicated that the role of the teacher was fundamental in the setting of a positive or negative climate in the classroom and ultimately in the school (Aldridge & Ala'l, 2013; Kontantopoulos, 2009; Nadelson et al., 2012; Peck, 2010).

Although it has been shown that the principal and the teachers have pivotal parts in the shaping of the school and classroom climate, students are also a part of the equation. Peer pressure, school violence, and bullying all begin with students. These acts impede the learning atmosphere (Prothrow-Stith & Spivak, 2005). Most studies on this topic emphasized the peer pressure and bullying aspects of middle school environments (Johnson et al., 2012; Klein et al.,

2012). Rarely were students asked what their opinion was of the school environment; however, when given the opportunity, they were very open and honest (Hill et al., 2013). Students realized that climate affected their overall feelings of security and hindered daily attendance, which led to an eventual increase in dropout rates (Johnston et al., 2012; Prothrow-Stith & Spivak, 2005; Williams & Portman, 2014). When students were surveyed, it was evident that they were influenced by their relationships with teachers, which allowed them to share personal concerns, possible school violence situations, or experiences of peer pressure (Konold et al., 2016; Lieberman et al., 2005; Peck, 2010). Findings indicated that school climate factored into an increase in achievement. Students wanted to feel safe and significant. These aspects helped their concentration on the academic components of school and the building of a future self-reliance system (Johnson, Burke, & Gielen, 2012; Konold et al., 2016).

School climate is a significant factor in the success of any school. As evidenced in the literature, a positive school environment correlated with a positive relationship among teachers and students, as well as stakeholders and others who had an interest in the well-being of the school. Research also indicated principals were an essential component in ensuring that the school climate was amicable for students, teachers and parents (Betters-Bubon et al., 2016; Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2013; MacGregor, Mendel, & Watson, 2002). Principals also set the tone by their overall organization of the building, which included the outward appearance. Once the principal set the standard, teachers also worked to develop a safe and pleasant classroom environment where students were encouraged to share and develop affirmation of their existence (Mehidinezhad & Mansouri, 2016; Moos, 2009). Through this affirmation, students concentrated on their studies and even learned self-resilience that helped them deal with other problems outside of school (Faitar, 2011). These attributes are essential in any school

climate, especially in a school serving minorities where adverse outside factors occur frequently and may interfere with the learning environment (Spiro, 2013).

School Leadership

The accountability of schools, leaders and student achievement has significantly changed in the new millennium. Therefore, it is vital that administrators are properly trained to build relationships with students, staff and parents. In addition, leaders also must have significant knowledge of the curriculum, effective implementation of data, and management of daily operating procedures (Chenoweth, 2009; Dufour & Marzano, 2011; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Meng-Chun Chin, 2007; Morales, 2010). Administrators are required to possess the skills of management, facilitation, and delegation. All of these components necessitate assurance for an environment where teachers feel empowered, students feel welcomed, and parents and stakeholders feel respected (Handford & Leithwood, 2013; Spiro, 2013).

It is paramount that teachers and administrators have amicable relationships, which positively affect student achievement. Studies indicated that a fundamental characteristic that a leader needed was trust among their staff members (Dufour & Marzano, 2011; Moos, 2009; Noguera & Yonemura, 2006; Peck, 2010). Trust consists of various characteristics, such as competence, consistency, reliability, openness, respect, and integrity (Gerhart et al., 2011; Handford & Leithwood, 2013). Teacher morale and trust of their leaders have been linked with student achievement (Dufour & Marzano, 2011; Handford & Leithwood, 2013; Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Other researchers have noted that teachers aptly developed a sustainable relationship with their students if their association with school leadership was trustworthy and sound. This also created an atmosphere of security and success for students, which built a harmonious climate (Kohl et al., 2008; Sailes, 2008). Consequently, the influential affiliation

between teachers and administrators established advancement for all students, especially those of color (Dufour & Marzano, 2011; Kohl et al., 2008; Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

Although administrators have extremely busy schedules, effective school leaders establish rapport with students. Research has revealed that minority students who felt principals were involved in their daily lives had greater motivation, fewer discipline concerns and were less likely to drop out of school (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2013; Reitzug, West, & Angel, 2008; Spiro, 2013). These decisive variables determined if a student had an effective academic career. Sometimes school is the only environment that is a safe zone for students who encounter a host of pervasive challenges outside. These challenges involve poverty, an abusive family life (physically or mentally); or even gang related activities (Johnson et al., 2012; Klein et al., 2012). It is salient for the principal to set a culture where safety is a priority and help is readily available. This may be accomplished when a principal knows a student's name and is aware when their demeanor changes.

A principal's job is extremely demanding, as they are managers of the curriculum, stakeholders, and staff, among many other duties and responsibilities (Dufour & Marzano, 2011). If this demand was met, managing the curriculum, stakeholders and staff, principals effectively raised student achievement within a two to seven-month timeframe (Branch et al., 2013). Although teachers are extremely instrumental in a student's life, teachers only affect the students they teach. On the other hand, a principal ultimately affects every student in the building (Spiro, 2013). Consequently, it is essential that administrators possess solid leadership characteristics such as dedication, excellent communication skills, visionary abilities, and strong support and passion. These effective characteristics for school leaders will help to advance their school into a positive climate that eventually will become a high performing school. Administrators are responsible for balancing all the factors and needs of everyone associated with the school and for

creating a positive atmosphere. As one principal eloquently stated, "I'd much rather people (i.e.,

teachers) be stressed out over making sure kids learn what they know is the right thing to learn

rather than being stressed out over test scores. If we could ever get to where we just operate on

that all the other things would take care of themselves" (Reitzug et al., 2008, p. 707). Effective

leadership prominently factors into the development of an optimal learning environment for

minority students.

Curriculum

Schools essentially need an effective curriculum for student success. There has been a

long battle to develop a national curriculum and the day has finally arrived. In 2011, 46 states

adopted the common core curriculum for language arts and math, accomplished due to the

encouragement incentives offered by the Obama administration. Although it was a process that

began decades ago, the adoption of the core curriculum was not an easy process (Achieve,

College Summit National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Association of

Elementary School Principals, 2012; Schmidt & Houang, 2012; Watt, 2011). The main purpose

of the common core standard initiative was to combat students' poor academic performance

results based on international studies and overcome the increasing achievement gap among lower

socioeconomic and minority groups. Another significant purpose was the effect of the global

economic competition (Koretz, 2009; Watt, 2011). The consensus among policymakers was, if

implemented, a common curriculum would mean all students would receive a rigorous

education.

The National Association of Elementary School Principals established six standards they

deemed significant for precise application of the core curriculum. A synopsis of these standards

includes the monitoring of data, professional development provisions for teachers, the

understanding of the unique needs of the student population, and security that the parents and

stakeholders are supported in their role of a supportive cast for the students. These standards are in conjunction with the curriculum (Achieve, College Summit National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2012). Leaders in the educational arena have a challenging role in guiding the staff toward a more stabilized and viable educational outcome for all students. It is an enormous task to seek the professional learning needed to carry out the various standards for leaders. This commitment by administrators guarantees all students, including minority students, are provided a demanding college-career-ready course load, which in turn creates a more labor ready workforce.

Teachers have sustained a practical change in the curriculum and through NCLB all teachers must be highly qualified. Now with the common core curriculum, teachers have gone through professional development training, which entailed "unpacking the standards." This process involved teachers' participatory training, where they were expected to delve into the standards. This in-depth process gave teachers the ability to explain the standards' function and vertically align the standards with other grade levels. In this procedure, teachers grasped the need for the teaching of a certain standard and how it supports the overall curriculum (Anderson, Harrison, & Lewis 2012; Beach, 2011; Brown & Kappes, 2012). Along with unpacking the standards, follow-up professional development sessions ensured a more comprehensive understanding of the standards. This understanding was evidenced by teachers using the standards-based techniques and strategies with students in the classroom. One point was clear, teachers trained properly to capitalize on the optimal program set forth a new educational trend of excellence in the United States. Proper implementation of the common core standards helped ensure America's number one standing.

Marzano (2004) stated over a decade ago that a clear viable curriculum was necessary for any effective school setting. When the curriculum identifies learning objectives that are

followed at every grade level, it creates opportunities for success for all involved. Another important component encompasses a core curriculum where all teachers are trained, monitored, and evaluated on their understanding and performance of the program. Teacher evaluations are no longer typical check-off lists at various intervals during the year, but rather a series of in-depth observations that provide evidence-based feedback on what worked and on areas that needed improvement (Beach, 2011; Brown & Kappes 2012; Schmidt & Houang, 2012). Moreover, administrators are trained and properly prepared to lead their staff, and to seek the necessary resources that help to ensure everyone's success in meeting the needs of every student. Only then does a common core curriculum meet the standard reduction rate of the achievement gap and produce students who are college-career-ready for a globally diverse and competitive world.

Effective Practices

Once teachers are in place, along with administrators and a viable curriculum, effective teaching strategies, techniques, and accommodations must be put into place that meet the individual needs of every student. It has been made abundantly clear that U.S. classrooms have become more diverse, whether due to English Language Learners, a growing special education population, or a greater minority influx (Alvarez-Valdiia et al., 2012; Dufour & Marzano, 2011; Georgia Department of Education, 2013). Rote memorization practices no longer promise that students are appropriately educated. Teaching strategies and techniques such as graphic organizers, collaborative group settings, and performance based projects are the innovative opportunities allotted to students who do not respond well to lectures, discussions, and other traditional methods of teaching (Brown, 2011; Greenwood & Kim, 2012; Zollman, 2009). Additionally, in this age of media modalities and computer technology, instruction is presented through various technology practices (Curry et al., 2016; Zheng, Warschauer, Hwang, & Collins,

2014). These various techniques, strategies, and accommodations are put in place to ensure that students achieve their optimal potential (Gentry, 2016; Hill et al., 2013; Thomas & Green, 2015; Quigley, 2013).

There are many teaching techniques utilized for students to be more effective in their studies and achieve academic success. One such technique includes graphic organizers, which are applicable for all content areas. Graphic organizers assist students in the organization of ideas and concepts. Graphic organizers are displayed through symbols and other pictorial signs that aid in comprehension (Brown, 2011; Schmidt & Ralph, 2016; Zollman, 2009). Graphic organizers support all students in their learning; however, research indicates that they are particularly effective with minority students and students with disabilities (Dufour & Marzano, 2011; Harris, 2007; Marzano, 2001; Reeves, 2009). In today's diverse classroom, graphic organizers are used in multiple subject areas on a daily basis. Graphic organizers are just one of the many effective practices often seen in an academically sound environment.

Another frequently used effective teaching practice is collaborative groups, often called cooperative learning groups, jigsaw, paired-shared, class-wide peer tutoring, (CWPT), etc. These types of groups involve students working among themselves with specified roles while teachers facilitate. Studies have indicated that students often learn best from one another. If a methodical system of collaborative grouping is put into place, effective results are forthcoming (Martel, 2009; Marzano, 2009; Noguera & Wing, 2006; Robertson, 2008). Collaborative groups also allow students to experience a democratic setting where everyone has an equally important role and require the function of a team for the desired outcome. Collaborative groups can build self-esteem and motivation while at the same time acknowledge one's shortcomings in some areas. Moreover, collaborative groups encourage cooperation and emphasize the importance of appropriate communication among peers. These groups can also encourage mediation and

socialization skills (Bird & Markle, 2012; Daily, Burkhauser, & Halle, 2012; Martel, 2009).

Collaborative groups are the stepping stones to team building and group projects that occur in

everyday working environments.

Manipulatives are various tools commonly used in math and the sciences. They are

comprised of any object that may help explain a concept or further develop an idea (Iran-Neiad,

2001; Ojose, 2008; Peck, 2010). Manipulatives allow those students who are kinesthetic learners

the opportunity for exploration while learning (Boghossian, 2006; Dewey, 2009; Glanz, 2008).

Researchers have long agreed that manipulatives develop critical thinking and offer the

opportunity for students to define the learning process more definitively. Effective processing

takes place when more is involved other than lecture and note taking (Gentry, 2016; Schmidt &

Ralph, 2016; Thomas & Green, 2015; Quigley, 2013; Zheng et al., 2014). Present day

classrooms have manipulatives as a staple strategy in dynamic instructional practices regardless

of demographics or economic status.

In today's 21st century pedagogical environment, media and computer technology have

also taken on an important role. There are many types of media and computer technology that

are utilized in the classroom (Curry et al., 2016; Hatten, 2012; Padron et al., 2012;). One type of

medium embraced is the short educational video, many of which may be found on the Discovery

educational website. This medium exhibits videos based on studied concepts (e.g., the Pilgrims,

the Civil War, or any famous or infamous individual in history). There are also science

experiments that have been reviewed and followed. Videos allow students who are auditory and

visual learners more access, while the teacher flexibly paces the lesson to the students' needs.

The emergence of STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) has also produced

innovative programs for students to enhance their book lessons (Educational Discovery, 2014;

Zheng et al., 2014). Computer technology has vastly improved within the last decade, in which

teachers may access multiple websites that incorporate many types of enticing vignettes for the students' learning interests. Moreover, game related activities used as immediate assessment determinants offer immediate feedback on student understanding. These two engaging practices enhance a sound curriculum carried out by teachers who are knowledgeable about the needs of their students; all these variables increase the probability of improved student achievement, especially among minorities (Chiarelli, Szabo, & Williams, 2015; Payne, 2013; Pickett, 2012; Schmoker, 2011).

Many types of effective teaching practices are implemented during the school year. Usually these practices are disseminated to teachers during what is referred to as professional learning. In addition, successful districts consider themselves professional learning communities (PLCs). Professional learning communities possess several, or all the following factors: "…supportive and shared leadership, shared values and vision, collective learning and application, shared personal practice, supportive conditions" (Jones, Stall, & Yarbrough, 2013, p. 2). For teachers and administrators, PLCs identify, implement and practice research-based strategies, techniques, and models that apply to their environment (Gormley & McDermott, 2014; Jones et al., 2013; Von Frank, 2009). For example, a PLC was very helpful in an urban population where most teachers did not have the required knowledge base that effectively educated their students of color. The PLC environment promised that time was spent in the training of the staff, of the facilitating follow-up, feedback, and the opportunity to address concerns and share successes (Douglas et al., 2008; Pickett, 2012). These vital components permitted an effective academic environment for students. "Thus, the professional learning community supports the school's purpose, high-quality student learning" (Hord, 2008, p. 13).

Effective teaching practices exist in many forms: graphic organizers, collaborative groups, computer technology, media modalities, and entire PLCs (which encompass a host of

model practices). These effective practices, when accurately implemented and when appropriate training and ongoing assistance are made available, can make a significant difference for minority students (Smith & Kearney, 2012; Sosa & Gomez, 2012; Sprio, 2013; Quigley, 2013). The use of pictorial symbols, organizational tools, and manipulatives address the various modalities/intelligences that children of color have. Therefore, it is more authentic to use performance-based evaluations, such as the building of a model, the acting out of a skit, the singing of a song, or a combination of these approaches. This type of creative teaching expands critical thinking and empowers students to own the material that has been presented (Witiziers et al., 2003; Zollman, 2009). Furthermore, when one develops various modalities to allow students to comprehend a concept, it adds real world tangibility to the lesson.

Parent Involvement

Parent involvement is a vital component of an overall effective learning environment. Various definitions explain exactly what parent involvement refers to, but for this discussion the following six characteristics explain it:

- Parenting—parents' expectations and attitudes that regard education.

- Communicating—communication between home and school that involves school programs and student progress.

- Volunteering—parental help during school events or activities (e.g., field trips, concerts, sports teams).

- Learning at home— monitoring and assisting with school related tasks (e.g., homework); registration in extracurricular academic or arts programs.

- Decision making—involvement in parent-teacher organization or high level educational committee.

- School and parent collaborations with the community (Alvarez-Valdivia, Chavez, Schneider, Roberts, Becalli-Puerta, Perez-Lujan, & Sanz-Martinez, 2012, p. 315).

These six guidelines act as a framework that posit the question as to why there is such a significant decline in parent involvement among minority schools.

Parent involvement has always been notoriously low in urban minority settings for several reasons. Four main themes that have emerged from multiple studies include time poverty, lack of financial resources, access and awareness (Alvarez-Valdivia et al., 2012; Cattanach, 2013; Williams & Sanchez, 2011, 2012). Since these indicators have been identified as significant in the promotion of achievement among students of non-color, it is imperative to consider each of these in more detail (Frew, Zhou, Duran, & Benz, 2012; Jasis, 2012; Williams & Sanchez, 2011, 2012).

Time poverty is defined as a parent who lacks the availability for participation in their child's education. Time barriers mainly apply to working two or three different jobs or shifts that are not conducive to school scheduling. In addition, other barriers may include the care of other children or a substance abuse issue (William & Sanchez, 2011). Conversely, non-minority parents usually have an increased socioeconomic status, which gives their children an edge by having parent(s) who actively assist with homework, attend parent-teacher conferences, and join parent-teacher organizations. These opportunities are readily available due to economic stability of a dual income household or a parent who may have a more flexible work schedule. This barrier of time poverty becomes evident when one examines and compares the grade point averages, test scores, or college admittance records of non-minorities and minorities (Aud et al., 2011; Stillwell & Stable, 2013). For example, some differences between minorities and non-minorities was the amount of time spent in the completion of college forms or the multiple

applications completed by students. Time poverty continues the cycle of generational economic stagnation.

Unfortunately, even with Title I funding, monetary assets continue to be a significant factor. Lack of financial resources is also a barrier to parent involvement. Williams (2011), when surveying parents, found that minority parents avoided school personnel because of their insufficient funds for field trips or other extracurricular fees. Parents perceived their insufficient funding concerns prohibited them from any opinions or participation in any other school activities (Williams, 2011). Parents' obvious shame or embarrassment further alienated them from school officials (Payne, 2013; Williams, 2012). Lack of financial resources did deter parents from being involved with school activities. This barrier of parent perceptions was one that hopefully may be easily rectified.

Lack of access to school is another hindrance that has been identified. Parents are not able to get to school due to lack of transportation, or else the hours of scheduled school events may not be favorable to a parent who works during the day. Likewise, sometimes the physical structure may not be accommodating to those with disabilities (Williams, 2011). These factors are just a few of the factors that have impeded a parent who was involved in their child's daily learning regimen.

The last cause discussed as a hindrance was lack of awareness. This included parents' non-awareness of any events that took place at school, including the distribution of progress and report cards, along with any other policy or procedural information. The problem lies in the fact that most communication is left to the student (Williams, 2011). Further, because of the increased mobility and overall instability experienced in a poverty ridden minority environment, communication is limited and rarely updated (Payne, 2013; Williams, 2011, 2012). This leaves

parents in the dark about activities at school, which translates to non-participation on their part. This cause poses a significant challenge for both the school and parents who want change.

Parent involvement is a multi-faceted variable and various studies have provided evidence of its importance (Cattanach, 2013; Payne, 2013; Williams & Sanchez). Yet, researchers have also pointed out the decisive hindrances that occurred for most minority parents regardless of their child's placement in elementary or secondary (Aud et al., 2011, Stillwell & Stable, 2013). These challenges have not been met with clear and sustainable solutions that afford minority students the same advantages adhered to by their more affluent counterparts. Only then will the achievement gap decline and the overall minority achievement increase.

Summary

The effectiveness of a minority school is based on the many attributes discussed within this literature review. Schools that possess a strong and knowledgeable leadership base that do not allow divergent teacher attitudes or beliefs to interfere with the core curriculum presented to students will be effective for minority students (Bird & Markle, 2012; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Mehidinezhad & Mansouri, 2016; Walter, 2015). There is a cognizant awareness of the most productive and engaging teaching practices best utilized for optimal student achievement. The implementation of these teaching practices through professional development opportunities coincides with frequent evaluations and feedback. Through these venues teachers can increase their awareness of the pros and cons of effective teaching practices within a minority setting (Greenwood & Kim, 2012; Harris, 2007; Hill et al., 2013). These attributes create a positive school climate that ultimately increases student motivation and self-efficacy, which in turn leads to more rigor in the curriculum and overall student success in post-secondary opportunities (Kinold et al., 2016; Osman, 2012; Peck, 2010; Pungello et al., 2009; Reeves, 2009).

The review of the literature presented the factors that are necessary for success in a minority based setting. In addition, it discussed the implementation of such influences and evaluated the recommendations that minority schools offered. Regardless of the demographic make-up, the final goal involves all schools that exude high student achievement. Ultimately, the pedagogical system began the development of a framework that changed the face of education as we know it.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Overview

The problem in the current school environment in the United States is that the achievement gap continues to grow among the African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Caucasian population of students. Students are not prepared for today's diverse American society, and continue to fall behind most other countries such as China and Norway (Meng-Chun Chin, 2007; Wagner, 2011). This decline is significant since the diversity of the nation continues its growth exponentially each year (Wagner, 2011; Williams, 2003). This persistent issue has propelled multiple laws, practices, and curriculum changes (ARRA, 2009; Elementary and Secondary Education Act 1965; Every Student Succeeds Act 2015; The National Commission of Excellence, 1984; NCLB, 2002;). As the United States looks for answers to this growing epidemic, it is vital that we delve into research and analyze those schools that are successful, especially those comprised of a diverse population.

This chapter presents the research design, which was a qualitative collective case study supported by analysis of pertinent documents, observations, surveys, interviews, and focus groups within several school-based settings. The descriptions of the school sites include demographics, geographical location, and the participant population. The procedures for the collection and analysis of the data from the surveys, focus groups, and interviews are described. The data coding process, based on the method commonalities reported by Bogden and Biklin (2007), Creswell (2013), Merriam (2009), and Yin (2009) is also explained. The names of the three schools, their administrators, selected students, parents, and all staff members have been changed to protect the confidentiality of those involved.

The chapter explains in detail the research design and why it was selected, as well as how the participants were chosen. This chapter also describes each of the instruments and documents

that were used to collect the data and develop a rich in-depth narrative analysis of the three bounded systems. I examined the documents and instruments by using a coding system that correlated with words and phrases consistently referenced within the theoretical framework and literature review. After assertions and themes were developed for each bounded system, a cross analysis was completed to obtain the overall themes.

Design

Qualitative research was defined by Merriam (2009), as "how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (p. 13). Creswell (2013) defined qualitative research as "a process that flows from the philosophical assumptions to interpretive lens and on to the procedural process" (p. 44). I observed the participants from various perspectives in a natural setting as part of the qualitative design. A qualitative design best fit the explanation for the factors that allowed for a successful minority high achieving school. After I had decided to use this type of design, further attributes determined the specific type of qualitative design applied (i.e., the case study).

A case study was chosen because it is the most effective design used for the gathering of results that may be replicated in other settings. According to Yin (2009), a case study involves the study of a case within a real-life contemporary context or setting. Moreover, this study examined the phenomenon of high achievement in a clearly bounded system. A case study also uses multiple sources of data, such as observations, interviews, audiovisual materials, documents, and reports. When I used multiple data sources, this allowed themes to emerge and thus strengthened the trustworthiness of the study (Creswell, 2013). Although a case study was initially selected, I implemented a collective case study that further increased credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Yin, 2009).

I viewed the collective case study as the best choice for my specific research design based on the universal solutions the study demonstrated. I used multiple settings and looked for common factors across cases that enhanced the transferability of the study. One case study diminished the capacity for exploration with the argument in-depth, whereas a multiple or collective case study proved substantial (Yin, 2009). The purpose of the study uncovered the common qualities that comprised a high achieving minority school. Moreover, I wanted to discover the common characteristics found among elementary, middle and high school settings. Lastly, I felt that a collective case study would provide significant data that would benefit other schools, counties and districts who were experiencing growth in their diverse student population.

An important consistent understanding within the framework of the study involved the definitions of a minority and an economically disadvantaged student. For this study, the combined percentage for the minority populations of Hispanic/Latino Americans and African Americans was 80% or more. To be considered economically disadvantaged, the percentage was also at 80% or more of students with free and reduced lunch status. This high percentage demonstrated the extreme deficiencies that were usually prevalent in this type of environment. The characteristics of a high achieving, high minority, and low socioeconomic school were examined in the school sites chosen. The set characteristics included "a focus on academic achievement, clear curriculum choices, frequent assessment of students with multiple opportunities for improvement, an emphasis on non-fiction writing and collaborative scoring of student work" (Reeves, 2003, p. 2). The school measured successful as based on the annual Georgia (CRCT) or the (GHSGT). The test has been aligned with the Georgia Performance Standards/Common Core Standards. The researcher gathered scores from students in the third, fifth, eighth, and eleventh grades for three consecutive years.

Research Questions

The following central research question and its accompanying guiding research questions informed the study.

Central Research Question: What were the unique characteristics of schools (high school, middle, elementary) with high achieving minority student populations?

Guiding Question 1: What was the role of teachers in schools with high achieving minority students?

Guiding Question 2: What was the role of administrators in schools with high achieving minority students?

Guiding Question 3: What was the role of students in schools with high achieving minority students?

Setting

The study took place in three schools that were in a suburban area outside of the largest city in the state of Georgia. The school system was one of the largest districts in the metropolitan area. There had been several changes that were difficult for the staff members. The loss of a tax base decreased the school budget to where the county worked with less workforce and thus greater demands on those who were still employed. The demographics had recently changed for some schools from a less suburban area to a more urban atmosphere. The researcher sent an informal request to the schools and asked permission to conduct the initial research. The researcher adhered to the county protocol and received permission from the supervisory personnel to conduct the study.

The three schools that were selected for the study exhibited the overall shift in the county where student achievement had been increasing. The county had experienced multiple

leadership changes within the past decade and had also implemented many mandated curriculum programs. Despite the district's changes, individual administrators remained true to the final goal of student achievement. Common qualities existed among each of the settings, notwithstanding their unique features that defined them as an elementary, middle or high school setting. The following sections elaborate on the unique qualities of each site.

School E (Elementary School)

The elementary school had approximately 1,000 students. The gender make-up of the school included a student population of 50% male and female. The school's free and reduced lunch percentage was 96%. The school's ethnicity was comprised of 1% Asian, 5% Caucasian, 11% Hispanic, 83% African American, and 4% multi-racial. The population included 12% identified for special education services, 6% identified for English Language Learner services, and 8% identified for early intervention programs.

There were three female administrators who served the school. The building had approximately 59 certified staff members who served grades pre-kindergarten through grade five. The student-teacher ratio was 23 to 1.

School M (Middle School)

The middle school had approximately 700 students. The gender make-up of the school included a student population of 47% male and 53% female. The school's free and reduced lunch percentage was 94%. The school's ethnicity was comprised of $\leq$ 1% Asian, 4% Caucasian, 8% Hispanic, 83% African American, and $\leq$ 1% multi-racial. The population consisted of 11% identified for special education services, 4% identified for English Language Learner services, and 18% identified for alternative educational programs.

Two administrators served the school; a male principal and a female assistant principal. The building had approximately 50 certified staff members who served sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. The student-teacher ratio was 14 to 1.

School H (High School)

The high school had approximately 1,400 students. The gender make-up of the school included a student population of 49% male and 51% female. The school's free and reduced lunch percentage was 90%. The school's ethnicity was comprised of 3% Asian, 4% Caucasian, 12% Hispanic, 77% African American, and 4% multi-racial. The population included 12% identified for special education services, 4% identified for English Language Learner services, and 8% identified for remedial educational programs.

Three administrators served the school; one female principal with two male assistant principals. The building had approximately 85 certified staff members who served ninth through twelfth grades. The student-teacher ratio was 27 to 1.

<div align="center">

Participants

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This collective case study used purposeful sampling, where "The investigator wants to discover, understand and gain insight therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). This type of sampling is the most popular among qualitative case studies (Merriam, 2009, Yin, 2009).

There were several steps that comprised how the participants were selected. All staff members and administrators in the three schools were invited to participate in the survey. I also observed 10 willing teachers from each grade level in grades three, five, eight, and eleven. The number of teachers observed did not exceed 10 at any given site because I kept the notes manageable for myself. When I selected the participants for the interviews and focus groups, I

based my selections on the common themes that emerged from the observation protocols and survey results.

A collective case study design by definition includes a minimum variation sampling procedure that requires descriptions from multiple perspectives (Creswell, 2013). This type of sampling also enables differentiation among criteria in advance of the study. For example, each setting was different because of the students who attended each school. The commonalities among the elementary, middle and high school included their identities as Title I schools, an African American population over 50% and a Hispanic/Latino population of 5%, and a student achievement percentage of at least 80% or higher on specified mandated state tests.

Administrators/Certified Staff

All principals, assistant principals, administrative staff, and teachers were invited to participate in the study at each of the three schools. Voluntary participation from the principal of the school, the administrative staff, the assistant principal(s), and any other staff members occurred at an 80% response rate. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended sampling until a point of redundancy or saturation occurs, so 80% was the litmus test. The age, gender, and ethnicity were not factors in the participant pool selection; however, stipulation of an overpopulated pool of female and African Americans existed due to the location of the study. Females dominate the field of education, thus most of the participants were female. This study was conducted outside of a metropolitan area that had a 50% African American population (Census Bureau, 2012), so the number of African American participants was higher than the national average of 7% (Aud et al., 2013).

Students

Students were selected by their availability and willingness and with approval from their parents. The age for students was based on the chronological age expectancy for the third, fifth,

eighth, and eleventh year in school. The participant pool selected an even ratio percentage of girls to boys per the make-up of each school. For example, if the school ratio was 60% girls and 40% boys, then the participant pool was modeled respectively. The focus group consisted of six to 10 students for each school. The make-up of the group modeled the ethnicity of the overall population as a result of the formula applied for the gender consistency of the focus group. The researcher assigned each student with a pseudonym in order to protect confidentiality.

Procedures

The procedure for gaining permission from Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) along with Research Review Board approval within the metropolitan area school district began with a compilation of various schools that fit the criteria utilized for this study. These data were obtained by accessing the Georgia Department of Education website where assessment scores for all schools were located. Once schools were identified that fit the criteria, the initial step included seeking approval from the county. Each school district had time frames and research regulations that were followed. The process took over six months and required repetition. Meanwhile, I continued with the IRB process and received provisional pending approval from one school district in October of 2014.

After two denials, district approval was granted along with permission from the three participant schools in June of 2015. I visited with the principals over the summer and described the research plan to each. I asked for the names of the benchmark grade level Chairs and immediately reached out to these individuals at the beginning of the school year. My plan consisted of completion of all facets of the study one school at a time. I contacted the two benchmark grade level Chairs at the elementary school, and within two weeks I met with both teams and gave a brief synopsis of my study, passed out consent forms, and gave surveys to those who returned the forms at the meeting. One team was very efficient, and we set up

observation schedules and a focus group time. This procedure was repeated throughout each bounded system. All three sites had two administrators who participated in the survey. Eight teachers from each bounded system participated in the focus group and a pair of students from each of the two sites contributed. One site did not have students participate.

Data were collected simultaneously as observations were completed. Because of the limited participation, some participants engaged in the focus group without being observed. This provided a wider perspective and in-depth look at the current culture that existed at each bounded system (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). The interviews and observations gave validity to the idea that replication was possible. The multiple uses of instruments provided a triangulation that allowed a more trustworthy and valid study. I also painted a vivid picture of the characteristics that continuously appeared throughout the various documents, observations, surveys, and interviews that had been conducted. The notes were member checked during the focus group session as I repeated each answer for assurance that the true meaning was captured. The transcription for all of the focus group and interview sessions were handled by an online company that guaranteed confidentiality and accuracy.

The Researcher's Role

As the researcher, I was biased due to the fact I had been an elementary teacher for 12 years. Moreover, my educational experiences as a student had a significant impact on how I approached my profession. I had a very negative introduction to math, in which I struggled most of my elementary and secondary career. My struggle was attributed to the fact that manipulatives were not utilized and rote memorization was emphasized. In retrospect, my belief was that I relied on kinesthetic learning as one of my essential modalities and I regretted that I had received no benefits from manipulatives, graphic organizers, and other learning mechanisms. Therefore, these were techniques and strategies I expected to see in a classroom. These

expectations generated my subjective opinions about what should occur within an elementary, middle or high school setting. Even though my educational background as a student included some negative experiences, my experience in the classroom and knowledge about objectivity did not interfere with the study. As the researcher, I was a non-participant observer who used the observational tools specifically designed and utilized during the training I received in both a teacher support specialist endorsement class and during an observational class I attended during the summer of 2013. This skill set enhanced my recognition of the effective instructional aids discussed in the literature review.

I had a relationship with all of the principals at the three schools, and the schools fit most of the criteria established for high achieving schools in the literature (Chenoweth, 2009; Dufour & Marzano, 2011; Marzano et al., 2001; Reeves 2003, 2009). One of the principals had won state accolades and county nominations for their outstanding job of turning a failing school into a school of excellence. Moreover, this principal was one of the reasons I felt this research was needed.

Data Collection

Data collection began in 2015 when IRB approval was granted by Liberty University and permission was obtained from the county where the research took place. Moreover, individual permission from staff members, students and the students' parents was granted. Data were collected when I reviewed important documents, conducted observations, administered surveys, conducted interviews, and facilitated focus groups. All these data collection methods served to increase the validity and relationships among the characteristics needed for a school of high achievement in a low economic, high minority populated environment. These data measurements produced a pattern that identified the various factors that were widespread

throughout the administration and certified staff members. These distinctive qualities ultimately transcended into progress among the student population based on previously reviewed research.

Document Analysis

The important documents analyzed included the following: (a) school improvement plan from school years 2008-2011, (b) Title I parent agreement letter from school years 2012-2015, (c) CRCT scores over the past three years from school years 2008-2011, (d) graduation scores over the past three years in eleventh grade from school years 2008-2011, (e) PTO membership percentage of parents over the past three years from school years 2008-2011.

These documents provided further documentation of the qualities that existed within a minority based, economically disadvantaged high achieving school. All these documents were accessed through the public county/state website, school records that were not deemed confidential, or the parent liaison located in each building.

The school improvement plan. The school improvement plan was divided into four goals. One goal dealt with improved math and science achievement; it earmarked the activities that had been used, what standards each of the activities met, the date when the activity took place, and the participants in each of the activities. The remaining goals targeted improved reading comprehension, promoted positive recognition and good behavior, and strengthened family and community involvement. Marzano (2004) wrote, "The lack of parental and community involvement could hinder the learning process which leads to a decrease in student efficacy which may correlate with achievement" (p. 9).

The Title I parent letter. The Title I parent letter gave detailed information to parents about the expectations of the school, the programs available for parents, and the role of the parent in the school. The letter specifically identified the modes of communication used, which included parent conferences, newsletters, parent connect phone calls, workshops, the school

website, and the educational channel. The school coordinated both parent involvement programs and activities. The letter involved parents who immediately participated in the planning of their child's future.

The CRCT Scores. The CRCT scores stemmed from the criterion referenced competency test that had been state mandated for first through eighth grades since the implementation of NCLB. The CRCT was only given in grades two through eight. This test confirmed if teaching of the given curriculum had been successful in the grade level based on state standards (Georgia Department of Education, 2013).

The Georgia High School Graduation Test (GHSGT). The GHSGT was used for students who sought a Georgia high school diploma. This test pinpointed the students' overall skills and concepts learned during their high school tenure. It also identified students' areas of weakness in case additional support had been giver prior to graduation. Those students who entered ninth grade in the 2011-2012 school year only needed a pass for the writing exam, but this change did not affect the data collected because the 11th-grade scores were analyzed from the 2008-2009, 2009-2010, and 2010-2011 school years. Students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs) received appropriate accommodations. Students who did not pass all the required tests had multiple opportunities for additional instruction, and they re-tested before the spring of their 12th-grade school year (Georgia Department of Education, 2013). These two assessments were utilized at the elementary and secondary level in order to measure consistent testing tools for valid and reliable outcomes.

The PTO membership. The Parent Teacher Organization involved parents at the basic level. This organization was a volunteer organization comprised of parents with the goals of encouraging teachers and students, community involvement, and welfare to students and

families. Membership dues provided monies for nominal activities, such as teacher appreciation week, administrators' and secretaries' days, and any other student funding the school needed.

Observations

I observed certified staff members using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS, Appendix A). Leadership has an identifiable set of skills and abilities that are available to everyone (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Observations were scheduled and pended administrative and teacher approval. I observed at varying times of the day because I wanted a holistic picture of consistent, effective teaching and leadership practices. Each observation lasted between 20-40 minutes and occurred at least once for each staff participant.

Survey

The Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS, Hallinger & Murphy, 1987) measured the perceptions of the staff and administrators regarding leadership roles and their relationship to student achievement (Appendix F and G). I was granted permission from the publisher for use of this instrument (Appendix K). This survey was validated in several studies as a reliable instrument that identified three dimensions of a principal's position, including instructional leadership, management of an instructional program, and promotion of the school environment. The survey uses a Likert scale scoring system and determines the mean score of the principals in each of the recognized categories. The data from this tool provided valuable, descriptive information about leadership and answered the central research question regarding the characteristics of high achieving, economically disadvantaged minority schools.

Interviews

Interviews with participating students and teachers were used because Yin (2009) described them as insightful. The interview process allowed for an in-depth analysis of the data already collected (Appendices L, M and N). The sample included one teacher from the eight

participants in the teachers' groups and one student from the two-person student groups. The

teacher interview questions were semi-structured based on the results of the survey and the

individual teacher observations. Student interviews were based on the return of the parent

consent form. All emailed interviews were completed at the participants own pace and enabled a

more thought-provoking examination of their initial responses

Table 3.1

Research (RQ) and Interview Questions (IQ)

Research Questions	Administrators	Teachers	Students
RQ1: What was the role of teachers in schools with high achieving minority students?	IQ1: What were your current/prior experiences with Hispanic/Latino and the African American community?	IQ1a: What were your current/ prior experiences with Hispanic/Latino and the African American community?	IQ1b: What can you remember about people that are different from you?
	IQ2: How do your own background experiences affect your interactions with students, parents and staff?	IQ2a: How do you use your own background experiences in the classroom?	IQ2b: What do you use that you have learned at home or in school to get along with everyone?
	Q3: How do you establish a rapport with staff, students and parents?	IQ3a: How do you establish a rapport with your students?	IQ3b: How do you try and get along with your teachers?
RQ2: What is the role of administrators in schools with high achieving minority students?	IQ4: What are some of the most effective strategies and techniques you have observed in the classroom?	IQ4a: What are some of your teaching strategies and techniques you use in the classroom?	IQ4b: What have teachers done this year or in the past that really helped you learn better?
RQ3: What is the role of students in schools with high achieving minority students?	IQ5: How are you ensuring students are college-career ready?	IQ5a: How do you get students college-career ready in your classroom?	IQ5b: What can you do to become an independent working adult while at school?
	IQ6: What do you do to enlist parent involvement?	IQ6a: How do you enlist parent involvement?	IQ6b: What would you like your parent/guardian to do to help you while in school?

Research Questions	Administrators	Teachers	Students
RQ3: What is the role of students in schools with high achieving minority students?	IQ5: How are you ensuring students are college-career ready?	IQ5a: How do you get students college-career ready in your classroom?	IQ5b: What can you do to become an independent working adult while at school?
	IQ6: What do you do to enlist parent involvement?	IQ6a: How do you enlist parent involvement?	IQ6b: What would you like your parent/guardian to do to help you while in school?

Research has indicated that people of color have been epitomized as economically disadvantaged (Aud et al., 2011; Davis & Oakley, 2013; Payne, 2013). Interview questions one and two were selected because of the over-representation of minorities in economically challenging environments that has been linked to students identified as at-risk once they entered a school setting. This belief was based on statistics that demonstrated the deficit between middle class children and their economically disadvantaged counterparts when they entered kindergarten (Anyon & Greene, 2007; Costigan, 2008; Daily et al., 2011; Greenwood & Kim, 2012).

In addition, interview question two correlated with statistics that led to low expectations by educators, specifically those who did not share the same ethnic background as the students the educator served. Studies have further pointed out that teachers had developed a sense of hopelessness when they implemented effective strategies/techniques in this type of environment (Nadelson et al., 2012; Payne, 2013; Sosa & Gomez, 2012). Many factors have caused these feelings of hopelessness and frustration, such as the lack of exposure to minorities or prejudices from previous experiences (Angrist et al., 2012; Baker & Johnson, 2010; Branch et al., 2013).

Interview question three was based on findings that attributed to the overall school climate, along with positive adult relationships that fostered a successful academic environment

for the student population (Aldridge & Ala'l, 2013; Bradshaw & Leaf, 2008; Osman, 2012;

Sailes, 2008; Smith & Kearney, 2012). The teacher relationship has been shown to play a key

role in the development or sustaining of self-efficacy, especially among minority students

(Payne, 2013; Sosa & Gomez, 2012). Another important factor that was enhanced for minorities

and economically disadvantaged students was their self-reliance system (Johnson, et al., 2012;

Koth et al., 2008). Wagner (2011) found that the characteristics of self-reliance and self-efficacy

complemented students with their future education and ultimately helped make them college-

career ready.

Interview question four was posed because of the literature findings that supported

effective strategies and techniques, which were essential in the success of all students,

specifically those of color (Chenoweth, 2009; Faitar, 2011; Hill et al., 2013). Various teaching

strategies and techniques that enhanced Gardner's (1983) multiple intelligence theory included

the use of graphic organizers, manipulatives, collaborative groupings, and technological

apparatuses (Bird & Markle, 2010, 2011; Iran-Neiad, 2001; Marzano, 2001, 2004, 2009; Reeves,

2003, 2009; Schmoker, 2006, 2011). Moreover, these strategies and techniques proved more

successful among minority students who had been less successful with learning in the traditional

classroom style such as lecture, rote memorization, and customary pen and paper testing methods

(Greenwood & Kim, 2012; Martel, 2009; Noguera & Wing, 2006; Zollman, 2009).

Interview question five followed the latest adoption of a nationwide core curriculum.

This historical phenomenon came to fruition because the United States consistently rated low in

international ranking among countries that were regarded as academically proficient, particularly

in math and science (Anderson et al., 2012; Lytle, 2012; Vileritti, 2012; Weiss, 2014). Marzano

(2004) noted over a decade ago that a viable curriculum was essential for any effective school

setting. Teachers and administrators must be properly trained and supplied with the appropriate resources that meet the diverse needs of students (Beach, 2011; Brown & Kappes, 2012; Schmidt & Holland, 2012). The ARRA (2009), which helped severely diminished state budgets, was accomplished by the Obama administration. Moreover, it provided a voluntary version of NCLB and assisted in the adoption of a nationally based curriculum (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, 2009; Kolbe & Rice, 2012; McQuinn, 2012; Weiss, 2014).

Interview question six was posed because, as noted throughout the literature, the various ways in which parents were helpful with their students' academic success were extremely vital to the entire school atmosphere (Chenoweth, 2009; Frew, 2012; Jasis & Ordonez-Jasis, 2012; Malsch, 2011; Williams, 2012). It is important that teachers understand that parents' backgrounds may explain their apprehension about participation in the overall educational process of their child. Parents' own personal experiences and levels of comfort with the educational system impact their willingness to help their child (Alvarez-Valdivia et al., 2012; Cattacnack, 2013; Williams & Sanchez, 2011, 2012). Therefore, teachers must have a plan in place that establishes a line of communication in a diverse, economically challenged community. This creates an invaluable and positive school environment from day one.

Focus Groups

A teacher focus group was comprised of eight teachers from each school who had completed the survey and were willing to participate. The commonalities that emerged from the survey responses became the topic of the focus group discussion. A second focus group consisted of students who were available during non-instructional hours who were in the designated grades.

The focus groups involved open-ended questions that were based on the results of both the survey and observations within the classrooms. The focus group discussion took place within a 30-minute time frame. The focus group discussions took place at the school building during after-school hours at a time and date conducive for all who participated. Focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed later for reliability. The focus groups consisted of six to 10 adults and students for each site analyzed. The make-up of these groups depended on the demographics of the three schools. The data were analyzed, and relationships were obtained based on the information from all the instruments.

Data Analysis

The first step in the data analysis process was to transcribe all the data using an independent coding system, specifically open and axial coding. Secondly, there were multiple readings of the transcripts. Within these readings, member checks and an audit trail were completed for assurance of accurate information. I used the CLASS tool for the individual staff observations. Furthermore, I followed the standard protocol involved in semi-structured interviews, especially with the use of a pilot group for any questions validated. The PIMRS survey used a strict protocol that was validated and previously deemed reliable for truthful data.

Coding Systems

I noted the importance of my familiarity with the data being collected. In addition, most researchers initially encourage a new investigator to manually explore and code their own data in the beginning because they appreciate the concept of data collection. Moreover, data analysis and collection occurred simultaneously and began immediately (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009).

Open coding was used parallel to the gathering of surveys, observations, interviews, and focus group data. Open coding entailed me tagging words or phrases with their own type of

labels, thus the word "open". Axial coding began once I developed interpretations of the data. Consequently, it was essential that I collected and analyzed the data concurrently, so it realigned focus throughout the process for confirmation of the research questions (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009).

Within Case and Cross-Case Analysis

"A primary goal of within-case analysis is to describe, understand and explain what has happened in a single bounded content, the 'case' or site" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 100). I used predetermined codes based on factors discussed in the literature review. Once data were clustered into assertions and then themes, a synthesis of developed evidence emerged (Miles et al., 2014; Stake, 2006). This process continued with each bounded system (elementary, middle and high school settings).

The main reasons for cross-case analysis improved the likelihood of generalizability or transferability as it related to the understanding or explanation of the phenomenon (Miles et al., 2014; Stake, 2006; Yin 2009). As stated earlier, I looked at each bounded system and then methodically studied associations, themes, causes and effects within the cases. Lastly, I identified the common themes and similarities developed over all general explanations (Ragin, 1987).

Graphic organizers assisted in the visualization and organization of the rich descriptive data collected from multiple sources, which included completed observations, interviews, and focus groups from most participants in all three bounded systems. These multiple sources offered triangulation, which further strengthened the trustworthiness of the findings obtained across the three bounded systems.

Since the data came from multiple sources (i.e., observations, interviews, focus groups, analyzed documents and surveys) through all three bounded systems, I had a vast amount of rich

descriptive data. These data were coded with open and axial coding. Additionally, a methodical

approach of recognized findings, clustered data, and developed themes for each bounded system

supported a synthesis of formulated ideas. Lastly, the arrangement of all data into graphic

organizers permitted a more manageable finding. Ultimately, assertions emerged in the

commonalities of the three bounded systems.

Authenticating Documents

When I analyzed pertinent documents such as test scores, school improvement plans,

Title I letters, and PTO documentation, I looked at the handbook provided for the protocol and

guidelines for these documents. In addition, an audit trail was performed (Appendix J) that

detailed where the data were obtained. It also answered any questions that pertained to the data

and how they related to the research questions. Since I studied and recognized the themes that

connected these documents to the literature previously reviewed and the other practices that had

been analyzed, the study ensured triangulation (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009).

These various procedures allowed for a more operative and all-inclusive study.

Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS)

The PIMRS was an effective tool that has been used in the assessment of principal

instructional leadership for over three decades. Scholars utilized the Ebel formula, which

verified reliability on each of the 10 leadership functions. The instrument has also been deemed

valid through concurrent multi-trait, multi-method methods (Hallinger, 2013). Therefore, this

instrument was the most operative device for this study that evaluated both principal and teacher

perceptions regarding their competent leadership abilities.

Class Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)

The use of the CLASS system was applied because I was a certified observer for the

instrument. I completed training and perfected my coding reliability. This instrument has been

validated and has "dimensions derived from a review of constructs assessed in classroom observation instruments used in child care and elementary school research, literature on effective teaching practices, focus groups and extensive piloting" (Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008, p. 11). The inclusive and very specific guidelines for coding facilitated consistent and detailed information for the various domains, dimensions, and indicators presented when I coded staff member responses. This instrument has been used in thousands of classrooms and is considered extremely reliable in its findings across observers. It has been documented as predictive in the academic and social outcomes of children (Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008). The coding sheet is identified in Appendix A of this document.

I used a qualitative collective case study, which obtained the characteristics that existed in a high achieving, low socioeconomic minority-based school. I analyzed important documents that pertained to student achievement, observed certified staff, conducted a survey along with interviews, and implemented two separate focus groups, which developed triangulation. I used diligent coding methods based on grounded theory that scrutinized the occurring commonalities within surveys, focus groups, and interviews. These commonalities were the basis of the distinctiveness, which also appeared in the important documents obtained as they related to student achievement on the CRCT/GHSGT. The information was then validated and compared to the studies that have been discussed in the literature review. The combined information from all the data sources previously mentioned gave characteristics that allowed for replication of the study and showed evidence of the leadership style, effective practices, and holistic environment necessary for the running of a high achieving, culturally diverse school.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness addresses credibility, dependability, and transferability. It was vital that all these multiple factors were addressed in the study so the ability to replicate in other settings

was present. Creswell (2013), Merriam (2009), and Yin (2009) each discussed the importance of credibility, dependability, and transferability for the increase of the overall credence to the research process.

Credibility

Credibility was maintained with observational times that consisted of a time range between 20 to 40 minutes. This time allotment ensured all markers were covered. I frequently observed within a specified range and varied my time periods, so I maintained objective learning of the places observed. Triangulation took place because data were collected from various sources, including pertinent documents, observations, surveys, interviews, and focus groups. Member checks were also implemented when I recorded focus group discussions and interviews with verifying information gathered from participants in an accurate assessment of their feelings, concepts, and ideas during the actual focus group or interview. The interviews were emailed or were face to face depending on participants' preferences. As the researcher, I developed a rapport with staff members at each site in order to improve relationships. I had peers who reviewed interview questions because I wanted confirmation of the questions' non-ambiguity. I also test piloted questions at my previous workplace for verified question comprehensiveness and understandability (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Schwandt, 2007; Shenton, 2004).

Dependability

Dependability was addressed by very thick descriptive data, which developed and certified that the design, collection, and implementation were very detailed in the language. The collection of the data was methodical in order to be replicated. The use of three bounded systems increased the accuracy in the skillfulness of data collection. The fact that a collective study was utilized also provided a certain dependability, which displayed the same

characteristics that were seen in settings with multiple differentiations (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Shenton, 2004; Yin, 2009).

Transferability

Thick descriptive data were used during the observations and focus group discussions. Moreover, questions were posited when I examined the pertinent documents (Schwandt, 2007). The type of setting used was made clear and delimitations were explicitly stated, which allowed for the occurrence of transferability. During data collection, specifically set times were used. The design was also justified in the carrying out of the study at a later time (Merriam, 2009; Shenton, 2004).

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Ethical Considerations

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Ethical considerations were a vital part of the research implemented. Creswell (2013) and Merriam (2009) both agreed that when case study designs are used, there are some unique concerns that may arise. Some of the unique concerns that were addressed involved the discussion of the student population's socioeconomic status, the racial perceptions, and their implications on achievement. Since these concerns could become a delicate discussion, I utilized discretion.

The study guaranteed the confidentiality of the schools, staff members, selected students, and their parents with pseudonyms for all involved in participation of the study. I guarded the data and used a password-protected storage on the laptop, as well as kept the notes collected during observations, interviews, and focus group discussions confidential. Focus group discussions and interviews were audio recorded for later transcription and kept in a secure location off campus until transcription was needed. After transcription was completed and the entire study was completed, audio records were destroyed.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings and data analysis of document artifacts, surveys, observations, focus groups and interviews and look at how they specifically align with the primary and secondary research questions. The rationale for this study is to identify the characteristics of an economically disadvantaged high achieving minority school. These data may help to increase the number of schools at both the elementary and secondary levels to become more effective learning environments. The knowledge gained through this in-depth analysis of the findings may assist the county and ultimately the state in teaching the diverse population that exists and ultimately create a globally competitive workforce for the state and nation. The research questions that navigated this collective case study are:

Central Research Question: What are the unique characteristics of schools (high school, middle, elementary) with high achieving minority student populations?

 Guiding Question 1: What is the role of teachers in schools with high achieving minority students?

Guiding Question 2: What is the role of administrators in schools with high achieving minority students?

Guiding Question 3: What is the role of students in schools with high achieving minority students?

Participants

The bounded systems involved a total of 24 teachers; eight each at the elementary, middle and high school who participated in a focus group and the survey. Two teachers from

each site agreed to be interviewed, and 15 permitted me to observe them in their classroom. There were six administrators, two at each site, who completed the survey. There were four students who participated in discussion groups and interviews who ranged in age from nine to 12 years. The data collected were used to develop a comprehensive narrative of what a high achieving minority school encompassed. The teachers were selected based on the grade level and/or subject they taught. I chose benchmark grade levels, expecting the most effective practices to be frequently and consistently represented. The student participants were volunteers who returned their permission slips from their parents within the designated period and had the capability to meet outside of the instructional day. The narratives that follow were developed from an analysis of the school improvement plans, the focus group transcripts, teacher observations, the consent forms and interview responses. Those participants who were interviewed provided a more in-depth viewpoint. Each of the bounded systems, teacher participants and student participants are described in the following narratives. The consent forms and the survey supplied specific demographic information such as the number of years of teaching, subject areas taught, and degrees earned.

School E Elementary

This school is a 12-year-old large elementary school located in an urban-suburban county on the outskirts of a metropolitan city in Georgia. At the time of the study the school had 1,000 students and 80 certified staff members. Third grade had the most teachers at eight, and team teaching was their protocol during that year. Most classes at the third-grade level averaged 25 students; fifth grade averaged 28. No fifth-grade teachers participated in the focus group or survey, interview or observations. The school was unique in that they had a fine arts program where students auditioned to gain access. The principal was a veteran administrator and opened the building. The two assistant principals had less than three years' experience in their current

position; however, each had previously taught at the school. The school's culture was one that emphasized the importance of rigor and high expectations. There were many instances of authentic assessments taking place, along with interesting extracurricular activities such as a chess club, an art club and a theater group. There was an amphitheater behind the school that hosted performances when weather permitted, along with a tiny pond and student-grown garden that was situated between the wings of the building.

Agnes. The information about Agnes came from sitting down and letting her get comfortable with me as we became acquainted prior to the actual interview. Agnes is a female African American student in the fifth grade, which she stated on her consent form. She was involved in the arts program at School E. Agnes started attending School E in the third grade and was active in various clubs at the school. She told me she was the only child in her family at School E. She had two older siblings, one at the middle school and the other at the high school.

Abigail. The information gathered about Abigail came from asking her to tell me about herself while we waited to see if other students would participate in the focus group. Abigail is a female African American student in the fourth grade at School E, and has attended this elementary school since kindergarten. Her siblings were younger; a sister in the Pre-K program and a brother in third grade. Abigail was often left in charge at home and had a quiet demeanor during our encounter**.**

Tasha. The information gathered on Tasha came from survey results, focus group participation, and observations. Tasha was an African American teacher with 15 years of teaching experience indicated from the survey responses. Thirteen of her years were in the same county. Most of her time she taught third through fifth grades and had been at Elementary E since it opened. Her education included an Education Specialist degree in elementary education. Tasha was known to be a firm disciplinarian and often received the most challenging students.

Her robust voice and no-nonsense attitude added to her reputation as one of a disciplinarian, and I observed this during the two observations. Tasha's speech demanded quick action. For example, "Zamaria this isn't completed you don't have time to talk with Xavier." Tasha was outspoken during the focus group, citing several times "Administrators need to accept the data for what it is and not what they want it to be."

Billy. The information regarding Billy was gathered from focus group participation, observations, and survey results. Billy was a male Caucasian who was in his third year of teaching as revealed by his survey demographic information. He shared with me before an observation that this was his second career path and he had completed an alternative teaching school program. He began his career at this school as a paraprofessional and then began to take an interest in teaching. He was encouraged to begin his teaching journey and was then hired as a classroom teacher. His teaching experience included grades three and four. He was in his first year of third grade in the fine arts curriculum at the time of the study. He was currently in the process of obtaining a gifted endorsement. Billy commented both individually and in the focus group regarding the feeling of being overwhelmed with the entire teaching process. As a new teacher, he felt it was important for him to be well prepared. "You have to have effective planning," he stated, and I could hear the frustration in his voice.

Esther. The information on Esther came from the survey, her focus group participation, and observations. Esther revealed on her survey demographic portion that she was an 18-year veteran teacher, with the last 11 years taking place in Georgia. Esther was a female African American and was the grade level Chair. She had held this position for several years. During the focus group Esther shared that she had come to Elementary E the second year it opened and had always taught third grade. She earned a master's degree and a gifted endorsement. She taught in the fine arts program. Esther was extremely even tempered and often went along with

all decisions that were made, rarely complaining about anything. After I had completed her observation she quipped, "I just do the best I can." The even temperament emerged when I approached her regarding the need to complete the surveys, focus groups and interviews and she responded with ease and assured me we would get it done despite various scheduling conflicts: "Girl you will finish, we will get it done."

Denise. The information regarding Denise emerged through her survey, focus group, and interview. Denise was another female African American. This was her 17th year of teaching and eighth year at Elementary E. She had an Educational Specialist in curriculum and instruction, taught early intervention, and served as grade level Chair for several years previously. She shared during the focus group that she had taught several other grades including second, fourth and fifth grade. Denise was a very private individual who remained professional with her colleagues. "With staff members, I just keep it strictly professional with them because this is a professional setting, and so we must model that type of behavior to our students." At the time of the study she was team teaching math and science with Tasha. Denise also had an even-keeled personality, yet had strong convictions on certain issues. "I don't ever want a student to feel the injustices I once felt as a child," she stated.

Frank. The limited information gathered on Frank developed from observations, his survey, consent form and focus group participation. Frank was a second-year teacher and this was a second career path for him. He had previously taught fifth grade. He taught math and science with Alley. He was in the process of completing the teacher alternative preparation program (TAPP), which is an intensive program that allows an individual to teach while completing their coursework. He was in the last year of his program. During our initial meeting, Frank had a laid-back manner and often joked of the many duties and responsibilities that existed. "Sure, I will just add this [survey] to the 1,000 other pieces of paper I need to fill out."

Alley. The information gathered from Alley came from her survey, consent form, focus group, and limited conversations. Alley was a third-year female African American teacher who had a bachelor's degree in elementary education, as gathered from the survey demographics portion.   Two of her years of teaching were in third grade at Elementary E. Alley shared in the focus group that she had completed her student teaching at Elementary E and had begun her teaching in the middle of the school year in kindergarten. At the end of that half year she then moved to third grade. Alley appeared to enjoy teaching and during our initial meeting asked, "What is your study on and what are you going to use the data for?" She demonstrated energy for getting the survey done and was the first to turn it in. She was less enthusiastic regarding being observed, however, and noted, "I really don't want to be observed." As a result, I did not observe her.

Libby. The information about Libby came from her survey, observations, limited conversations, and the focus group. Libby had a bachelor's degree in marriage and counseling and had completed the TAPP system, as noted on her survey demographic responses. All seven years of her teaching experience had taken place at Elementary E. She spent five years in kindergarten and won teacher of the year. She also served as technology specialist and maintained the school website, where her name appeared as web master. She taught the fine arts curriculum, and at the time of the study was team teaching with Esther. Libby was not present during my initial meeting with the team regarding what the study entailed; therefore, I met with her one-on-one, where she shared that she was enrolled in the gifted program. She was more than happy to assist with the study and was extremely flexible. "Whatever you need, I'm here to help you."

Patricia. The information about Patricia was based on her survey results, focus group participation, and her in-depth interview. Patricia was an African American female who had

been at the school since it opened. She had an educational specialist degree in leadership and supervision. Patricia was the "go to" teacher at her school. For example, if something was wrong with your computer, or if you needed help with some type of data input for the county, Patricia was the one to see. "I have a really good rapport." The administration relied on her technological practical understanding and she often assisted with PowerPoints for professional development. Patricia had worked as a teacher for 16 years. At the time of the study Patricia was an early intervention teacher and was the only one in the group who engaged with multiple grades. Patricia spoke fondly of her memories as an army brat. "I'm always mindful of what kids are going through." She also talked about her own personal connection regarding her child. "I'm a parent of a special needs child so that also puts in that layer of what that [diversity] looks like. I think every kid deserves just a good opportunity to learn."

School M Middle School

The information for the middle school and most of the middle school participants was collected from the school improvement plans and through brief observations and conversations before the focus groups. M Middle School is located in a rural town and was steeped in history. The school was over 30 years old, and one principal had been there for over two decades. The school was one of the smaller middle schools in the county with 700 students. The staff had changed since it recently had transitioned to a new administrator. According to the initial discussion with the principal, the new staff members were recent graduates and the vibe in the school was one of enthusiasm. The principal was a Caucasian male who had been newly appointed to the middle school mid-year a year and a half prior to the study. The transition appeared since 50% of the staff had left. The grade level I observed and completed the focus group with was comprised of 25% recent graduates from an out of state university recruitment fair the new principal had attended. The atmosphere in the focus group and during observations

was one of excitement with a willingness to try new ideas. The team talked and demonstrated a sense of camaraderie when together.

Goldie. The information obtained for Goldie was gathered from her consent form, survey results, focus group participation, observation, and a very candid interview. Goldie was a female African American veteran with over 41 years in education. She held an educational specialist degree in leadership and supervision. She had served in many positions such as grade level Chair, curriculum support teacher, assistant principal, and principal for 17 years. Her tenure at two elementary schools as principal resulted from many promotions from her staff. The principal of the high school in this study served as her assistant principal early on in her career. "I knew Valencia was something special, she is one of the best administrators I had the pleasure of working with me. She is very untidy, but that's my strength not hers." She laughed as she told me a story of how they once could not find the budget for the year and had to tear her office apart looking for it. Goldie returned to the classroom for several years at the middle school level and later won teacher of the year. "I felt as if the classroom was an easier way to serve children and I wasn't getting things that I felt were important done anymore as an administrator. It was time for a change." She was a wealth of information and was very open in her interview:

> We're teaching from 8:00-3:00. We're still teaching the same curriculum, and it's not working. The old adage 'if you keep doing the same thing over and over, getting the same results, shouldn't you look at that and do something different?' But we're not in education, we are stuck. Yet, through legislation we could mandate to have different results. Until something changes from the top down, we're going to still have the same results.

Rico. Rico's information was gathered from his consent form, professional resume, his

survey results, observations, focus group participation, and interview. Rico was a male African American with 10 years of teaching experience. Rico had been in the county for the last four years at Middle School M. He had a bachelor's degree in biology and a master's degree in education and supervision. He also had a math endorsement. Rico was a very active member in the teacher's association. He went to the annual national conference and served on the board. He reported often on the current policies and procedures and served as the representative for grievances in his building. "I want people to know their rights, especially new teachers. Our job is a difficult one and it's important to have support." He won teacher of the year and numerous other awards. "I participate in the different activities and take the lead and not begrudgingly either." Rico taught science and served as the community site coordinator. He also had served as the grade level Chair in the past.

Robert. The information pertaining to Robert came from his resume, survey results, observation focus group participation, and interview. Robert was a male African American with 16 years of teaching experience. He had been in the same county all his career and had been at Middle School M for the last 12 years. Robert was an extremely busy individual both in and outside of school. "I have to find interactions, opportunities to interact with the staff and the students." He often hosted after-school detention and Saturday school and was known to demand excellence. "I can help bridge gaps for them [students]. Being in a minority group myself I recognize that some of the students may be at a disadvantage in our educational system." He had a master's degree in special education and an educational specialist degree in leadership and supervision. He had served as grade level Chair and on many committees throughout his career. He was known for his calmness and ability to de-escalate situations.

> I always draw from my personal experiences as a teacher. Equally I try to let them see
> where some of those failures have resulted from [me] not listening or following through.

The big thing is I try to help them [students] set goals for themselves, whether that's in academics or a long-term path that they may take for their careers.

Leanne. Leanne's narrative was gathered from her consent form, observation, focus group participation and limited conversation before and after the observation. Leanne was a third-year female Caucasian teacher who was certified to teach language arts. She also possessed a gifted endorsement. She had spent her first two years in a rural county in southern Georgia. She completed a traditional program at a university outside of the state of Georgia. She was very vocal in the focus group and the first to volunteer to be observed. "In English, we spend a lot of time dealing with character education, and trying to fill in some of their gaps that they have from home or past teachers because they need background knowledge." During the observation Leanne frequently apologized for the noise since students were working in cooperative groups: "I apologize for the noise, sometimes they get too excited."

Kim. Kim's limited information was derived from her consent form and survey results. Kim was a first-year female Asian American teacher who was certified in math. Since she was a first-year teacher she was timid throughout the focus group and declined to participate in observation sessions.

Sabrina. Sabrina's information came from her consent form, survey results, observation, and focus group participation. Sabrina was a 15-year female African American teacher who was certified in math. She had spent 10 years at the elementary level and had served in middle school for the last five years. She had taught in the county for eight years. At the time of the study Sabrina was in her second year of teaching at Middle School M and co-taught a few classes with Rico. Sabrina commented during the focus group; however, her true personality was captured during the observation period. She paced her lesson and was explicit in the instruction the students received. "The heading has your name date and the title of the lesson.

Let's get ready to go over our warm-up on page 410." Students knew what was expected and dutifully prepared to get started.

Darcy. The limited information received on Darcy came from the consent form and the survey results. Darcy's contribution to the study came from the survey. Darcy was a first-year African American female teacher who was certified in language arts. Darcy completed her degree from a university outside of Georgia, and was recruited and hired by the current principal at Middle School M. Darcy was not talkative during the focus group.

Marcia. Marcia's narrative arose from observation, limited conversation, focus group participation, consent form, and survey results. Marcia has a master's degree and is certified in all subjects. Marcia had taught middle school for the past 15 years at Middle School M. She had served as grade level Chair during the year of the study and had held this position previously, along with various other positions. Marcia was the reigning teacher of the year as indicated by her bulletin board when entering the building. She shared her interest in integrating technology into the curriculum and often gave workshops to the staff after completing professional workshops within the county. "I love STEM [Science Technology Engineering and Math]; it's opening up a new world for our students." During her observation she demonstrated her enthusiasm and relationships with the students. "Chaz is going to work in this group and I am going to sit right next to you," she lightheartedly stated as she proceeded to sit next to Chaz for several minutes to ensure he was on task.

Barbra. Barbra was an eighth-grade African American female student who had two siblings, one in elementary and the other in high school. She had attended school in the county for several years. Her dad was a widower and her maternal grandmother assisted with Barbra and her siblings. Barbra was a solid student who was enthusiastic about learning and was looking forward to beginning high school**.**

Betsy. Betsy's information came from sitting with her before the focus group and having a conversation to break the ice before beginning the focus group. Betsy was an eighth-grade African American female student who was an only child. Both her parents worked in the school system. Betsy was on the student government board and was known for her outspokenness regarding the needs of students. Betsy's grades had earned her a spot on the honor roll most semesters since sixth grade.

School H High School

The information for this narrative was documented from observations, school improvement plans and brief conversations before focus groups. The high school is located in an urban area of the county. According to the school improvement plans, the school has experienced a shift in demographics in the past several years. The town, along with the high school, saw an increase in the Hispanic/Latino and African American populations, going from a third of the population at the school to three fourths of the population within the last decade. The physical make-up of the high school is an older building with multiple smaller buildings interconnected to one another. The principal, a documented success story through local news articles and state awards received, was in her third year at the time of the study. She was promoted because of her ability to turn schools around and maintain a rigorous academic environment. The school had experienced many long-term substitutes because of the difficulty in finding highly qualified teachers for the content areas, including special education. Therefore, in the focus group there were several new teachers and some long-term substitutes who participated. This made it difficult to coax anyone to allow me to observe them, let alone interview them. The pace at the school was fast and the administrators were difficult to track down. I sent emails to all of the administrators, talked to them individually and gave them a hard copy of the survey. Lastly, I walked with one of the assistant principals in the hall, followed

him/her to the cafeteria, and stated I would be back in a designated amount of time just to get the survey completed. I went to the principal's house to get her to complete the survey. When I walked the halls during the changing of classes the students were well-mannered. The halls were orderly and student monitors in the hallway appeared to maintain order. Because of the fast pace and busy schedules of the administrators, I was unable to schedule meetings with students. Therefore, I did not have any student narrative encounters.

Chica. The narrative gathered on Chica came from her interview, observation, focus group participation and resume. Chica was a 16-year veteran who served in the department of exceptional services. Chica had taught at the elementary and high school level; 10 at the elementary, and was in her seventh year in high school. Her resume was extensive. She worked in a program for a major university in a metropolitan area to increase reading achievement among the exceptional education population for several years. "It was very rewarding and allowed me to gain a different perspective on classroom practices." She also worked at the elementary level as an exceptional education teacher where she spent most of her time identifying students for the program and deciding which setting would serve as the least restrictive to accommodate their needs. "The pendulum changed in recent years; we are now integrating [including] students with exceptionalities into the general education setting with support, whereas a decade ago many were pulled out or isolated altogether. I see this as a positive change." Chica completed her master's and bachelor's degrees in the metro Atlanta area. She participated in many professional development seminars facilitating or assisting. Chica is both published and presented to the largest school district in the state of Georgia.

> I love the profession that that I'm in, I don't love all the things about the profession. But because I am from a very interesting demographic growing, up on the islands [St. Thomas] and receiving my elementary and secondary schooling there and then coming to

the states. I feel like because of where I've been and where I am now and even coming

into this new space of working with highs school and adolescents…I've been able to

really learn a lot more about myself.

Jan. The information gathered from Jan emerged from the consent form, focus group

Participation, and interview. Jan had 10 years of total teaching experience at the elementary and

secondary level.   Jan was the most unique individual in the high school group. Jan held a

bachelor's degree in communication and had taken several classes at the master's level seeking

teacher certification. She had experience in the elementary, middle and high school levels as a

paraprofessional for students with disabilities and as a long-term substitute in an inclusion

classroom. "I love the kids, but I have a difficult time testing and gave up on a teacher

certification," she confessed. Most of her experience was in a parent liaison capacity, yet her

hands-on experience in the classroom was evident.

> You can be extraordinarily creative with ways to involve students. In elementary you
>
> start out by getting kids college career ready by wearing your college t-shirt, having
>
> college banners and colors and letting them identify those colors. In middle school, you
>
> have college career or college color days where you start to once again speak more about
>
> why they're studying what they're studying shaping student into getting ready for high
>
> school, in high school we do expose students, you're exposing them to logos, brands and
>
> their interests. You do professional trips as well. Culinary schools, beauty schools,
>
> mechanics, electricians, and other vocations come and visit. Exposure is essential.

Her unique perspective assisted both with parents and during the year of the study with all the

new teachers and substitutes, as she had firsthand experience in these roles. Her insight proved

very useful both in focus group and during the interview.

Bethany. Bethany's information came from her consent form and the survey results. Bethany was a recent graduate from a university located in another state. She was highly qualified in language arts. She was a recent hire who had not begun the school year. Her knowledge of the various educational acronyms and overall school culture was limited. Bethany's sole contribution to the study stemmed from her responses on the survey. Bethany shared with me, off record, that she had learned a lot and was grateful for the experience of participating in the study.

Nancy. Nancy's information stemmed from her consent form and survey results. At the time of the study Nancy was in her first full year of teaching. Nancy's first year began in January of the previous school year. Nancy was two years out of college and had graduated in December and then started her position almost immediately in January. She was highly qualified in language arts. Nancy was not vocal during the focus group and took copious notes during the exchange. Nancy, because of her limited experience, did not want to participate in interviews or observations. Nancy's information for the study came from her survey results.

Sally. Sally's information came from her consent form, survey results, a brief observation and limited personal conversations, and focus group participation. At the time of the study Sally was in her third year of teaching. This was her first year at this high school. She was highly qualified in language arts. Sally obtained her English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) endorsement. Sally shared with me during an informal conversation that she was interested in becoming certified in another content area in order to increase her options at the high school level. At the time of the focus group she expressed some concerns regarding her adjustment to the school. She was reluctant to share this information on tape but did let me know her concerns before the session began. "I am new here, I will help in any way I can but I have nothing negative to say."

Dottie. Dottie's information came from her consent form, survey results, observation, and focus group participation. Dottie had taught for 13 years. She was certified in language arts and had previously taught social studies. Dottie held a doctorate in educational leadership, and expressed in the focus group introductions that she was seeking an administrative role. Her demeanor was very quiet and matter of fact, both in the classroom and during the focus group. Her personality demanded respect, as evidenced by the podium that was present in the classroom. "I feel [administration] should recognize teacher autonomy," she stated in the focus group after others had also commented. She had taught at this high school for the past three years. Her feelings were that administrators "…don't feel we are professional or trustworthy."

Gail. Gail's information came from the consent form, limited survey results, and focus group participation. Gail was a long-term substitute who began the year teaching math and was then moved into a language arts class. Gail substituted for three years at the high school level. She shared during focus group introductions that she was deciding if she wanted to begin the teacher alternative preparation program (TAPP). She wanted a mentor that could assist with the transition from math to language arts, but had not received one at that point. She stated in the focus group that the instructional facilitator and the department Chair were providing help with lesson plans and other questions; however, Gail felt overwhelmed and discouraged many days because most of her colleagues were also new and inexperienced.

Francine. Francine's narrative came from the observation, focus group participation, a brief conversation after the observation, and survey results. Francine had a unique experience. She had taught in elementary, middle and high school, yet she had only been teaching for four years. This was her first year at the high school and she was provisionally certified in language arts. This information was shared when I begged to observe her and Chica. Francine was vocal in the focus group regarding the lack of support from the administration in assisting with

resources. "No support to actually help you really build that classroom that needs to be." Francine was also one of the teachers who co-taught with an exceptional education teacher and this was her concern regarding support. She gave Chica all the praise saying, "I would be lost without her input." Yet she was unclear on the responsibility roles from the administrative aspect. Despite her feelings of inadequacy during my time in her classroom, the chemistry between Francine and Chica was phenomenal. Francine had a genuine easygoing relationship with the students, which was exhibited through their ease in asking questions and her tolerance of their use of technology (i.e., use of camera phones to take pictures of PowerPoint notes). Francine gave ample wait time to ensure all students completed their note-taking and often asked, "Are we ready to move on?" Chica stealthily circulated the classroom and was there to answer questions with minimal disruption to the lesson. It was also obvious that both teachers equally addressed all students' needs. Even with various office announcement disruptions attempting to locate a particular student, Chica finally left the room to handle the situation. It was amusing to see the students become annoyed as they were trying to continue their lesson.

The following table gave a summary of the teacher participants, their ethnicity, years of teaching and the current education obtained. The table provided what activities each individual participated in during the study.

Table 4.1

Teacher Participants

Teacher Name	Gender & Ethnicity	Years	Last Degree Earned	Observed	Focus Group	Survey	Interview
Alley	Female African American	3	Bachelor's		✓	✓	
Billy	Male Caucasian	3	2nd Bachelor's	✓	✓	✓	
Denise	Female African American	17	Education Specialist	✓	✓	✓	✓
Esther	Female African American	18	Master's	✓	✓	✓	
Frank	Male African American	2	2nd Bachelor's	✓	✓	✓	
Libby	Female African American	5	2nd Bachelor's	✓	✓	✓	

Teacher Name	Gender & Ethnicity	Years	Last Degree Earned	Observed	Focus Group	Survey	Interview
Patricia	Female African American	16	Education Specialist	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tasha	Female African American	15	Education Specialist	✓	✓	✓	
Darcy	Female African American	1	Bachelor's		✓	✓	
Goldie	Female African American	30+	Education Specialist	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kim	Female Asian American	1	Bachelor's		✓	✓	
Leanne	Female Caucasian	3	Bachelor's	✓	✓	✓	
Marcia	Female African American	15	Master's	✓	✓	✓	

Teacher Name	Gender & Ethnicity	Years	Last Degree Earned	Observed	Focus Group	Survey	Interview
Rico	Male African American	10	Master's	✓	✓	✓	✓
Robert	Male African American	16	Education Specialist	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sabrina	Female African American	15	Master's	✓	✓	✓	
Bethany	Female African American	1	Bachelor's		✓	✓	
Chica	Female African American	16	Education Specialist	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dottie	Female African American	13	Doctorate	✓	✓	✓	

Teacher Name	Gender & Ethnicity	Years	Last Degree Earned	Observed	Focus Group	Survey	Interview
Jan	Female African American	10	Bachelor's		✓	✓	✓
Gail	Female African American	1	Bachelor's		✓	✓	
Nancy	Female African American	1½	Bachelor's		✓	✓	
Sally	Female Caucasian	3	Bachelor's	✓	✓	✓	

Results

The researcher utilized a qualitative collective case study design. A collective case study approach used a within and cross case analysis for each of the three bounded systems. The three bounded systems included one elementary, middle and high school. The multiple forms of data collected included: physical artifacts, observations, focus groups, surveys and interviews. These multiple forms of data provided triangulation and therefore strengthened the information gathered (Creswell 2013; Merriam, 2009; Miles et. al., 2014).

Physical artifacts included: the school improvement plan, Title I parent agreement form; Criterion Referenced Competency test scores, the Georgia High School Graduation Test and parent teacher organization membership. These documents are all public records, two (CRCT & GHSGT) can be found on the state department website (Georgia Department of

Education, 2016). Table 4.2 provides the numerical information and a summary of the overall

message of the school improvement plans for the 2008-2011 academic years.

Table 4.2

Physical Artifacts	Elementary	Middle	High
School Improvement Plan			
2008-2009	Increase Reading/Language Arts by 5% in benchmark grades.	Increase Language Arts and Math by 3% in 6th, 7th and 8th grades.	Increase Language Arts and Math in all grades up to 80%.
	Increase parent involvement by 3%.	Increase the use of technology in Social Science classes.	Increase the use of writing throughout all the subject areas.
2009-2010	Improve communication among stakeholders.	Provide and maintain a safe and orderly learning environment.	Effectively communicate the system's vision and purpose and allow stakeholder involvement in an effort to build understanding and support.
	Recruit and retain highly qualified and effective staff.	Create an environment that promotes active engagement, accountability and collaboration of all stakeholders to maximize student achievement.	To provide high quality support services delivered on time and within budget to promote student academic success in the district.

	Elementary		Middle	High
2010-2011	Effectively communicate the system's vision and purpose and allow stakeholder involvement in an effort to build understanding and support.		Improve communication among stakeholders.	Increase Biology competency by 11% in benchmark grades.
	To provide high quality support services delivered on time and within budget to promote student academic success in the district.		Recruit and retain highly qualified and effective staff.	Increase Math competency in Algebra by 10%.
Title I agreement (compact)	The numbers are for the current years, since the information is destroyed after three years.		The numbers are for the current years, since the information is destroyed after three years.	The numbers are for the current years, since the information is destroyed after three years.
2012-2013	90%		80%	60%
2013-2014	95%		80%	60%
2014-2015	95%		80%	60%

CRCT		3rd	5th	8th
2008-2009	M	76.5%	71.8%*	75.8%*
	L	85.7%	89.3%	89.6%
2009-2010	M	84.3%	80.0%	79.8%
	L	90.9%	86.5%	88.9%

		3rd	5th	8th
2010-2011	M	82.5%	79.6%	76.5%
	L	86.9%	90.4%	93.4%

GHSGT		11th		
2008-2009	M	70% *		
	LA	86%		
2009-2010	M	88%		
	LA	86%		
2010-2011	M	80%		
	LA	83%		

PTO Member-ship	Elementary The PTO at the school had a treasurer that was also a faculty member.	Middle The parent liaison was instrumental in assisting with the PTO.	High The organization was solely run by the parents.
2008-2009	70%	60%	50%
2009-2010	75%	58%	52%
2010-2011	78%	62%	48%

Note. *Math scores for the CRCT (Criterion Referenced Competency Test) and GHSGT (Georgia High School Graduation Test) were all below the criteria for the school year of 2008-2009, yet these schools agreed to participate in the study.

The teacher focus groups had eight people in all three bounded systems. Because the participant pool was limited, all of those participants who completed a survey participated in the focus group. The student focus group was very limited. It was difficult to obtain parent permission; moreover, times were difficult to schedule due to testing obligations. The result

ended in only two students participating at the elementary and middle level focus groups, which per Yin (2009) and Merriam (2009), did not meet the criteria for credibility. The focus groups were audio recorded, transcribed, and member checked. I then aligned the assertions and themes with the data from the observations and the surveys. Categories were predetermined by the literature review, theoretical framework and the data instrument utilized in the observations. The observation guide used phrases and ideas that correlated with the theoretical framework and literature review ideals discussed. These categories were the basis of analyzing the data from all sources. I then expanded these categories, creating additional phrases and words that I ultimately grouped into assertions and themes in each bounded system. I tabulated the categories and phrases on a frequency chart for each data source; observations, focus groups and interviews (Appendix F). I divided each piece of data into individual assertions and themes for each data resource (observations, focus groups and interviews) and each individual bounded system (Appendix G). Later, I completed a cross-case analysis from the three bounded systems.

The Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) has three forms and two of those forms were used in this study. I used both the teacher form and the principal form. The survey used a Likert scaling system with three categories and 10 functions with five questions within each function. The first category, which defines mission and goals, had two functions: frame the school goals and communicate the school goals. The second category, managing the instructional program, consisted of three functions: supervise and evaluate instruction, coordinate the curriculum, and monitor student progress. The last category, developing student climate, consisted of five functions: protect instructional time, maintain high visibility, provide incentives for teachers, promote professional development, and provide incentives for learning. I focused on the Likert scale responses of four and five, which represented frequently (4) and almost

always (5). Each function set was analyzed as a group (Appendix N). When the majority of the teachers (seven out of eight or 87.5%) chose four or five on a particular question, that question was considered valid for the purpose of the study. Moreover, when four out of five (80%) of the questions in that function/function had seven out of eight or 87.5% of the teachers in agreement, that function was considered valid for the purpose of the study. For example, since "frames the school's goals" had five questions in its section and seven out of eight of the teachers answered at least four out of five of these questions with a four or five response, then that functional area was considered valid/effective for the sake of the study.

The elementary survey sampling consisted of eight participants. Each participant completed the survey independently and contacted me via email when they had completed the survey and were ready to submit it. Some of the questions remained unanswered if the participant felt their knowledge base was insufficient. Consequently, when a question did not receive all participants' responses, the divisor was adjusted accordingly to obtain an accurate percentage rating.

No dimensions or functions (functions) produced an 80% or above rating. The word function was used in the survey to mean a function from this point forward the word function was used. The highest function was professional development, which had an average of 60%. There was no dimension (category) that was high; both defines school mission and managing instructional programs averaged 64%. The dimension of developing school learning climate was significantly low, with an average of 37%. In addition, the function called maintains high visibility, any of the questions rating a four or above had an average of 25% among all five questions within the function.

At the elementary level, although there were four administrators, a female African American principal, a female Caucasian and female African American assistant principal, and a female African American instructional facilitator, only two administrators returned the survey within the allotted time frame of two months. The findings for the elementary administrator surveys produced high ratings in many functions and two out of the three dimensions; however, the results are less than trustworthy since there were only two participants. The dimension, defines school mission produced a score in one function of 100% of the questions rating a four or above. Both dimensions, defines school mission and managing the instructional program rated an average of 95% or higher. The last dimension, developing school learning climate rated an average score of 50% and there was one function out of the five that rated an average score over 60%.

The middle school survey sampling consisted of eight participants, all who participated in the focus group. The survey was completed before the focus group began. The overall responses from the middle school teacher surveys were favorable and consisted of four or higher ratings. There were several functions that were rated at 100% of the responses being at four or above. In the dimension of defines school mission all functions rated at 100% of teachers responding with a four or above on all questions. The lowest two functions were in the dimension of developing school learning climate, each of the functions maintaining high visibility and provides incentives for learning were both at 65% of teacher's ratings at four or above. Consequently, developing school climate for learning was the lowest scored dimension with a score of 74%. These findings pointed to a comprehensive positive administrative outlook by the grade level on the management of their middle school environment.

At the middle school level, there were a total of three administrators; one male Caucasian principal, a female African American assistant principal, and a female African American instructional facilitator. This was the assistant principal's first year back at this school as an administrator and due to health issues, she did not participate in the study. Therefore, the two participants were the principal and the instructional facilitator.

The overall responses from the middle school administrator surveys were favorably consistent, scoring a four or above in most functions. There were four functions that were rated at 100% of the responses being at four or above. In the dimension of defines school mission all functions rated at 100% of administrators responding with a four or above on all questions. The lowest function was in the dimension of developing school learning climate. The function, provides incentives for learning, had one out of the five questions at a four or above rating. Consequently, developing school climate for learning was the lowest scored dimension with an average score of 64%. These findings pointed to a comprehensive unified administrative outlook of their management of the middle school environment by the two administrators who participated in the study.

The high school teacher survey sampling consisted of eight individuals who taught language arts at the high school site. The participants also engaged in the focus group and responded to the survey independently before the start of the focus group session. All participants were female, with one Caucasian and the others African American. There did not appear to be collaboration while answering the questions, as I was present the entire time.

The overall responses for the language arts department at the high school level were low. No dimensions or functions produced an 80% or above rating. The highest function was frames goals, which was in the highest dimension, defines school mission, which averaged a rating of

59%. The lowest dimension, developing school climate, had an average rating of 24% and most of the functions inside the dimension had few responses that had more than three teachers rating at a four or above for any particular question. I postulated the inexperience of the teachers could account for the low ratings; moreover, some questions were not even answered because of the teachers' naïveté of the school's culture.

Teacher interviews were completed from the three bounded systems. Two females were interviewed at the elementary level, two males and a female at the middle school level, and two females completed the interview questions at the high school level. All interviews were completed outside of school hours because a rapport was established with most of the participants and their schedules were extremely hectic. The flexibility may have led to more candid answers. Interviews were transcribed using an outside company, and were emailed and verified by the participants regarding the transcripts' accuracy. The same categories from the literature review and theoretical framework and observation overview were used to obtain the assertions and themes.

There was one female student from each of the bounded systems for the elementary and middle school. Students felt more comfortable replying via email in case they wanted to elaborate on a question. The use of email enabled additional resources, such as parents, for assistance. This was a viable alternative because of scheduling conflicts within the school day. Member checking was not needed for the email questionnaire. The email questionnaire was anchored in the literature, which correlated with the research questions and theoretical framework. The responses utilized the same coding system previously discussed.

I performed axial coding by counting the frequency of specific words or phrases noted within the documents, observations, focus groups and interviews (Appendix F). Once a count of

the frequency of the words was completed, I then cast the words or phrases into assertions. The assertions that I repeatedly noted then developed into themes, which encompassed the assertions from the various data mediums (Appendix G). I utilized this systematic method over all three bounded systems. The cross analysis over the bounded systems finally produced themes that were consistently demonstrated. Five themes emerged that steadily appeared and were evidenced throughout the data and bounded systems with narratives from several participants.

Theme Identification

As previously stated, theme identification came from the frequent occurrence of common assertions and themes from the various data instruments utilized and later analyzed several times to reach a point of saturation of the data results (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). I repeated the process twice and had an independent individual review one of the data mediums to ensure the process being utilized was reliable and could be generalized (Creswell, 2013). The extended documents and other data resources could not all be processed by the independent individual due to time constraints. The themes that emerged were supported by observations, retrieved documents, and individual and collective discussions. The information shared both formally and informally produced valuable information that led to a comprehensive analysis of what the characteristics of an economically disadvantaged high achieving minority school looks like at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Theme I: An Explicitly Designed School Improvement Plan

The first theme that emerged from all three bounded systems and evidenced by various data measurements was an explicitly designed improvement plan tailored for each site. The school improvement plan provided a snapshot of each bounded system as to what their expectations were for that year. I examined each of the nine plans and noted overall assertions

and themes from the reoccurring statements. The assertions and themes evolved from the words

and phrases that I recorded on the frequency chart. The school improvement plan was a template

used throughout the district, which was why the assertions were the same, yet the way the plan

was carried out within each bounded site differed based on individual needs of each school.

Many of the goals were repetitive; however, each bounded system listed the specific actions.

The overall commonalities were discussed at the end. It was clear the school improvement plans

were research based and theoretically aligned with the framework previously discussed in

Chapter Two. The implementations of the school improvement plans were evident in the

interviews, focus groups and observations discussed in detail in the paragraphs that follow.

The school improvement plan for the elementary school focused on the ways to address

the concerns/deficits for the three years analyzed. One of the assertions was providing

professional learning to increase English Language Arts scores by 3%. This was to be

accomplished by instructing teachers on the use of various instructional strategies (i.e., thinking

maps explicit instruction, etc.) This particular assertion was seen when I observed Tasha during

language arts. Her explicit instruction included her giving instruction on her expectations when

she explained the concepts of subject and predicate. "I am going to demonstrate what I want you

to do." She stated, "Please look at the screen so that you are clear on how I want it to look on

your paper." She used a document camera that exhibited the same worksheet the students were

working on. They did several examples together and then were asked to complete them on their

own before the end of class. Tasha monitored and walked around, assisting students who

appeared confused.

In Esther's room, during an observation in language arts/reading class, students were

developing predictions based on pictures and the foreword at the beginning of the story. Esther

even went as far as to have students look at the questions at the end of the story so that they would have a focus on what they would be reading. "I've heard some interesting suppositions on what may happen in this story; however, when you give me a prediction let's have evidence to validate your hunch. For example, since Lenox stated that she thinks she is going to get lost, what in the pictures or questions suggest this?" The discussion continued for another five minutes. The students had 10 minutes to write down their predictions with a brief reason for why they thought it would occur. They listened to the story while Esther periodically stopped the CD to ask questions and discuss if their predictions were accurate.

During the teachers' elementary focus group, Alley spoke of the importance of using scaffolding when discussing subject and predicate. "I always build on what was said previously because the students amaze me how they don't remember what was said from day to day." Tasha added, "Most students look at me as though they have never heard of a predicate on Monday after we have spent the entire week talking about it! The looks really bother me sometimes."

Another assertion was to provide professional learning to increase math scores by 4% by integrating technology and other instructional strategies into the standards. During her interview, Patricia discussed how she used Donors Choose to buy additional iPads so students would be able to have more opportunities learning the concepts from one another. Patricia stated, "I have small groups and they have the opportunity to guide whatever that work is and be their own teacher, then I know they have mastered it." Whereas Frank, in his classroom, utilized anchor charts to assist students with definitions and mnemonic devices to increase their accuracy on their performance tasks. His words of encouragement during my observation empowered students to not give up on their tasks. The focus group mentioned the different types of

strategies used during math. Alley chimed in how she liked STAR math since it provided a baseline and specific areas that helped her create her small groups. Libby stated, "I like using manipulatives such as money and the counting cubes, many of the students need the tactile part of learning to make real world connections. I feel as though sometimes I see the lightbulb immediately coming on."

The last assertion at the elementary level was to setup a plan to increase teacher retention rate by implementing a mentoring program. The focus group had concerns regarding mentoring at the school. While it was promoted, it did not appear to exist. Alley felt she did not have enough support on what to do, adding, "I don't know if I am to follow the pacing guide or teach to mastery. I feel I am torn in trying to meet the needs of the students and I don't have anyone to ask what to do." Tasha chimed in, "You are expected to leave your personal problems at the door yet you are required to take professional work home." Esther, the Grade Chair, was asked if these concerns were addressed at leadership meetings and her response was, "No one brings anything up anymore, because it doesn't seem to be addressed. We are always too busy; it's difficult for me to give Alley any support when I can barely keep up and I have been teaching for years."

The school improvement plan for the middle school focused on these ways to address the concerns/deficits for the three years that were analyzed. The assertions were similar to the elementary assertions but had overall differences with the structure and implementation. The first assertion was to increase their reading scores by five percentage points via professional development and 180-minute reading blocks with an emphasis on explicit instruction. The middle school teacher focus group discussed reading/language arts and the importance of students understanding explicit instruction. Goldie stated, "If students are not interested in what

is going on, then you must make a connection to peak their interest." Robert chimed in regarding the importance of integration into social studies and their need for basic comprehension before details of history could be understood. Leanne talked of developing character education along with scaffolding before she would teach English.

During Leanne's observation, I observed the ideas of scaffolding and character when students worked in collaborative groups to develop their presentations. They were reading *Of Mice and Men* and completed an analysis on the two characters in the book. Leanne circulated throughout the classroom ensuring all the students were on task. She assisted where was needed and asked pertinent questions. For example, she noted, "Luke, Ethan, Quinton and Isaiah make sure you have several characteristics that explain the characters and their importance to the story. I see you are talking about Lennie, so tell me why you picked him and the characteristics you like and those you dislike." After explaining to the students about how to set up their presentation, she decided to return to the board and review what was needed for each group:

Ladies and gentlemen let's go over exactly what you should be doing together. You want to explain your characters, listing their features. You want to describe their importance to the story. Tell me the theme of the story. What I think is the hardest part is to decide as a group how the story relates to present day. Remember how we did this in the story? This time you have your group to help you come up with a common connection.

Similarly, at the elementary level, one of the middle school's continuous assertions related to math scores increasing by five percentage points by professional development, including reading data scores and integrating writing and technology. During my observation of a math class, I noted several different modalities being displayed. Sabrina began the lesson in routine fashion by checking students' interactive notebooks. "I want to see all dates and

headings nice and neat. Not having all your notes or graphic organizers will result in point deductions." Simultaneously, Sabrina had the LCD projector on with the warm-up problem as she checked off notebooks. The pace in the class was quick and students seemed comfortable. On the board were written the essential question and advance organizer detailing the agenda for class. During another math class I observed integrated games at the end of a lesson on reviewing proportions. Rico stated, "This is a game you can play at home that will increase your math acuity on proportions. Melissa, do you remember what acuity means?" "Yes, sharpness." "Great, now let's go over how to play the game – we have two minutes."

The school improvement plan for high school had many of the same assertions; however, because of the limited parent participation, the one assertion evidenced from other data was that the school added a parent liaison that would continue to arrange parent workshops and other resources to increase assistance in their child's academic achievements. This was evidenced by the parent liaison's interview, Jan, who confirmed her mission was to "…involve parents in volunteer activities, help teachers a little bit more combining curriculum based field trips and workshops for parents on Saturdays. These are just some of my roles including collaborating for career & college week. Moreover, I want to involve parents throughout their time in high school and not just freshmen and senior years." The vast experience she had accumulated at both the elementary and secondary levels increased the validity of this assertion being met.

When I examined the artifacts of the school improvement plan I specifically highlighted words that were synonymous with words used during the observations, focus groups and interviews. As a result of this analysis, it became evident that a course of action existed at all levels. Each level had designed a plan that specifically met the needs of their environment, notwithstanding their unique differences. As stated in the literature, most minorities from

economically disadvantaged surroundings can experience more turmoil in their everyday lives

more so than other economic groups (Chenoweth, 2009; Konold et al., 2016). Therefore, the

significance of having clear and research based guidelines engendered a sense of empowerment

and self-resilience, which is vital in minority students' existence outside of school (Johnson et

al., 2012; Payne, 2013). The school improvement plan was just one of the many instruments

needed to cultivate an effective school environment. It was the foundation of answering the

how, why and when the goals were obtained.

Theme Two: Safe and Secure Environment

The second common theme throughout all three bounded systems was the idea of a safe

and secure environment with accountability in place for all involved**.** This theme was supported

by data gathered from the school improvement plan, teacher observations, teacher interviews,

and focus groups.

The teacher observations exhibited specific components that supported a safe and secure

environment. The observation tool I used was categorized into three main domains: emotional

support, classroom organization and instructional support; within the domains there were three to

four dimensions. The rating scale ranged from one to seven, which was grouped by low (one,

two) middle (three, four, five) and high (six, seven). Since I was looking at highly effective

environments, scores of five and above were identified. The dimension's overview guide

(Appendix A) explained the language and examples given to assist with observations.

At the elementary level the school improvement plan stated professional development

was implemented that emphasized de-escalation techniques to provide a safe environment.

When I observed the classrooms, over half of the teachers utilized the Class Dojo system for

classroom management. This is a technology based points system plan that can be managed by

students. This concept supports the accountability component of most school improvement

plans. The frequency of both routines of encouragement and affirmation were the most frequent

coding seen at the elementary level. In the classrooms I observed posted routines and

procedures. Some teachers specifically explained why certain procedures were carried out. For

example, Billy allowed students to go to the restroom by tables and students had assigned jobs.

There was an argument as to who was supposed to do what, and Billy stated, "This is why I

assign jobs beforehand, so there are no issues." In Libby's class students were told explicitly

how and when to clean up the class. "Class, in five minutes we will begin putting our

manipulatives and laptops away as tables. One person will oversee putting manipulatives away

and another will put laptops up," Libby announced.

During the interviews Denise emphasized how her personal experiences were key in

ensuring a safe and fair environment for students. "When growing up in the South I didn't feel

that my school experiences were always fair. Therefore, I make it a point to assure my students

that classroom operations are 'fair' and do my best to explain why certain consequences exist

when called into question." Whereas Patricia cited her military background and the diversity it

afforded her and the need for a safe and secure environment that depended on procedures and

routines being maintained. "I've lived out of the country which offered me to see what different

environments and exposures in different cultures and people bring."

The young ladies who participated in the focus group spoke highly of their feelings about

the school environment. Abigail stated, "I feel that I am able to be in class and focus without

disruption." Agnes added, " I think their jobs[administrators] are to take care of anything that

goes too far."

When referring to a safe and secure environment one is not simply talking about the physicality of a building. There are a multitude of attributes that contribute to this phenomenon, such as social norms, rapport, beliefs and attitudes (Aldridge & Ala'l, 2013; Pickett, 2012; Smith & Kearney, 2012). The middle school created a safe environment by conducting a town hall meeting each semester, following PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention System) by using strategies such as pep rallies, construction of a student committee and additional counseling when needed. During Robert's math class observation, it was obvious in the tone and demeanor he used that he had developed rapport with the students and that expectations had been established. It was an environment that included students who demonstrated high impulsivity levels, as evidenced by the small number of students in the classroom and the way they their desks were arranged. The 10 desks were arranged in a horseshoe and were spaced far enough apart so as to not allow them to touch one another. Some students had their own personal behavior management cards displayed on their desk. As soon as the students walked in Robert began giving instructions. "Today we are going to review proportions and know if they are equivalent. Does anyone remember our conversation from yesterday?" Robert scanned the room as he walked toward Shaun who had yet to get his book out. "We are all on page 254, thanks Keisha for coming in and being prepared quickly. Give yourself a point." The entire lesson continued with the same solid reinforcement type behavior from Robert, which appeared to keep the students on task and calm. The lesson went smoothly and the pace was brisk, which did not allow for students to get off task.

Robert's lesson coincided with the topic that the majority of the members in the focus group discussed regarding accountability in the classroom. Goldie mentioned, "When we listen they know that you care and if you care they are more responsive to you as far as the curriculum

is concerned." That is when Rico stated, "Exactly, therefore if it [concern/issue] can't be resolved in the classroom we'll refer them to the counselor and we do have a peer mediator program which often gives them some type of solution."

When observing Rico's class, I noticed that the students had a very laid back approach and it was evident they felt comfortable with him. At one point the discussion became lively. One student, Edward, yelled back at Mary "Shut-up bighead!" Rico quickly interceded and stated in a matter- of-fact tone, "Is that the type of language we use when referring to one another?" Edward responded quickly, "No sir." "Would you want someone to talk to your mother or sister that way?" "No sir." "Remember ladies and gentlemen treat others how you would like to be treated, and if you like being treated poorly, then think of how I want to be treated," Rico said, chuckling at the end.

Achieving accountability and creating a safe environment relied heavily on building relationships and relating to the student's everyday lives in the middle school. It was evident through observations and the focus group discussions that real life experiences played a vital role in molding student academics at this level. The two young ladies who participated in Saturday school meeting talked about how students were concerned with their image and how they may act one way at school and another way at home. Barbra stated, "I feel that students don't act their selves around their parents. Then when they get to school, they act different and more disrespectful toward the teachers." Although I did not observe any blatant disrespect among the students, I did witness some students getting loud with each other and calling each other names such as stupid and ugly. There were no expletives used nor any physical altercations the entire month I was in the building. It was evident that this team of teachers worked hard to ensure a sense of accountability and consequences for students' actions.

At the high school level, the theme of a safe and secure environment was manifested in a different way. It is crucial in an economically disadvantaged setting for students to feel a sense of safety and to have the ability to express their thoughts (Nadelson et al., 2012; Sosa & Gomez, 2012). This is especially relevant at the high school level where students will be entering the work force or college and may never have the support needed to navigate the challenges of their daily experiences. I did not get many chances to observe in the classrooms at the high school level due to the teachers' unwillingness to grant permission; however, in the classes I observed mutual respect and organization were present.

I observed in a co-taught class where the general education teacher and the special education teacher shared a mutual understanding that was obvious by the flow of the lesson. There was no indication of the students identified with disabilities, as no one student was singled out during the session. The organization of the classroom created an environment that promoted cooperation and a discussion-like atmosphere. The desks were arranged in three rows of five desks that mirrored one another. The aisle was in the middle of the room, enabling space for the teachers to walk and face the mirrored rows. The rows were turned so each half of the class faced one another, which allowed for a discussion forum. The teacher's desk was at the end of the main aisle and the LCD projector screen was at the other end of the main aisle. The room was a bit crowded, yet no one seemed bothered by the tight accommodations. Neither teacher sat during any portion of the observation. It was evident that students were used to the pace and the consistent monitoring by both teachers. Francine appeared to be the lead teacher that day, while Chica monitored the class.

Class began with a bell ringer question, which was corrected and collected within a five-minute span. Class started with an advanced organizer for students, which included the learning

standard and overall agenda given both orally and visually in PowerPoint form. The lesson was orally presented, where students took notes and could utilize their phones to take pictures of the overhead screen if they needed to. The lesson focused on the components of expository writing with various examples. The students appeared very laid back with the teachers, who allowed them to ask questions without raising their hand. For example, a student asked "Do we need to write this out too?" without being acknowledged. Francine responded, "No, this is just additional information, that may help when putting your paper together. You can take a picture if you want it." It was evident in this class that audio and visual recording was permissible.

A safe and secure environment at the high school level appeared in the demonstration of a student's ability to combine their current experience with technology within the classroom with Chica and Francine's PowerPoint. The relationship between Francine and Chica indicated a close-knit environment where everyone felt empowered and had a sense of self-reliance to cope with daily life experiences.

This phenomenon was also discussed in Chica's interview and among the focus group briefly. Francine felt that motivation was most needed to build confidence in students and her techniques seen in the classroom demonstrated her belief. Being allowed to use their camera phones gave students the opportunity to build a trusting relationship while utilizing the technology to improve their own note taking skills. Chica chimed in during the focus group, "…You never assume they know anything." She demonstrated this in the classroom by monitoring during the PowerPoint presentation those students who were known for being off-task. Her style was very subtle, either by being near the student or by making eye contact.

A safe and secure environment for all three bounded systems enabled students from the elementary to the secondary level to have a sense of stability and steadiness during their school

day. For some students this may be the only time they have such security. Research indicated that having a protected atmosphere leads to self-confidence, feelings of empathy for others and self-reliance (Aldridge & Ala'l, 2013; Johnson et al., 2012; Smith & Kearney, 2012). These factors were beneficial in the development of students being academically successful and ultimately becoming productive citizens in the workforce.

Theme Three: Positive Relationships among Students and Staff

The third overall theme recognized throughout each bounded system was the need for administrators, teachers, and students to establish a positive relationship with one another. This theme was discussed in both interviews and focus groups alike among each of the bounded systems. It was also observed consistently in all classrooms as it is at the core of each school's mission statement and overall improvement plan. This theme was also something that was addressed on both teacher and administrators' survey results.

The elementary level appeared to have a more systematic approach to establishing a rapport with students, which improved relationships with teachers. All the teachers I observed discussed Class Dojo and its positive effects on relationships with students. Class Dojo is a positive behavior intervention application that can be managed from a phone application or computer or smartboard and instantly reinforces students' positive behaviors and provides feedback to both parents and administrators in real-time (Chiarelli et al., 2015). Tasha utilized Class Dojo and incorporated student autonomy, as students were encouraged to award points on the computer when told to do so. "Thank you, Lexa, for doing the right thing. Go ahead and give yourself a point on Dojo," Tasha rang out, while beginning her lesson on subject and predicate. "You see when you are doing what is expected of you, you can get rewarded." During focus group, Patricia, who was a technological guru stated, "Class Dojo is one of my favorites; it's

quick and easy and is documentation friendly. It provides the parent and my boss [principal] records. It's a beautiful thing!" she laughed. Class Dojo directly coincided with the school improvement plans, implementing a school wide positive behavior intervention system (PBIS). Even the students were clear on the expectations in the classroom as Agnes aptly stated, "I think that I'm supposed to stay focused, get all my work done and respect my teachers."

Teachers demonstrated their understanding of the relationships needed with the administration and with one another. The results collected from the teacher surveys indicated there was a schism between expectations from the administration and what the staff experienced. For example, during the focus group there was extensive talk on how the coaches, along with the administrators made it clear regarding what the role of the teacher was, and yet most teachers did not feel administrators were fulfilling their duties. Billy said, "I've been here for several years and I have received lots of professional development with great ideas, but I hardly ever get the time to plan and implement those ideas." Esther chimed in "We no longer suggest anything at the leadership meetings because it appears to fall on deaf ears."

The teacher survey at the elementary level revealed a lowered execution of the administration's role in the everyday experiences at the school. The broad categories of the survey included: School mission definition, management of instructional program and the development of the school climate. In this instance for this theme the focus is in the last section, development of school climate, which had a subset of five components that addressed protection of instructional time, incentives for teachers, incentives for learning, professional learning and high visibility (Appendix M). Every component in this broader section scored well below 50% except for professional development. The Likert scale survey was based on teachers giving a score between one and five; five being the highest. I tallied scores that were four and higher as

being acceptable. Based on the data, the majority of the teachers felt the administration did not value instructional time nor provide incentives for individual or practices completed. These data correlated with the administrators' scores, which averaged 50% for the same category, development of school climate, with four out of the five functions at 50% or less, except for the function of professional development.

Therefore, although relationships were indicated necessary to build a successful and viable learning environment for the students, it was documented that there was still room for improvement with relationships between teachers and the administration. The fortification of said relationships would solidify the mission for an effective learning environment. This implication is further discussed in Chapter Five.

The middle school appeared to have positive relationships between the staff and the students. The moment I walked into the building the atmosphere appeared friendly and warm. The secretary talked with the students and seemed to know most by name and asked about their personal well-being. Students responded well to her sense of humor and enjoyed her motherly attitude when she told them, "Tuck your shirt in young man, first impressions are important." Each time I walked down the hall students were laughing and joking during changing of classes, while teachers stood outside of their doors urging students to get to class. There was loudness and typical pre-teen behavior, but nothing rowdy or violent.

The focus group, observation, interview and survey data pointed to the significance of relationships among students and briefly touched on the importance of the administration's role [or lack thereof] in establishing a positive relationship with students and staff. Goldie elaborated extensively on the importance of getting to know the students in the community and what they were exposed to outside of school. She even provided parents with her personal phone number

where she could be directly contacted. "I let students know that they can't call me but can ask me things before, during and after school because I am there for them."

In the focus group Leanne talked about how students, even those who are labeled 'gifted' are not exposed to vocabulary. "They are not getting the root words at home… sometimes they don't even know how to act around people." Robert interjected, "For example, code switching and stuff like that." Most in the group agreed by nodding their heads. "We do life lessons in my room," Goldie stated. "Usually it happens when a student comes in my room upset about something and we stop the entire class and talk about it."

Yet when the group began talking about the relationship between the administration and themselves, there was a different attitude. Sabrina commented. "They [administrators] need to be visible. They can't hide." Rico stated, "Holding not just teachers accountable but holding students and their parents accountable for the student's learning for their behavior and actions." Again, there was an overall resounding yes that followed, the voices among the group agreed. Teachers were clear on what and how to establish positive relationships among students and even parents. However, again there seemed to be a more tenuous relationship among the administration and the teachers.

The survey data pointed out areas where improvement was needed. The category emphasized was development of school climate, which consisted of the functions mentioned previously: protection of instructional time, incentives for teachers and learning, promotion for professional development and high visibility. At the middle school level, the teachers were more satisfied with the job the administrators were doing more so than the actual administrators were. Since the study was limited to only two administrators at the middle school level, this created a reliability issue. The overall score for the category for teachers was 74% with eight participants,

and an 80% average in the category for administrators with two participants. The functions of professional development were the highest for both administrators and teachers with 100% and 98% respectively; the lowest scores were 65% in high visibility for teachers and 60% from administration. These scores indicated that although they were low, both parties were aware of the problem and must now come together to find a solution.

Observations in the various classes demonstrated solid relationship development among students and teachers. During one observation of a math class, I arrived at the end of one of the administrator walk throughs. Neither the teacher nor students acknowledged my presence. When I looked for a seat, a student moved his belongings and offered a seat next to him and continued following along. The setup of the class was one of congestion, as it appeared to have too many students (22), yet no one seemed to mind the pace was quick and the students seemed familiar with the routine. Throughout the session there were rarely any disruptions and Sabrina's body language and voice were even keeled during the entire lesson. Students raised their hands and had few private conversations that did not focus on the lesson. Students appeared to be quite serious.

In contrast, Robert's class was rambunctious. It was also crowded, with 27 students. I learned later it was this way because every student was required to take social studies and he was the only teacher on grade level. There were various side conversations during his class and he stopped several times until the students subsided. He had a jovial demeanor and never appeared bothered or annoyed by their disruptions and continued with the lesson. Most students were interested, especially when he talked about how the past correlated with the present day and explained the relevancy.

High school was a bigger setting and the pace was fast. People moved quickly throughout the day. My observations were limited because most of the teachers were not willing to be observed; however, I conducted three observations. There were various references during both the interviews and the focus group that indicated the significance of a solid relationship among teachers, students and administrators. The surveys from the teachers and administrators also indicated relationship relevance. All data were discussed within the bounded system.

 Sally, being new at the school, was willing to let me observe her class. It was a smaller class with 6-10 students who worked independently at completing their writing assignments. These were students who still received ESOL services and were ready to test out of the program. Sally allowed students to work in groups while working on their writing assignments. Sally noticed that Juan worked on his own and she monitored him from a distance. It appeared he was struggling and Sally went over with several different graphic organizers and began explaining how they could help him begin his writing. For the remainder of the session Sally sat next to Juan, giving him individualized assistance on organizing his paper. The other students who were in the class came over to Sally once or twice to ask questions. The atmosphere in the classroom demonstrated one of mutual respect, where students were extremely comfortable to ask Sally for help at any time.

The focus group and interviews addressed the significance of building relationships with the students and administrators. Chica spoke of meeting students where they are. "A lot of the times the books and stories they want us to use the kids can't relate..." Sally added, "I use differentiated instruction." Jan, who was the parent liaison, added, "…I try and learn the community leaders and get the extra benefits that could benefit or support those portions of the

lessons." "It's also important to differentiate according to reading scores and model behavior," Gail stated.

The group also pointed out their concerns with the treatment they received from administrators. Dottie complained, "The recognition of teacher autonomy is my main one." Revealing her displeasure at the current state of the administration. Francine added, "I would say support, no support to actually help you really build that classroom that needs to be." Gail chimed in, "As a new teacher, I requested a mentor and I have never got one..." Despite teachers demonstrating their understanding of what students needed to be successful, many described some deficiency in the way the administration handled their communication with teachers.

The survey data aligned with the other findings. The category of school climate development aligned most closely with the theme regarding positive relationships between students and administrators. The functions of instructional time, incentives for teachers and learning professional development and high visibility indicated how both the administrators and teachers felt regarding the environment in the building. Both averages for teachers and administrators were low; 32% for teachers and 54% for administrators. The functions that were especially low included incentives for teachers and learning at 25% and 26%. The functions in the administrator results included the lowest score for incentives for teachers at 40% and professional development at 60%. These scores demonstrated that there were common denominators between administrators and teachers and that now an action plan was needed.

The third theme from all three bounded systems produced documented evidence that relationships between students and teachers were positive, as displayed frequently through observations and discussions by all focus groups and interviews from both teachers and students.

However, the data from each bounded system indicated there was room to improve relationships between teachers and the administration.

Theme Four: Professional Development Impact on Curriculum

The fourth theme emphasized the significance of professional development and the impact on the curriculum. This idea alone was host to many studies in the literature, and led to subsequent laws citing curriculum as a hallmark in current education (Durfour & Marzano, 2011; ESSA, 2015; NCLB, 2002; Payne, 2013). In addition, the professional learning community and its importance in minimizing the achievement gap was the argument that continued in the increasingly diverse classroom (Ackram & Ghani, 2013; Anderson et al., 2012; Brown & Kappes, 2012; Curry et al., 2016; Jones et al., 2013; Quigley, 2013).

In alignment with the findings from the literature, when I observed and talked with students and teachers in a group and individually, pedagogy was found to be at the forefront. For example, the focus group at the elementary level was very in tune with professional learning. Billy responded, "We meet sometimes five days a week on various ideals, data analysis arts within the curriculum etc." Tasha interjected, "However, a lot of the meetings could be emails giving us our time to actually plan." Patricia added, "Since we literally meet about five times a week, it is difficult for you to use any of the wonderful ideas shared in your actual classroom." Alley timidly added, "Sometimes, I honestly don't know what I should do, there is so much thrown at me, I thought it would get easier but it just seems to be more to learn each year." Most in the group firmly agreed. Denise mentioned in her interview session that although professional learning was important, she felt as a veteran that it was "Quite a bit, and did feel sorry for new teachers. I am overwhelmed sometimes and I have been teaching a while [17 years]."

It was evident when I talked with the participants in groups and individually that professional learning was a significant part of what occurred in their building. It was very clear to me when I observed that it was being utilized. The lessons went smoothly and always included some type of technology. Teachers were constantly using positive reinforcement and used Class Dojo as second nature in some classes. Every type of technology that had been mentioned within the focus group was observed in a class. For example, Tasha spoke of choice boards, which is a way to differentiate instruction while reviewing lessons that needed to be retaught. When I observed her class, I saw first-hand how this graphic organizer worked in the classroom. This lesson was also the way Tasha utilized her data analysis, which was one of the professional development workshops that took place often during planning.

Patricia gave professional learning workshops but would only agree to do them after school or on a planning day. "I am a teacher too, I realize that we still need our time if it's not to just decompress sometimes. Knowledge is great, but you must have time to actually use it." Patricia was trained by the county on conflict resolution and the de-escalation of situations. It was clear that her humor and her way of never letting anything get her down contributed to the reason she was chosen to redeliver this to the staff. This [use of de-escalation techniques] was not something I witnessed during any of my observations in the building during my time there.

It was apparent that professional development was something important within the county and in the elementary building. The focus groups, interviews and observations documented both the pros and some cons of professional development, whereas the survey data solidified and demonstrated the importance of the completion of professional development in the building. The function of developing school learning climate averaged 88% for the teachers, which indicated that professional development was above average. The two elementary

administrators surveyed were in 80% agreement that professional development was a strong point at their school. There was, however, strong feelings expressed by the teachers that more actual planning and implementation time was necessary in order for teachers to not feel burdened or overwhelmed.

Middle school's aura throughout their focus group demonstrated a more balanced temperament for professional development. There was not as much emphasis on the professional sessions, which only appeared to take place once a week during planning time and whenever the county had a county wide professional development session. At the middle school, planning time occurred daily and was an hour long [55 min]. During their weekly planning, the team indicated they usually spent a large portion of their time planning their lessons as a team and addressing any behavioral concerns that occurred. Robert often spoke of preparation for the Georgia Milestones and how they would prepare for Saturday school. The additional assistance began in January until spring break (end of March).

The newer members of the team spoke of the individual training they had attended. There was no feedback, positive or negative, on its help in their everyday role within the classroom. Rico discussed individually the many different workshops he had attended, one of which was learning to be the trainer for teachers on the student support team process. He was also the one to help with behavior intervention strategies, which he would discuss at meetings or individually if needed. "The administration over the years has been helpful in empowering me to attend workshops that I feel will benefit me as long as I am willing to share. Meaning redeliver to the staff."

Goldie, who had worn multiple hats throughout her career, had a unique perspective.

"I feel we are in a technological society, yet every child doesn't have a computer at home. We should be teaching two and three languages by the middle school yet we aren't." Her overall point was that most of the professional development was covering outdated ideas that addressed twentieth century ideals instead of twenty-first century goals. She felt this was the reason for the achievement gap and the disconnect between students and teachers at times.

My observations in the classroom demonstrated well prepared individuals who emphasized the standards and ensured they were visible within the room and were verbalized and understood by the students. Although there was a formulaic pace to most lessons, regardless of subject, there was still the personalized touch of the teacher. It was evident when speaking with the students that their role was known and adhered to by most. Betsy stated, "Teachers teach us what we want to be when we get older, different scientific stuff, mathematics and language arts." Barbra added, "…teachers are supposed to teach us different things that we might need when we grow up."

The last set of data that demonstrated professional development as a significant part of the middle school's success was the surveys completed by the eight members who participated in the focus group and two of the three administrators. This bounded system was the most consistent with their alignment between both sets of participants. The category, developing school climate, with the function of professional development, was 98% and 100% met, as indicated by both the teachers and administrator results. These data matched their demeanor within the focus group and their overall feedback. Although there were several new teachers, they did not express a feeling of being overwhelmed, despite the fact that they were apprehensive to allow me to observe them, and I respected their wishes.

The high school's emphasis on professional development was also not as intense as that which was felt at the elementary level. The high school teachers whom I was able to talk with and observe were all members of the language arts team, and most who participated in the focus group were new to the field. The high school demonstrated the same formulaic pattern of ensuring the visibility of the standard on the board, teachers beginning the lesson with an ice breaker, and verbally stating what the lesson would entail for the day. In Dottie, Francine and Chica's classes this was done in the form of an advanced organizer displayed in PowerPoint format. It was clear that students were familiar with this type of set-up because in each setting students entered the classrooms ready to begin their lesson within a five-minute time frame. Sally's class was less formal, although she did still review the standard and pass out a graphic organizer.

Chica discussed the need for additional training for her because of the ever-changing needs of some of her students. For example, she stated, "Now that I work with mostly seniors I am looking at how I can take my expertise and support them as they matriculate out of high school into college and career readiness." Therefore, she enjoyed going to a workshop to not only increase her professional learning opportunities, but to "...see what other people are doing." She added, "I like to let my students know what's coming up for them."

The professional development theme was not as evident within the results of the high school survey as in the other two bounded systems; however, this could be a result of only two veteran teachers within the seven teachers who participated. Moreover, it was only related to one subject, language arts. . Forty percent of the high school teachers scored a 4 or higher in the category of developing school climate with the function of professional development. Two of

the four administrators who participated scored four or higher (60%) as far as professional development was concerned.

Professional development with focus on curriculum was an integral part of the daily atmosphere at all the bounded systems. The teacher surveys at two of the schools were extremely high and aligned with the administrator survey results. It was clear why these particular sites were successful because all administrators, teachers and even the students realized that a viable curriculum was the key to a bright beginning.

Theme Five: Effective Practices

The last common theme in all the bounded systems was the use of effective practices, including technology, differentiated instruction and multiple intelligences. These techniques and strategies were discussed, surveyed and observed in every site. The majority of techniques and strategies that were previously mentioned in the literature review were in some way discussed or observed at each of the bounded systems. It was evident why research deemed effective practices essential to academic success in any school environment.

Effective practices at the elementary level took on many different forms. The county encouraged technology and was one of the first to install interactive whiteboards in all classrooms. This enabled the assigned teacher laptops to interact with the technology on a daily basis for lessons, and enabled teachers to have access to videos and other games instantly. It also replaced the need for a bulky TV and overhead projector. The significance of such a system enlarged the space within a classroom and enabled the teachers to access electronic textbook, which in turn freed up the teacher to become a facilitator and provide feedback in the classroom in live time.

For example, Libby, during her presentation of fractions, utilized the interactive whiteboard in order to have the math electronic textbook problems displayed as they appeared in the students' own textbooks. While simultaneously having the problems displayed, the students worked out the problems on the board. Students were also required to explain systematically how they derived the answers and the class would have to agree as a group on the accuracy of their process. "What did you do here Jessica? Remember when explaining how you arrive at an answer please use complete sentences and be as specific as possible," Libby stated to each person. Libby allowed students to volunteer to go to the board in order to avoid someone becoming embarrassed. "What does everyone think about Jessica's final answer?" David? Do you think everything is accurate? If not please in a nice way tell her what she may have missed?" The students were eloquent in their responses to one another and it was clear, that this type of open dialogue was routine in the classroom. "Mrs. L, she didn't reduce it to the lowest denominator." "Go up to the board and show her what is next, very good David. Does everyone see that? Libby then scanned the room to check faces to ensure everyone appeared to understand. "Ok, let's move on to the next problem."

This lesson contained many attributes of effective practices. For example, the use of multiple intelligences, using auditory, visual, kinesthetic and gross motor skills was noted. By using many different modalities, the teacher was able to reach learners on several different levels. Research studies have indicated that these types of effective practices are highly successful within a diverse community (Bird & Markle, 2012; Chenoweth, 2009; Gage, 2016; Thomas & Green, 2015; Quigley, 2013). I observed that these types of lessons were frequent in the elementary setting.

The focus groups and interviews produced the same type of results. As stated before everyone agreed that there were ample professional development opportunities that guided instruction within the classroom. Alley stated. "We had explicit instruction training, data review and arts within the curriculum." "Choice boards allow students to choose what they want to do based on standards being currently taught. This enables them accountability and a sense of empowerment," Tasha chimed in. Patricia talked about what it was like being the professional learning facilitator. "We as teachers are able to talk to one another in in our professional learning communities and just learn from one another." The group also talked about the importance of technology. Denise stated, "Star Math is important for getting an early understanding of where a student falls with certain skills, it assists in grouping children initially." Esther commented on Starfall Reading. "It's [Starfall Reading] a great program for those students who still struggle with basic phonics since there is nowhere in my day to assist with that particular skill." It is evident in both the elementary school interviews and group discussions that effective practices were discussed and implemented on a frequent basis.

The middle school effective practices were documented in several ways. The school improvement plan spoke of several workshops being offered to include teachers being trained on multiple practices. One practice being emphasized was the positive behavior intervention system (PBIS) which was being utilized school wide. The school improvement plan spoke of meeting with recognition rallies that quarterly rewarded positive behavior, as well as setting up a student committee that would suggest better practices for the school. It was clear the school knew of the correlation between achievement and behavior management.

I observed in several classrooms at the middle school level, two of which included two all-male classes. In all classes I saw various levels of teaching strategies and techniques being

utilized. One language arts class was in cooperative groups the entire time, completing a culminating project based on the completion of a novel. Another class worked in groups of two to three completing math equations. One class worked together on solving proportions, while focusing on creating a respectful and cooperative environment. While the last two classes worked in a lecture setting, they moved at a steady pace that enabled them to ask questions and evaluate the information as they went along. The class size often dictated how lessons were presented. All teachers presented learning standards and an agenda for each lesson. For the most part students were engaged and on-task and the overall climate in all classes was respectful.

The focus groups and interviews discussed the importance of effective practices. Leanne noted, "In English we spend a lot of time talking about character education." Goldie talked about the many ways she felt were important to obtain academic success. "A lot of projects, a lot of videotaping and now using technology… online research and creation of games and other new software. This makes them more engaged in the activities and the teaching." Whereas Robert talked about other strategies:

> My administration created a study skills class for a student who had failed the year
>
> before, I monitor his grades, make sure his work is turned in and work with him to
>
> become more responsible and organized for keeping up with his work. Some students
>
> may need additional support in the organizational piece of it all and how not to get
>
> overwhelmed. This too is an important piece of being successful.

Even the students at the middle school level agreed on the importance of being focused and respectful to teachers in order to prepare for high school.

The high school level offered effective practice vignettes as well, although the observations and discussions were limited due to the focused content being discussed and the lack of teaching experience. There was no input from the students at the high school level.

I was able to observe three classes at the high school level. The classroom of Francine and Chica gave a glimpse into what co-teaching looks like. The minute the bell rang most students were seated and ready to begin. Each teacher was stationed nearly at opposite ends of the room and Francine began the lesson. She began with an overview of the content that would be covered and began a PowerPoint presentation. Chica monitored the room from a distance and kept in close proximity with certain students without interrupting the flow of the class. In the second observation, Sally was in a more intimate setting and allowed students to work in a group setting or individually, providing graphic organizers and any other materials that students needed to complete their essays. This was an English to speakers of other languages (ESOL) class, therefore she used many different strategies, such as modeling and one on one instruction. The last class that I observed also utilized graphic organizers, however the teacher lectured in traditional style at the podium with very little movement. She kept the class engaged and could see everyone in the classroom.

The focus group and interviews among the teachers at the high school level discussed effective practices and how they were needed to increase academic success. Chica stated, "The first order of business is establishing classroom management. I'm a firm believer if you don't have classroom management, you are not going to have anything else." Although Jan was not a teacher, she still understood what it meant for teachers to be effective. "Focusing on getting to find out what the student needs to integrate a little bit more. Learn about their culture and then expanding their American cultures." During the focus group Sally mentioned using various

techniques, "I try and extend beyond paper and pencil activities. I promote a little speaking we do a little sketching confirmation type sketching to get them to understand some kind of terms and things." These particular strategies work in concert with a diverse population. Jan went on to say, "I try and help by creating a field trip or an experience or activity that parents and students can do…"

Effective practices were evident at every bounded system. Most were integrated into lessons that flowed easily and appeared to engage students, from advance organizers, to the various cooperative groups, to the use of multiple technological resources. These practices were discussed, observed and implemented in order to produce academic success for all students in these bounded systems.

Outlier Assertions

The five themes that emerged correlated with both the findings discussed in the literature review and the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter Two. The use of an explicitly designed school improvement plan enabled each of the bounded systems to have successful learning environments that followed distinct guidelines and set specific goals. The use of a designated template allowed each bounded system the freedom to create a plan that suited the need of the demographic atmosphere. The need for a safe and secure environment existed at all of the sites and was explicitly discussed in the literature review as significant in the self-empowerment and efficacy of students. These attributes are especially important for students within a diverse community who may be at-risk for outside factors, such as increased unemployment/underemployment, domestic violence and decreased mortality rate (Gage et al., 2016; Hill et al., 2013; Johnson et al., 2012). Moreover, the idea of a safe environment includes more than simply the physical climate of a building. Teachers and administrators are essential in

assuring that students, as well as parents, feel welcomed within the building. This occurs when there is continuous outreach and communication by keeping parents informed of any changes within the school. The safety and security correlate with developing a positive relationship among the staff and students, which was the next recurring theme.

Relationships are integral for all students and have significant meaning for a diverse student population who may experience many challenges outside of the school environment. Those challenges include, but are not limited to, higher dropout rates, increased at-risk behaviors, and frequent absenteeism (Bird & Markle, 2012; Branch et al., 2013; Dufour & Marzano, 2011; Payne, 2013). When a good rapport exists, these issues are decreased, if not eliminated. This concept is related to the theme indicating the importance of professional development and its impact on the curriculum. When teachers are trained on the curriculum and other related components of teaching such as cultural awareness through workshops and behavior management sessions, staff begins to develop the knowledge necessary to ascertain signs that could alleviate some of the challenges students and parents face in their daily lives that impact their ability to learn. Professional development therefore not only includes honing skills for curriculum but for an overall holistic approach to the mental and physical wellness of the student.

The last theme that tied all of the themes together was effective practices. The use of effective practices existed because they were specifically detailed in the school improvement plans developed for each designated site. The staff members, including the administration ensured a positive rapport that enabled a safe and secure environment where self-efficacy and stability were evident in order for students to become successful. This was compounded by the professional development received, both for academic and behavior enhancement.

The themes that emerged worked symbiotically to create effective learning environments, yet there were a few that did not align with what makes a successful diverse school setting. For example, at the elementary level during the focus group discussions there was an overall sense of overwhelming tiredness. Tasha stated, "A lot of meeting should be emails." Billy also spoke, "It's not a planning period because you don't get to plan."

Alley complained, "I don't know what the expectation is anymore because they have so many expectations [administration]." The entire group felt it was a difficult task to balance the duties of the job with their own personal lives. This was pointed out by Tasha and others. "It's like you are expected to choose between your personal life and your professional life." Patricia stated, "The administration's role should be to provide support, accept the numbers for what they are, instead of what you want them to be."

At the middle school level, there were also some concerns that were shared in the focus group regarding the role of the administration:

Rico stated, "It [learning] shouldn't be all on the teacher's shoulders." Goldie went on to say, "I think the code of conduct book is a wash. They [administration] don't take certain offenses serious. Whereas, we [teachers] think they're serious. The consequences aren't severe they're lenient." Yet Sabrina had some thoughts on what administration should be able to offer the staff: "They [administration] also need to be familiar with the curriculum itself. Whether they are working with the instructional facilitator, just in case their boss asks them about the data at school."

High school teachers also brought a frustrated feeling to their focus group. Their overall concern was the fact that little to no mentoring and support was given to teachers. I felt because there were several long-term substitutes and young teachers here, there were unique needs that

needed to be addressed. Francine pointed out: "Yeah, no support to actually help you really build that classroom that needs to be." The veteran teacher, Dottie, pointed to the way teachers were treated overall and since she had taught for a while this statement was surprising. "Our qualities are not being recognized on a consistent basis. Our own value, skill/expertise in knowing our schools and knowing how to reach out to students without anyone coming forward and telling us how to reach and how to teach our students." Gail chimed in, "I requested a mentor and I have never gotten one." Bethany said, "My mentor is my assistant principal, but I don't see how you can actually be helpful and have the sit down and talk with me if you have to deal with a lot of paperwork and I need another teacher where I can bounce ideas off."

The concerns of all three bounded systems centered on the relationships with the administration. Each system had a different underlying issue. At the elementary level the concern was the lack of time to accurately plan. The middle school's concern was the leniency of the administration. At the high school level teachers felt the lack of administrative support through mentoring new teachers. These characteristics point to a school with specific needs that hamper overall success, yet all three schools managed to overcome the concerns and still be effective.

Research Question Results

The themes and outlier assertions were evidenced in all the documents, observations, focus groups and interviews. The central and guiding research questions served as a blueprint to answer the question that targeted the characteristics of high achieving minority populations and the roles teachers, administrators and students played. The collective case study provided data that could be replicated among any elementary or secondary diverse economically disadvantaged

educational site. In the section that follows I discuss how each research question was answered within the data collected.

The central research question was: What are the unique characteristics of schools (high school, middle, elementary) with high achieving minority student populations? The unique characteristics of schools at the elementary and secondary levels with high achieving minority student populations was evidenced throughout each bounded system. I saw through the documents analyzed, observations completed, focus groups and interviews transcribed that the schools aligned with the literature review findings and the theoretical framework discussed. The main focus of most of the documents demonstrated an emphasis on the implementation of a strong curriculum. For example, at the elementary level the school improvement plan called for a 5% increase in reading/language arts benchmark grades. The scores indicated a range of a 3-5% increase in language arts and a 5-8% increase in math. One method that may have attributed to the increase was evidenced in Tasha's class with explicit modeling. She utilized the document camera and explained step-by-step the process of diagramming subjects and predicates in a simple sentence. The use of the same worksheet the students had in front of them at the time and the 'I do, we do, you do' model engaged the students throughout the lesson. Whereas in Esther's class students were operating at the analysis level of Bloom's Taxonomy when they were using clues from story illustrations such as the body language of the characters and the background imagery to predict possible outcomes. During the focus group discussion, six out of eight members brought up the importance of using specific techniques or strategies that included the use of computer technology, including STAR Math and Accelerated Reader, which encouraged and increased students' skill sets on multiple concepts. The survey results provided data (Appendix N) where a high percentage of the teachers (73%) agreed the curriculum coordinated

with the overall mission and goals set by the school improvement plan. Survey results also provided scores in the professional development category (88%), which was well above the criteria set for student achievement goals.

At the middle school bounded system, the school improvement plan indicated guidelines that included an increase up to 6% in language arts. This goal was found on the CRCT Language Arts scores with a range of 4.5% over a 3-year period (2008-2011]). Another goal on the school improvement plan was to provide a safe and secure environment. One of the language arts teachers, Leanne, discussed in focus group and during her observation the need for students to learn how to communicate with those outside of their peer group. Students needed to realize that speaking with an adult was not like talking to their friends and 'code switching' was necessary in order to be effective. Leanne allowed a certain amount of freedom within her classroom as students worked in collaborative groups. She felt they were loud, yet did not share her thoughts about this with them. She monitored and talked with groups individually and as they were engaged in completing the task at hand. In another classroom, Rico reminded students of the language, tone and actions that they should use with one another. He remained calm in his demeanor, expressing the importance of keeping one's cool and using non-abrasive words with one another, such as saying be quiet instead of shut-up. It was evident students required consistent and positive reinforcement about the use of appropriate language and gestures when one student, Latanya, yelled out "Stupid!" and then immediately apologized for her outburst.

The survey results indicated a majority agreement in two of the three categories on the PIMRS. Defines school mission and managing instructional program both had ratings well above the 80% criteria. The defines school mission category had 100% of the teachers' responses rating the administration's actions at a four or higher on the survey, making both sub-

sections results at 100%.   Likewise, the category managing instructional time with the sub-categories of questions regarding coordination of the curriculum (100%), supervision and evaluation of instruction (90%), and monitoring of student progress (70%), had an overall average for all three sub-categories of 87%. The high scores indicated the teachers' overall satisfaction regarding the way the administration handled these particular areas. The last category, developing school learning climate received an overall average of 74% for its five sub-sections. The sub-sections included protection of instructional time (70%), maintaining high visibility (65%), providing incentive for teachers (72%), promotes professional learning (97%), and provides incentives for learning (65%). The data in this category indicated areas of improvement for the administration. The guiding questions specifically discussed the roles of the individuals in these bounded systems.

At the high school level, the school improvement plans indicated the need to increase language arts and math scores to 80%. This was accomplished for language arts for all three years (86%, 86%, 83%) and two out of the three years for math (70%, 88%, 80%). These scores were obtained from contributing factors found in the classroom. One method was the use of co-teaching. Francine and Chica demonstrated a true collegial relationship with one another. It was evident in the rapport observed in the classroom. Francine's use of current technology such as Microsoft PowerPoint and the use of phone cameras helped to build a mutual respect with the students who stayed engaged throughout the lesson. Another method included Sally's technique of individualized teaching in her ESOL class. She was able to address students' questions separately or allow them to work in a group. This style of teaching helped promote more second language students to the proficient range, as evidenced by the end of year assessment.

Guiding Question 1: What is the role of teachers in schools with high achieving minority students? Teachers made up most of the participants in this collective case study. Eleven teacher participants spoke in the focus groups, allowed me to observe them and completed the survey responses. Seven teacher participants participated in the focus groups, observations, surveys and interviews. Six teachers were present at the focus group but did not speak, and also completed the necessary paperwork. There is a multitude of documentation in writing, discussion, and monitoring that confirmed the findings. At the elementary level the school improvement plan stressed the significance of parent participation with a goal of increasing it by 3%. There was an 8% increase in parent participation over the three years analyzed, moving from70 to78%. Teachers contributed by joining the parent teacher organization and hanging a badge displaying their participation outside of their classroom doors. This initial outreach opened the door to other important factors. Researchers have found that teachers were the first and main influence for students in the classroom setting (Aldridge & Ala'l, 2013; Nadelson, 2012); therefore, it was important that a rapport was developed. The relationships that were developed were discussed in the interviews. Denise spoke of her own experiences of injustice that formed her tenets of fairness in the classroom whereas Patricia drew on her military background as a dependent and her own journey as a parent of a special needs child. Denise and Patricia indicated their use of multiple strategies such as collaborative grouping and technology. Patricia spoke of her outreach through Donors Choose to raise money for iPad in her classroom, whereas Denise stressed the importance of connecting concepts to real world practices such as repeated addition when calculating how many water bottles would be needed for a soccer game for the team. Both strategies pointed to the importance of peer learning.

The focus group discussed many important factors and highlighted how teachers wanted administrators to treat them. One concern was the lack of visibility or instructional support, which was an issue that also appeared in the survey results. The category of developing school climate had five functions, one of which was maintaining visibility (referring to administrators), which showed an average of 25%. The other sub-section, protect instructional support, had an average of 45%. This validated the teachers' concerns addressed in the focus group. Another concern in the focus group was not enough time for planning, which Bill emphasized. Another was pointed out by Tasha, who was upset about the lack of professional respect she felt she had received. These results point to the importance of administrators' accountability in the role of developing an effective environment.

The middle school's role for teachers showed similar findings. The school improvement plan called for both the need for an increase of 3% in language arts and for a safe and orderly learning environment. These goals needed teachers' assistance to fulfill. The Language Arts scores increased by 4% over the three years analyzed. The goal of maintaining a safe and orderly environment was evidenced through the survey responses. The category of defines school's mission dealt with questions regarding how and when goals were discussed and maintained. All of the teachers rated all questions at frequently [4] or almost always [5] on a five-point Likert scale (Appendix H).

One of the main concerns in a middle school environment was the need to maintain an orderly environment. The focus group mentioned the presence of a peer mediation panel that was setup by the school counselor. This philosophy aligned with Goldie's discussion on the importance of an established rapport. She talked of giving her phone number to the parents and allowing students to reach her via e-mail before and after school to discuss any concerns they

had. Another technique she developed throughout her long educational career was attending

activities such as sporting events students were involved with in the neighborhood. Robert

discussed the importance of sharing anecdotal stories of his trials and tribulations and how he

never gave up. His constant and diligent monitoring of one student's study skills led to him

graduating in May instead of having to attend summer school in order to graduate.

The survey responses at the middle school level for the teachers were unified. Two out

of three categories, defines mission goals and managing instructional program, both resulted in

an 80% or higher average among the sub-sections. Most teachers agreed on the strengths and

weaknesses of the administration. For example, defines mission's goals responses averaged

100% in both sub-sections, yet the overall average for developing school climate category was

70%, with three out of the five sub-sections in the low 70% average. This information is

discussed in more detail in the Implications section of this paper, as well as the viewpoints and

areas of weakness that were shared among the middle school participants.

The high school level teachers' responses from the survey, observations, interviews and

focus group discussion indicated an overall need for further experience in years taught and

mentorship to support the new teachers. The dynamic felt among the focus group discussion was

one of frustration. For example, Francine asked for a mentor, only to receive an administrator.

which she felt was not a good fit. Dottie talked of her need to be treated as a professional. The

other six members of the group expressed their lack of support or confidence in the current

administration. Yet when observed in the classroom, both Francine and Dottie did not show

signs of uncertainty. Francine demonstrated expertise in content curriculum by consistently

referencing the standard and providing an example of what was expected during her PowerPoint

presentation, while Dottie established the same content awareness using a graphic organizer and peer tutoring.

The presence of low morale emerged in the data collected from the survey responses. The category of defines school mission was the highest, with an average of 76%. The other categories, managing the instructional program and developing student climate, were both under 80% (58% and 32%). These scores supported the feelings expressed in the focus group. The lowest scores appeared in the functions in developing school climate regarding incentives for students and learning, with the low percentages of 25% and 26%. Again, these low scores were not reflected in the day to day observations in the classrooms. Sally, the ESOL teacher, provided individualized teaching and demonstrated a rapport with the students in her classroom. They were comfortable enough to come up and ask questions and worked well in their small groups, yet respected Juan as he decided to work by himself. Sally checked on both the group and Juan and offered additional graphic organizers to complete their writings. Although the high school teachers indicated their concerns, it was not evidenced that their concerns hindered them from giving students their best efforts.

Guiding Question 2: What is the role of administrators in schools with high achieving minority students? The role of administrators was discussed through the interviews, surveys and focus groups. Teachers and students both spoke of what they expected administrators to do. Both sets of participants expected administrators to be knowledgeable regarding content and the culture of the school. Three teachers at the elementary level stated they expected administrators to be able to cover a class if needed as to not have to divide a class up if a substitute was running late. Sabrina stated, "They [administrators] also need to be familiar with the curriculum itself." Several teachers nodded in agreement.

The survey resulted in administrators being evaluated on their actions toward both teachers and students. One area of improvement for administrators involved their need to become more visible. The responses by teachers often were in contrast to what administrators felt they were doing. For example, at the elementary level, the sub-section maintain high visibility, according to teachers averaged 25%, whereas administrators at the elementary level averaged 50%. The same discrepancy existed at the high school level where teachers averaged 33% and administrators 60%. The middle school results were similar for both teachers and administrators in this sub-section; 65% for teachers and 60% for administrators. The survey results revealed that only a third of the bounded systems analyzed were aligned as far as the expectations of how administrators felt they were doing and how teachers felt they were doing. When I examined the data in the category of developing student climate for both the elementary and high school bounded systems the gap was usually 15% or more.

The limited student input for the role of administrators was similar among the elementary and middle school students, where both sets of student participants felt administrators did their jobs. Agnes, an elementary student, stated, "I think their [administrators'] job is to take care of anything that goes too far." In addition, a middle school student, (Barbra) put it in colloquial terms "…they [administrators] keep the children in check and make sure they're trying to behave well." The students also talked about the administrators attending activities such as plays and performances. While in middle school both Barbra and Betsy wanted administrators to "…continue to write up the children who are misbehaving and make sure teachers are doing their jobs."

Guiding Question 3: What is the role of students in schools with high achieving minority students? The student's role in a high achieving minority setting was demonstrated in

the limited interviews and focus groups. I observed how students interacted with both teachers and their fellow peers. All three bounded system demonstrated a reciprocal relationship between student and teacher. For example, at the elementary level, students in Tasha's class followed the directions given and knew how to give themselves points on the computer when rewarded by Tasha. Libby's class had a more open format where they were allowed to inquire and debate as to why certain situations occurred. For example, when one student wanted to go to the restroom, Libby answered "No" and the student replied, "Why not?" Instead of becoming frustrated with the student, Libby informed the student that several people were out of the classroom and they would need to wait.

Students displayed mutual respect for both their peers and teachers. The students who participated in the focus groups talked about the importance of listening and focusing on what the teachers said. "They [teachers] will always try to help you try to figure it out." stated Agnes. Whereas Abigail talked of the expectations she had for teachers. "I think my teachers are supposed to assist me in any way and help me to exceed the Georgia Milestones." There were also mixed feelings expressed regarding the need to get to know a teacher on a personal level. Agnes and Abigail, elementary student participants, agreed it was important to have information such as an email address or things the teacher likes so a student could buy her gifts. Whereas Betsy, one of the middle school participants, stated, "I don't think we need to know their private life. I think we should know our teachers to see what we're working with [professionally]."

Summary

In Chapter Four the findings were presented based on the data collection sources. The data collected derived from physical artifacts including state assessment scores, parent compacts,

school improvement plans and PTO membership records. The other data resources included the observation tool CLASS and the survey tool PIMRS. The themes that emerged from each artifact, assessment instrument tool and interviews/focus group were categorized by each bounded system and the three sources described.

Each theme emerged from each bounded system and had assertions that correlated with the literature review and the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter Two. I used words and phrases that consistently appeared in the documents, observations, focus groups and interviews analyzed. Those words or phrases then formed assertions, and those assertions then developed into themes for each of the data instruments [observations, focus groups, interviews]. I then cross analyzed and developed the themes from all the bounded systems.

There were some assertions from each bounded system that were contrary to the literature review findings. The ongoing concern among each of the bounded systems was the relationships with the administrators. The evidence was discussed in focus groups, surveys and interviews. The surveys' results indicated less than stellar ratings [three and under] in the category developing school learning climate in each of the bounded systems. The focus groups and interviews developed some concerns dealing with mentorship of new teachers, decreasing behavior issues by their presence, and recognition of teacher effort. These are issues that require further discussion.

The study employed a comprehensive analysis of the characteristics needed in order to have a successful economically disadvantaged minority setting. Most of the attributes discussed in the literature review were seen throughout the bounded systems. The data suggested that teachers, students and administrators all seem to have basic commonalities on what should be evidenced in their settings. However, each group had a different approach on how full success

was achieved. In Chapter Five I discuss the three bounded systems in their totality, which

allowed me to see that they had even more common threads than I had first predicted.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

The most comprehensive education bill since the Elementary and Secondary Educational Act (1965) came to an end in 2009 and Every Student Succeeds Act replaced it. This Act was legislated to encourage states to have more flexibility. Georgia was one of the states that adopted the common core curriculum, along with the college and career ready performance index (CCRPI). CCRPI consists of various components such as achievement, progress achievement gap and challenge points to calculate an overall score that indicates how any particular school is doing. This rating system considers many aspects of the overall school atmosphere, in addition to academics (Georgia Department of Education, 2016). This gives schools that are economically disadvantaged the opportunity to compete with their economically affluent counterparts. This new standard of analysis to determine the success of schools takes into account various components that researchers have noted are important at a diverse school site (Alvarez et. al., 2012; Bird & Markle, 2012; Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Chenoweth, 2010; Viteritti, 2012; Watt, 2011).

The purpose of this multi-site collective case study was to learn the characteristics of minority economically disadvantaged high achieving schools at the elementary through secondary level. The research questions assisted in providing further in-depth knowledge of these characteristics. The research questions are as follows:

Central Research Question: What are the unique characteristics of schools (high, middle elementary) with high achieving minority student population?

Guiding Question 1: What is the role of teachers in schools with high achieving minority students?

Guiding Question 2: What is the role of administrators in schools with high achieving minority students?

Guiding Question 3: What is the role of students in schools with high achieving minority students?

In this chapter, I summarize the findings and correlate the research questions. I discuss the implications of the findings and their commonalities with the literature review. In addition, the limitations and recommendations are discussed.

Summary of Findings

Each research question dealt with the characteristics that teachers, administrators and students brought to the three bounded systems. When discussed in Chapter Two, a vivid picture was painted, and the completion of the data collection and analysis coincided with what was previously discussed. Each research question was aligned with one or more of the themes that were thoroughly discussed in Chapter Four. The central research question was an overall question reviewing both the elementary and secondary characteristics.

Central Research Question: What are the unique characteristics of schools (high, middle elementary) with high achieving minority student population?

It was evident in the research and in the emergent themes that many commonalities between the three schools existed. All the themes were addressed, beginning with the school improvement plan of each bounded system. Each plan specified concrete and complete guidelines tailored to fit the needs of each bounded system's demographics. Students', staff's and parents' requirements were addressed through professional development opportunities and other incentives to ensure a cohesive alignment. The responses from the teacher and administrator surveys revealed teachers and staff members believed the curriculum was clearly

understood by both staff and students. The results from the survey participant responses also indicated that although professional development was present, the actual needs pertaining to the grade level were not met. Moreover, instructional planning time was virtually nonexistent, which was a wearing factor on the teachers.

Two of the themes, the safety and security of the environment and positive relationships among students and staff, were closely aligned between the elementary and secondary systems. The feedback from the focus groups and interviews were aligned with the concerns on the survey responses, confirming the importance of relationships with administrators. The data also reinforced the need for the administration to appreciate teachers' hard work. All three focus groups discussed rapport and the need for relationships to be formed with the students and the time necessary to develop such rapport. In each focus group over 50% of the participants emphasized the importance of respect and patience. Moreover, the significance to deescalate hostile and frustrating situations both in inclusion and general education classes was observed throughout all three bounded systems.

There were ample data regarding the last two themes, professional development's impact on curriculum and the use of effective practices from all three bounded systems. The data from the participants' survey responses resoundingly supported the idea that professional development was at the forefront, with two out of the three bounded systems averaging 85% or higher with responses of a four or five. During the teacher observations in all classrooms I observed effective teaching practices that considered multiple intelligences, (e.g., advanced organizers, technology [Microsoft PowerPoint, algebra software], document cameras, educational games [BrainPop], behavior management systems [Class Dojo] and cooperative groups).

The characteristics of an elementary, middle and high school setting for high achieving minority students were evident in the multiple data sources analyzed. The five themes that were common among each bounded system emerged frequently in the focus groups, interviews, survey responses and observations. The frequency at which the actions or ideas occurred led to assertions and the themes previously discussed. This comprehensive collection and analysis provided an in-depth proof, correlating with the literature review discussion from Chapter Two. This last component, reviewing and documenting the characteristics mentioned, validated the research discussed in Chapter Two.

Guiding Question One

What is the role of teachers in schools with high achieving minority students? The major purpose of most school improvement plans is to lay out the foundation and guidelines of the school. Teachers are instrumental in the implementation of any school improvement plan. When analyzing the school improvement plan, teacher roles were discussed. For example, content areas increased from 3-8% in each bounded system. There were pacing guides and other mandates in place that were state, county and even specific to the school or grade level. In the classrooms where I observed, the learning standards were evident on the board and were orally stated for each lesson.

A sound foundation filled with effective procedures and routines provided a safe and secure environment for the students. This principle was a major responsibility of the teacher, although students and administrators were also responsible for fulfilling this goal. The practicing of rules, such as how to set up a proper math notebook with study notes, and explicit teaching using the document camera were examples that I observed in classrooms in each bounded system. Teachers attended professional development on a weekly basis, if not more. There was

also the newsletter and other communications that were mandated to keep parents informed regarding events and activities in the classroom. The use of PowerPoint and other technological programs were typical. I observed cooperative learning groups, laptops and digital classroom management systems in all of my visits to the classrooms. In all interviews teachers spoke of their outreach to parents using various modes of communication and their sensitivity to multicultural parents and students. All of these actions, observations and feedback coincided with the discussion of the literature in Chapter Two. Teachers were well versed individuals in the curriculum, and had an awareness of the needs of students and in their own ability to maintain the frenzied pace of a 180-day school year.

Guiding Question Two

What is the role of administrators in schools with high achieving minority students? Administrators are called to ensure that teachers, students and parents have a safe environment and feel comfortable approaching administrators at their sites. This was evidenced in all three school improvement plans, which had some type of outreach program involving administrators and parents, holding pep rallies or other incentive parties for students, and implementing some type of yearly or quarterly recognition for teachers. Many of the administrators noted that they needed to be more diligent with the recognition of teachers and with their ability to manage their workload. Administrators are also expected to involve the community stakeholders and provide a liaison. The survey responses provided a viewpoint that enabled me to see that in some bounded systems the perception was a bit skewed between what the principal and the teachers actualized in their own building. Administrators appeared busy and overwhelmed with the primary concern of student discipline at all three sites. Even though expectations and consequences were known, discussed and consistently carried out, there seemed to be

reoccurrence in misbehavior for many of the students. This is an issue for further research and discussion.

Guiding Question Three

What is the role of students in schools with high achieving minority students? There was a limited participant group to study this phenomenon. The responses of the students who participated aligned nicely with what teachers and administrators wanted, and these students were unafraid to express their opinions. The students volunteered for participation in the study without any prompting from teachers and responsibly had parents sign and return the permission slips on their own time. As evident in the school improvement plans, students, as they increase in age were expected to be more responsible for their own learning. For example, as cited in the school improvement plans for the bounded systems, the students were expected to develop behavior contracts in class, sign and understand the school handbook, and participate in student council or other leadership committees. As articulated in the focus groups, the students felt it was clear what was expected of them in terms of behavior and learning objectives. Half of the students who participated in the focus groups were frustrated with the time spent reprimanding other students instead of more severe consequences occurring.

Discussion

The common themes that were evident throughout each bounded system tied into the ideas that were presented in Chapter Two through the theoretical framework and the factors highlighted within the literature review. The emergent themes are discussed and aligned with the research findings discussed in Chapter Two. The theoretical findings of Dewey, constructivism and Payne were identified in multiple data findings in each of the bounded systems. However, the analysis of the data, along with the perspectives of the participants brought forth new

information that led to new discussions. In addition, examining the empirical data coincided with the data discussed, yet there were also concerns that need further discussion.

Theoretical

The explicitly designed school improvement plan implemented by all three bounded systems was tailored for each site. This concept paralleled the ideas discussed in the theoretical framework from Piaget, who believed students learned at their own pace and developmental readiness (Powell & Katina, 2009). In addition, a specific and explicit improvement plan based on the needs of the students within that community was at the heart of Payne's (2001, 2003) philosophy, which emphasized the importance of having an understanding and empathy for the minority's socioeconomic background.   Moreover, the constructivism ideal was identified in the school improvement plans. The concepts revealed in each of the bounded systems' improvement plans pointed to increasing technology in content areas, maximizing student achievement and increasing writing throughout all subjects. These components are essential in a diverse educational system in order to increase academic success (Ultanir, 2012).

Although many of the ideals presented in the school improvement plans coincided with the teachings of Dewey and Piaget, there were aspects that differed. One measure of effectiveness in the current study was the percentage increase in the content areas of math, language arts and other subjects. This was in direct contrast to Piaget, who believed cognitive development occurred in sequential stages (Schmidt & Houang, 2012). It is often difficult for teachers to develop differentiated instruction while keeping up with the pacing and sequencing required for district and state mandates, such as the Georgia Milestones' criteria. This quandary is where practicality collides with theory.

One of the ways the school improvement plans aligned with the theoretical viewpoints described was the emphasis placed on ensuring that the staff received quality professional development. According to the focus group discussions and interview responses, professional development opportunities included workshops on behavior management and on understanding the needs of diverse populations, including Hispanic/Latino Americans. At the elementary level, three of the eight third-grade teachers were either enrolled in or were already gifted certified, which provided them with additional training on differentiated instructional methods. As mentioned during the teacher focus group, all staff members at the elementary school received arts through the curriculum training on a monthly basis. All three middle school teachers interviewed spoke of the emphasis on technological strategies such as introduction to Khan Academy, Edmodo and Remind. The spotlight on professional development from two-thirds of the bounded systems demonstrated their commitment to ensure a successful academic environment.

The second theme, shared by all three bounded systems, was the idea of a safe and secure environment with accountability measures in place for staff, students and administrators involved. Dewey's (1922, 2009) philosophy entailed education being a social process. This was reinforced in the school improvement plans' phrasing of various goals, which spoke of the improvement of communication among stakeholders and the ability to provide support services in a timely manner. Another aspect of the constructivism theory focused on empowering students toward critical thinking and self-evaluation (Iran-Neiad, 2001; Nogowah, 2009). The school improvement plans aimed to reach critical thinking/self-evaluation objectives for students by requiring self-monitoring of interactive notebooks. During the teacher observations at all three sites I observed this goal being supported in the form of explicit instruction using document

cameras and PowerPoints to elicit understanding. This constructivist approach placed the responsibility on students for their learning activities and allowed for more reflection to occur when actions had consequences (Sheer et al., 2012). This was discussed in the focus groups and interviews by six of the 24 participants, who detailed the process that took place that would lead to a response to intervention plan. The constructivist framework allowed for the college-career ready model of the 21st century schools to demonstrate its effectiveness in the development of productive globally diverse individuals (Wagner, 2011).

The idea of a safe and secure environment theoretically did not differ when analyzing the bounded systems. There was a concern raised in the middle school teachers' focus group regarding the manner in which students interacted with one another. The students' tones and sometimes harsh language could lead to unsafe conditions if misinterpreted by a peer. Therefore, the socialization factor described in constructivism could lead to inappropriate outcomes. For example, two teachers in the middle school focus group mentioned students using the same harsh tone and language toward adults and not understanding the inappropriateness of their actions. Moreover, during a classroom observation, I witnessed students using inappropriate language with a peer. Such behavior contrasted with the constructivism model examined in Chapter Two.

The idea of a safe and secure environment reached beyond the physicality of the building and the students' interactions with each other and with their teachers. It is important for students to understand their personal worth and have their confidence boosted. Payne (2001, 2013) elaborated on the differences between the mindset of those who live in poverty and the middle class. Therefore, teachers' roles are to ensure that students, regardless of their circumstances, achieve the goals set forth at school. In every focus group, 75% of the teachers reviewed how they spent time either daily, weekly or quarterly taking time out of the academic schedule to

simply talk with their students. This enabled students to re-hash some of their concerns/questions in a safe environment and receive input from someone with experience and knowledge. This pointed to the heart of Payne's (2013) philosophy regarding the establishment of real world connections.

The third common theme among all three bounded systems dealt with the recognition from administrators, teachers, and students of the need for a positive relationship with one another. This outlook coincided with the theoretical rationale of Payne (2001, 2013), who postulated relationships were essential for those who were economically disadvantaged. When one understands those with limited economic resources have a different priority system than those with more economic means, then one has the ability to relate and assist in improving their situation. The significance of building a relationship was evidenced through all three bounded systems. Teachers in the focus groups and interviews dialogued about the importance of establishing rapport with students and administrators, as this builds trust, which may in turn enhance academic success. One way to establish this trust, as stated by several teachers, was to talk about interests with which students could identify (e.g., sports, latest clothing fashions, hobbies). Teachers understood they needed to empathize with their students' plight and build on their strengths.

Although teachers noted that it was important to build relationships with both students and administrators, it was well documented in the survey responses and focus groups that these relationships were not always strong with the administration. Two-thirds of the teacher responses among the three bounded systems showed decreased percentages when it came to visibility and overall faith in their relationships with the administration. Elementary and high school survey responses demonstrated a 50% discrepancy [teachers from administrators] on their

responses regarding the visibility of the administration. Moreover, both focus group conversations for elementary and high school revealed teacher frustration in the mentorship and support from the administration, with most of the participants showing agreement either verbally or by nodding their heads. The ambiguous support from the administration as perceived by the teachers led to further discussion for implications.

The importance of relationships emerged in many of the data analyzed. This theme dominated all teacher focus groups and interviews and appeared in many sections of the school improvement plans. Dewey (1922, 2009) focused on teacher knowledge that led to logical and organized components of a classroom. He also believed this knowledge would then lead to teacher facilitation. This thought process was instrumental in the organization of school improvement plans for all of the bounded systems. Each system's plan consisted of goals, including academic, learning environment, stakeholder involvement, effective communication, daily operations and staff retention. All of the goals were comprised of several mini-goals and actions. The focus group discussions and interview responses also emphasized fostering a sense of community and trust within the school setting by learning their students' interests. This aligned directly with the viewpoint Payne (2001, 2013) emphasized in both of her writings.

The fourth common theme included in all three bounded systems was the importance of curriculum content specific professional development opportunities. Theoretically speaking, Piaget (2008) and Dewey (1922) believed that learning was a continual process, one that occurred on a continuum and could not be rushed. Specifically, Dewey believed in what is now consistently referred to as real world experiences. Dewey (1922) maintained that one's experiences were the only way to develop critical thinking skills; whereas Piaget focused on student learning through what he called 'play.' In the 21st century classroom this would include

hands-on experiments, lab work inside and outside of the classroom, and performance and authentic assessments (Hatten, 2012; Osman, 2012; Payne, 2013). I observed 13 out of the 24 participants demonstrating one of the specific aforementioned instructional strategies. Two of the teachers conducted math labs utilizing computer technology where the students were grouped by twos or threes. One teacher was completing an end of the unit performance task, while two others used everyday household items to engage students in real world life tasks and their relationship to math. These examples aligned with both Piaget and Dewey's theoretical viewpoints.

It was evident in all classrooms the significance of teachers being well versed in the curriculum; however, the concern brought forth in one of the teacher focus groups dealt with teachers' limited planning time. Over half of the teaching staff in all three focus groups complained of not enough planning time to implement the curriculum and newly learned strategies. All teacher focus groups expressed a feeling of being overwhelmed. Moreover, in the middle school and high school teacher focus groups, teachers suggested that professional development for the curriculum should be followed up with feedback from the administration to ensure teachers were being effective in their delivery.

The prolific professional development sessions that took place at the elementary level reiterated the dedication to a successful learning community. Teachers agreed unanimously in the elementary focus group that professional development was a central focus. Meetings for professional development took place once or twice weekly. Teachers were taught several different instructional strategies, including how to integrate arts into the curriculum, and how to use data to drive their lessons and differentiate instruction. Moreover, at the middle school level, planning on professional workdays consisted of learning the latest technology the county

purchased, as outlined in their school improvement plan. The extension of the theoretical philosophies enabled the teachers to comprehensively explore Dewey's (1922, 2009) idea of considering student differences in conjunction with the curriculum. Secondly, the information received on systematic processes regarding curriculum integration, data analysis and differentiated instruction considered the sequential organization of students' learning and their developmental readiness, which coordinated with Piaget's theory of individual learning at one's own pace (Powell & Kalina, 2009). This in-depth look at curriculum and its impact on an effective diverse setting emerged clearly from the data.

The last common theme that was evidenced among all three bounded systems was the use of effective practices, such as technology, differentiated instruction and multiple intelligences, to improve students' academic achievement. These various effective practices align directly with Dewey's (1922) idea of one's experiences being essential to problem solving. The school improvement plans demonstrated in each bounded system focused on ensuring that critical thinking strategies and skills were implemented throughout the culture of the school. Technology usage, along with the professional development opportunities, were mentioned in all three sites' improvement plans. The focus groups and interviews for elementary, middle and high school discussed extensively the need for effective teaching practices. One of the central themes in today's classroom is making the teacher a facilitator and students more accountable for their own learning. Constructivism is at the core of this concept, removing the teacher from the center of knowledge and encouraging the learner to understand his/her role in the educational process (Boghassian, 2006). Consequently, further critical thinking is occurring and less rote memorization is taking place (Sheer et al., 2012; Ultanir, 2012).

Although Piaget believed individualized learning should take place at one's own developmental rate (Powell & Kalina, 2009), this proved to be a difficult task for most teachers to maintain. This dilemma caused heated exchanges during teacher focus groups at two of the three bounded systems. Teachers argued that theoretically, although the idea of progression at one's own pace was touted, the pacing guides and mandates did not allow this ideal to reach fruition. Therefore, the teachers concluded, this was a continuous battle between mastery or exposure to a particular skill. This issue was a concern for 50% of the teachers who participated in the focus groups, and no resolution was reached.

The extension of effective teaching practices came from the realization that utilization of various strategies and techniques improves the overall well-being of all students, regardless of the background or experiences. Payne (2001, 2009) elaborated on the importance of understanding the viewpoint of those with limited economic resources because their mindset varied from the mindset of those with a multitude of resources. One of the variances Payne discussed was the hierarchy found in families. For example, various Hispanic/Latino families have extended family such as cousins, uncles, aunts and grandparents in close proximity to one another who may be in charge of everyday duties in a household. Therefore, simply reaching out at the beginning of the school year with newsletters or other modes of communication in their native language establishes the importance of family involvement. This simple outreach gains the support of extended family and can help improve students' academic prowess in the classroom.

Empirical

The literature review discussion examined the various factors researchers postulated as keys to the success of a diverse educational setting. I saw evidence of many of those same

factors in each of the bounded systems in the current study. Through meticulous analysis of documents, transcription of focus groups and interviews, recording of survey responses and observations, characteristics emerged that aligned with Chapter Two's discussion. As I collected data through the various means described, I had a distinct process in mind. There must be clear obtainable goals and individuals must be trained in order to effectively implement said goals (Bubon-Burns et al., 2016; Marzano 2009; Schmidt & Huong, 2012).

One part of the clear obtainable goals existed in the analysis of the school improvement plans, which contained the tools, techniques and guidelines expected in order to implement school success. Marzano (2001, 2004, 2009) emphasized the importance of a viable curriculum and the need that everyone involved ensure that every tool, technique and lesson revolved around the school mission. Schmoker (2006, 2011) and Chenoweth (2009) indicated that not only do goals need explicit statements, but administrators and teachers must consistently reinforce each goal. Each school improvement plan explicitly explained the administrator's role as far as providing support and when the support would take place. Teachers were decidedly reminded of their role in the classroom to promote self-confidence and self-reliance for students, while implementing best practices based on the needs of their classroom. Walter (2015) regarded teachers as the best indicator of student success. Walter discussed the importance of self-confidence among teachers and how this assisted in the development of student success. If a teacher demonstrated confidence in their curriculum delivery then a student would become confident in sharing and entering into discussion in the classroom, which in turn created a conducive learning environment.

One important section of the literature review included a discussion on parent involvement; however, in most of the school improvement plans there was a limited amount of

mini-goals that focused on concrete plans for parent involvement. The research indicated many variables that affect parent involvement, especially among diverse communities. Some of these variables included parents own preconceived notions about schools based on their experiences, lack of time due to underemployment or inadequate financial resources such as no transportation, etc. (Alvarez-Valdivia et al., 2012; Cattanach, 2013; Williams & Sanchez, 2011, 2012). These types of concerns may be combatted by the role of the parent liaison; however, with the limited finances sometimes available these concerns still existed. The parent liaison's role as explained firsthand, ensured students were able to attend field trips. The parent liaison also ensured parent workshops took place twice a year that informed parents about the curriculum and transitional programs. The limited financial resources hindered the parent liaison from tackling other concerns.

The extension of the school improvement plan lent itself to the integration of accountability for students. Each bounded system included a description of an overall positive behavior management system (PBIS). Researchers were clear that positive reinforcement produced successful environments (Bird & Markle, 2012; Chiarelli et al., 2015; Klein & Konold, 2012). Bird and Markle discussed extensively improving the psychological aspect of students, which included ideas such as goal setting, mentoring and the development of interpersonal relationships. Chiarelli (2015) focused solely on the use of Class Dojo, a computer software generated classroom management system that reinforced behaviors for individualized students and worked in conjunction with other reward systems. This system is popular at the elementary setting and was downloaded to most teachers' phones and class computers at the elementary level. Klein and Konold targeted at-risk behaviors such as absenteeism, behavioral aggression and substance abuse in order to find ways to diminish their occurrences in the future.

The literature review analysis regarding the security of the environment contributed to several positive attributes that emerged. One attribute is confidence, which enabled students to feel stable and therefore concentrate on what needs to happen in school; such as completing tasks assigned in class, listening, contributing to discussions and socializing without fearing ridicule or humiliation (Nadelson et al., 2012; Peck, 2010; Sosa & Gomez, 2012). Moreover, self-resiliency leads to higher completion rates for high school, less juvenile delinquency and better coping skills overall in daily life experiences (Bird & Mackle, 2012; Gage et al., 2016; Murray & Naranjo, 2008). These attributes were achieved in the current study by creating a positive school climate, which existed in all three bounded systems. Teachers and administrators knew the importance of setting the tone and demonstrated these characteristics through their survey responses, observations and discussions within the teacher focus groups and interviews.

The research in Chapter Two focused on teachers', administrators' and students' roles regarding the make-up of a safe and secure environment. The study brought to light the lack of assistance by administrators. In reviewing the research, many researchers (Branch et al., 2013; Handford & Leithwood; Spiro, 2013) indicated the significance of the administrator setting the tone for the building. Yet, two-thirds of the teacher focus groups and teacher survey responses indicated that they felt that administrators were lacking in this role. The data pointed to the need for administrators to empower teachers and comfort students (Handford & Leithwood, 2013; Spiro, 2013). These factors, according to one study, could improve student achievement within two to seven months (Branch et al., 2013). Despite researchers' attestation regarding the need for a symbiotic relationship between teachers and administrators for student achievement, (Kohl, 2008; Sailes, 2008), student achievement did occur in the current study.

I noted that positive school climate existed beyond an awareness of student needs. I observed teachers exhibiting their general care for one another by joking and laughing during quick exchanges in the hall. These exchanges were excellent models for students to comprehend the mutual respect one should hold for individuals. I observed within the classrooms that teachers often displayed body language that welcomed students into the classroom and created a haven where students knew questions could be asked without fear of ridicule. This type of interaction was at the core of Aldridge & Ala'l's (2013) research, which targeted the importance of connectedness for students. During an interview, one of the teacher participants shared their own personal trials and tribulations. Research has supported that examples of empathy and compassion strengthen students' feelings of belonging and self-resilience (Angrist, 2012; Hanushek & Rivlin, 2013). Whether spoken or not, these gestures continue to reinforce the idea of ensuring that students feel comfortable and safe at school.

When a positive relationship is had by all, one can openly share both the strengths and areas of support that need to be addressed. When this ideal exists, the achievement gap can be decreased because now students gain confidence as well as empowerment (Baker & Johnston, 2010), which leads to students desiring to better themselves. Empowerment leads to students' self-efficacy and long-term goal setting regarding their educational endeavors or careers (Fairlie et al., 2014; Hill et. al., 2013). The establishment of a positive rapport benefits everyone, including the community. These same ideas were shared frequently in my interactions with teachers and students throughout my time in each of the bounded systems.

Research points to the impact that teachers' attitudes and beliefs have on student success (Costigan, 2008; Jyun-Jun et al., 2008; Sosa & Gomez, 2012; Walter, 2015). The current study's results brought forth a different perspective because most of the teacher participants resembled

the students. The three bounded systems included 79% African American teachers. This

unusual occurrence created a unique environment where minorities were in the position of

influence. Research made it clear that success for minority students hinged on the beliefs,

stereotypes and prejudices of their teachers (Angrist et al., 2012; Koth, 2008; Nadelson, 2012).

Therefore, it was imperative that teachers receive training on sensitivity concerns, use of

multiple techniques and strategies, and behavior management skills to build a more conducive

learning environment (Achieve et al., 2012; Anderson et al., 2012; Hallinger & Murphy, 1987;

Marzano, 2009). Although training did occur in these areas at the bounded systems studied,

teachers were more apt to acquire the skill set faster because of their ability to relate to the needs

of their students.

I noted that teachers talked expansively about the importance of building relationships

with students and their parents. Research continually pointed to the significance of a cohesive

relationship between students and teachers (Douglas et al., 2008; Fairlie et al., 2014; Gichuru et

al., 2015; Konstantopoulos, 2009; Peck, 2010).   As stated previously, 50% of the teachers in the

current study were passionate about reaching out to both students and parents by any means

necessary, including learning the local language (Spanish) to develop a sense of caring and

interest in the community. This type of interaction was discussed extensively in Chapter Two.

Many researchers repeatedly emphasized how relationships not only increased self-efficacy and

confidence, but increased resiliency and the ability to cope with other challenges outside of the

school setting (Costigan, 2008; Morales, 2010; Nadelson et al., 2012; Sosa & Gomez, 2012).

This not only increased student achievement but prepared students to compete in a globally

diverse world (Johnson et al., 2012; Wagner, 2011). One common thread throughout the three

bounded systems was that communication remained steadfast, whether through emails, telephone

calls or personal conferences. Communication, despite its advances, was seen as the way to establish and maintain relationships.

Professional development was the core to any successful endeavor and was linked to many factors discussed in the literature review. It was also why it was a main theme throughout the three bounded systems. Stillwell and Sable (2013) noted that the achievement gap improved when teachers were properly trained in effective teaching practices. These types of environments are known as professional learning communities (PLCs) and are indispensable in a disadvantaged minority school setting (Hord, 2008; Jones et al., 2013; Von Frank, 2009). I noted that the school improvement plans, the focus group discussions and interview responses made frequent reference to professional development and the numerous PLCs attended. A professional learning community is not simply comprised of the curriculum and how it is implemented. It also requires a reflective and evaluative look at the issues and concerns that exist within the specific community. This could involve getting the school counselor or other auxiliary staff to conduct a training workshop (Burton et al., 2016). Professional learning is the conduit to ensure teachers, students and administrators are all on the path for a successful school year (Hord, 2008; Jones et al., 2013).

The teacher survey responses within each of the bounded systems noted that although professional development opportunities were prolific, teachers were not convinced they were addressing their particular interests nor providing continual development for administrators. Overall, teachers in each system felt overworked and professionally invalidated. This feeling was in direct contrast with the purpose of professional development. Professional development should provide training in effective practices while guaranteeing feedback and follow-up (Smith & Kearney, 2012; Sosa & Gomez, 2012; Spiro, 2013); however, the teacher survey responses

showed a disagreement, as managing instructional programs averaged below 70% in two of the three bounded systems. This suggested that professional development was occurring, but time to implement the learning that occurred, reflect on the learning, or follow-up from the administration did not take place.

Because of the unique environment for all three bounded systems of having a minority majority, professional development could explore various avenues. The district itself was a pioneer, providing the latest in technological advancements. Suldo and Shaunessy-Dedrick (2013) discussed the importance of motivated minority students having the opportunity to excel by increasing the math and science content load. Another important aspect in regard to professional development was the need to increase teachers' multicultural learning. Researchers discussed the increase in the minority workforce and the need for all to become privy to the needs of a diverse population (Daily et al., 2011; Dufour & Marzano, 2011; Jennings, 2011). The district's solution to increase knowledge of the minority workforce was to offer ESOL classes to teachers, which would hopefully increase teachers' understanding and empathetic responses to students not of their culture.

The thorough analysis of effective practices within schools, especially those in minority settings, was studied with findings supporting the necessity for such practices in disadvantaged minority settings (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008; Anyon & Greene, 2007; Aud et al., 2013; Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Chenoweth, 2009; Noguera, 2010; Parker, 2005). Each bounded system demonstrated various effective practices as noted in the school improvement plans as I listened to teacher focus group discussions and interviews, and observed teachers in their classrooms. Time and time again studies indicated that minorities were more likely to gain success if multiple intelligences were employed (Faitar, 2011; Helding, 2010; Quigley, 2013), or when graphic

organizers were implemented, students were able to retain a much higher percentage of the lesson disseminated (Marzano, 2001, 2004, 2009). The same standard applied toward technology, differentiated instruction, and the individualized educational plan and their effects on student performance (Morales, 2010; Padron et al., 2012; Schmoker, 2011; Thomas et al., 2015; Zheng et al., 2014). Effective practices were acknowledged to benefit minority student achievement, consequently, they must be implemented, monitored and upheld to sustain a consistent gain on closing the achievement gap.

Effective practices were observed and discussed throughout the three bounded systems; however, the district did require that explicit instruction and rote memorization programs be utilized. There was an explicit phonics program (Reading Mastery) targeted for grades one through three. This program followed a direct instruction approach to increase reading ability in students identified as having a deficit or who received special education services. Even though many studies have shown graphic organizers, collaborative group settings and performance based projects are the innovative approaches to encourage minority student success (Brown, 2011; Greenwood & Kim, 2012; Zollman, 2009), there were still those teachers who continued with more traditional techniques. The direct instruction was not done in a whole group setting but with eight to 10 students in a private area. The intensity and small group setting were implemented to improve the outcome for students in a short time span.

The common themes and how they directly correlated with both the theoretical framework and the factors listed in the literature review demonstrated why these three schools exhibited success. They were professional learning communities that embraced what research indicated and continued to hone those research-based characteristics to ensure a personalized fit for their particular school setting. The current study filled a gap in literature because most

studies concentrated on a particular grade level; whereas the current study examined both elementary and secondary sites and concluded that commonalties were evident. Moreover, the staff's commitment to engage in a study that identified their deficits and ensured continued evolution for the three bounded systems was commendable.

<center>**Implications**</center>

The implications of this collective case study included a discussion of the shortfalls that were common among all three bounded systems. There were many theoretical and empirical correlations documented within the study as discussed in Chapter Four; however, there were areas where improvement was needed to increase academic success among students. Teachers emphatically stressed the need for additional planning time, based on focus group discussions as well as interview and survey responses. Another area of improvement involved support and mentorship for teachers, which could also be extended to administrators and stakeholders. These implications are discussed in the following sections.

Teachers

The shortfalls confirmed among two of the three bounded systems included math test scores below the criteria established for the study, not enough incentives for either teachers or learning practices, and the need for more visibility and autonomy from the administration. Research emphasized the importance of incentives and the staff feeling supported by leadership (Dufour, & Marzano, 2011; Hyun-Jun et al., 2008; Mehdinezhad & Mansouri, 2016). These deficits indicated a need for targeted professional learning sessions. The school sites in the current study were cognizant of the importance of a professional learning community; however, input from teachers was one area that the teacher participants noted was lacking. They shared that the voice of staff members would ensure targeted development for concepts deemed vital for their students that year. They also suggested that professional development sessions could also

include strategies for teaching math that colleagues had used and had found to be effective. The use of professional development in this manner would address the deficits of incentives for learning among teachers as well as increase autonomy and self-efficacy. Professional learning that includes the staff as the instructors increases their sense of empowerment, which in turn strengthens rapport with administrators (Harbour et al., 2015; Kissinger, 2011; Peck, 2010).

Another practical implication included a concrete teacher mentorship program for both veterans coming from another school and beginning teachers. Research indicated that without teachers having a clear understanding of the school's culture and unspoken codes, they were less likely to be successful (Nadelson et. al., 2012; Sailes, 2008; Sosa & Gomez, 2012). Mentoring provided by a retired teacher, preferably one who had worked at the school, may be beneficial. Retired veteran teachers serving as mentors can be beneficial because they have the time and can offer feedback and follow-up since they are no longer tied to their own classroom (Handford et al., 2013; Hord, 2008). Benefits of mentoring new staff members include increased retention and more effective teaching (Martel, 2009).

If a veteran/retired teacher cannot be provided, then grade level Chairs or other seasoned teachers need to be given "real time" to mentor and train new teachers. This could include providing these mentors with additional planning time or specific incentives or compensation. Mentorship must be provided by teachers who are willing and open-minded rather than being forced to mentor, thus generating resentment. This mentoring approach would return results that would be optimal in the retention of bright and effective teachers (Martel, 2009; Nadelson et al., 2012; Parker, 2005).

Administration

Teacher participants noted greater visibility of administrators as a deficit, and more professional development opportunities for those in leadership may be warranted. There have

been studies that indicated administrators who were more visible experienced a decrease in disciplinary concerns and in staff absenteeism (Kotze &Venter, 2011; Reitzug et al., 2008; Schmoker, 2006; Spiro, 2013). The survey responses from the teachers and administrators demonstrated a discrepancy between their views on the administration's development of school climate; whereas teachers noted this aspect needed improvement. Consequently, administrators would benefit from receiving additional training in building relationships with staff and also by observing other administrators who have established relationships with their own staff. Research has indicated that administrators were instrumental in creating a professional learning environment and in promoting autonomy (Koth et al., 2008; Smith, 2012). This in-depth analysis of the three bounded systems suggested these concerns were shared by both teachers and administrators and may require action to improve overall morale.

Community Stakeholders

It is imperative to develop a liaison between schools and stakeholders within the community. Moreover, the inclusion of the community and businesses has been found to improve a school's climate and develop a strong sense of community (Hendrickson & Raad, 2012; Klein & Konold, 2012; Osman, 2012). Community alliances could also generate additional funds for the school to launch the professional learning and mentorship programs previously discussed. The coalition could provide the community the opportunity to volunteer within the schools while recruiting/training students or parents for jobs. A comprehensive outreach of this nature produces a civic obligation for all to be accountable.

There needs to be a focused and strategic plan to ensure that community liaisons are able to perform their specific tasks effectively and do not become side-tracked with extraneous duties. Too often the administration and other entities deem those who do not produce immediate results as people who may not be doing their jobs. Their goals may not be reached immediately and

may even take more than one school year and many different attempts for them to reach fruition. These goals must still remain in the forefront of importance because the end results could have long term lasting effects that outweigh the current administration's tenure.

Students

Although there was limited feedback from students in the current study, it should be noted that student input pointed to the need for further research. Students are an important component of school climate and achievement; therefore, their input should be sought, as indicated by the results of several studies (Aldridge & Ala'l, 2013; Johnson & Gielen, 2012; Koth et al., 2008). The students who participated at the elementary and middle school level spoke of the importance of teacher and administrative roles. The viewpoints of students need to be addressed more consistently in order to develop an environment that truly meets their needs. Students provided insights that were indicative of what they thought was missing for students who want to achieve academic success.

<div align="center">

Limitations

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This collective case study was limited geographically, by personal, teacher and administrative bias, inadequate participation, and criterion standards. These limitations greatly reduced the trustworthiness of the study. Most limitations were not within my control; however, the significance of each are discussed.

The first limitation was geographical. I tried to gain access to an additional county that had more schools that fit the study's criteria; however, even though county approval was granted, there were no schools that were willing to participate, which limited the generalization of the study to other settings. Despite the county being diverse, each district has its own set of guidelines that may alter the entire area's climate.

The next limitation were biases (personal, teacher and administrative). I felt the teachers' perspectives were rather negative at the elementary and high school levels. I am unsure if it was due to the time of the year or the lack of experience, but there was an overwhelming climate of limited support from administrators, coupled with an unrealistic workload. This may have led to a lower than normal ratings response on the teacher surveys. Although the data for assessments were used from five years ago, the current teacher retention trend in the elementary and high school was low for the past two years. This low teacher retention rate may have long term consequences regarding the academic success these settings once experienced in past years.

Only one administrator had been consistently placed at their school for three or more years. The other two administrators had less seniority in their buildings and there were some new administrative staff members. This could have accounted for the inconsistencies in the survey ratings in conjunction with limited participation.

Initially, there may have been some intimidation when entering the high school setting for me. However, once observations began and I realized the students were not as unruly as I had previously believed, my attitude changed and my bias dissipated. It became clear there was more in common with the other schools than I had previously anticipated.

Another limitation included inadequate participation. This reduced the trustworthiness of the study, which includes credibility, dependability, and transferability (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Miles et. al., 2014; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009). The study had to adhere to stringent guidelines, which restricted access to students during instructional time. Moreover, I found it extremely challenging getting teachers to participate despite the incentives of refreshments and a raffle. Most complained of their full schedules and other responsibilities, consequently, it took cooperation from the administration to encourage participation. In addition, administrators themselves did not respond to the survey quickly and had to be sent multiple reminders. The

recruitment of students was the most difficult; the afterschool program at the elementary level served as the answer, but only yielded two actual participants. At the middle school, enrollment in the study took place during Saturday school and yielded two participants as well. Unfortunately, at the high school I never obtained permission from any students since I could not get the support required from the administration to facilitate a meeting due to their busy schedules.

The last limitation was the criterion standard for math standards not being met by all the sites. There were only two schools in the entire district that met the math standards and I did not receive permission from the administration to conduct the study at those sites. This was an unforeseen problem that could not be avoided. However, it was offset by all the other criteria being met and the familiarization with the administrators. Seeing that it was still quite problematic to obtain participation and data from individuals. it was best to have the advantage of a relationship with those in leadership. Effective diverse schools are needed in the new millennium, along with the continuation of accountability for teachers and administrators (Baker & Johnson, 2010; Faitar, 2011; Stillwell & Stable, 2013).

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings from this study produced ramifications for the future. The study demonstrated a potential blueprint for districts, states and ultimately nationwide describing how to develop effective minority schools. Recommendations include studying several counties simultaneously, including multiple grade levels at each site, and observing those sites that are failing. These studies may offer additional data that may prove important in gaining perspectives on how to advance the educational system. The recommendation of completing the study in at least two counties simultaneously may reveal the similarities and differences that exist across counties. Also, it may be used as a learning opportunity for educators and administrators to

collaborate to strengthen the educational foundation in the state. This relationship may lead to a cohesive unit within the metropolitan area, decreasing the failure rates that exist in a mobile student population.

The second recommendation included implementing the study at multiple grade levels throughout the elementary and secondary levels. This may improve the generalization and trustworthiness of the study, since including multiple non-benchmark grade levels removes the preconception that students and teachers work harder in those grades due to added accountability factors. A study conducted with multiple grade levels may have a likelihood of a bigger participant pool, which may strengthen the overall numbers for redundancy and saturation of data outcomes (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). Finally, stakeholders and policy makers would not view the results as an anomaly, but rather as the status quo.

The last recommendation was to complete the study at the elementary and secondary levels at sites that are failing by either CCPRI standards or schools slated for the state take-over. This study may enable the personnel in those buildings to analyze the data firsthand, review it, and put their own action plan in place. The first step in fixing a problem is to recognize what specific concerns exist and then develop an action plan. Replacing the entire staff without empowering them may lead staff members to leave the education field permanently.

Summary

This collective case study examined the many characteristics of an economically disadvantaged high achieving minority school. The research questions were answered and correlated with the theoretical framework and literature review from Chapter Two. The themes that emerged from all three bounded systems exhibited common characteristics based in research. An in-depth discussion aligned the findings with research from the literature and noted

how this study's findings differed from and extended the many ideas that were presented in the literature.

The study aligned in many ways with the literature findings discussed in Chapter Two. The ideals from Piaget, Dewey and Payne were prevalent in the findings from each of the bounded systems. The concepts regarding developing a social setting and expecting students to advance at a developmentally appropriate pace were demonstrated in the conversations among teacher participants. These conversations from the focus groups and interviews included developing a rapport with students by talking about some of their interests, speaking in their native tongue or asking about their lives outside of school. The teachings of Payne were evident when I observed the relationships established among the students and teachers. The mannerisms and the ease of students when they approached some of the teachers or the comfort displayed in the classroom when asking questions were obvious. Constructivism was evident throughout the school improvement plan in each bounded system, as manipulatives, graphic organizers and other effective practices in everyday teaching lessons were demonstrated.

There were implications drawn from the data gathered that pointed to how to further expand the ideas for a more effective learning environment. Some of the implications discussed provided additional professional learning for teachers and administrators targeting specific areas as noted by teachers. During focus groups, I listened as 20 of the 24 participants spoke of their autonomy being questioned or compromised. Yet during observations I saw effective practices, great rapport with students and overall professionalism in the classrooms. The skills discussed in Chapter Two as essential to high achieving economically disadvantaged minority settings were present in each of the buildings and deserved to be shared among the staff to build morale and collegiality. Another implication was the involvement of stakeholders and having an individual

tasked to work within the community. I discussed the limitations of the study in relation to the limited years of administrative experience. Although the administrators at the middle and high school were not new principals, they were new to their buildings. Another limitation included the limited student participation due to district rules. Recommendations included expanding the pool of grades, schools and districts used to improve the participant range to obtain generalizability.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: CLASS Dimensions' Overview

Teachstone

CLASS® Age Levels

CLASS is used in classrooms of all ages (birth–secondary) to measure and improve teacher-child interactions—the single most important influence on children's learning and development.

Birth–18 Months	15–36 Months	3–5 Years	5–8 Years	4th–6th Grade	7th–12th Grade
INFANT	**TODDLER**	**PRE-K**	**K-3**	**UPPER ELEMENTARY**	**SECONDARY**
RESPONSIVE CAREGIVING	EMOTIONAL & BEHAVIORAL SUPPORT	EMOTIONAL SUPPORT	EMOTIONAL SUPPORT	EMOTIONAL SUPPORT	EMOTIONAL SUPPORT
Relational Climate	Positive Climate	Positive Climate	Positive Climate	Positive Climate	Positive Climate
Teacher Sensitivity	Negative Climate	Negative Climate	Negative Climate	Teacher Sensitivity	Teacher Sensitivity
Facilitated Exploration	Regard for Child Perspectives	Teacher Sensitivity	Teacher Sensitivity	Regard for Child Perspectives	Regard for Adolescent Perspectives
Early Language Support	Behavior Guidance	Regard for Child Perspectives	Regard for Child Perspectives	CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION	CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION
	Teacher Sensitivity	CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION	CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION	Behavior Management	Behavior Management
	ENGAGED SUPPORT FOR LEARNING	Behavior Management	Behavior Management	Productivity	Productivity
	Facilitation of Learning & Development	Productivity	Productivity	Negative Climate	Negative Climate
	Quality of Feedback	Instructional Learning Formats	Instructional Learning Formats	INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT	INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT
	Language Modeling	INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT	INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT	Instructional Learning Formats	Instructional Learning Formats
		Concept Development	Concept Development	Content Understanding	Content Understanding
		Quality of Feedback	Quality of Feedback	Analysis & Inquiry	Analysis & Inquiry
		Language Modeling	Language Modeling	Quality of Feedback	Quality of Feedback
				Instructional Dialogue	Instructional Dialogue
				* Student Engagement	* Student Engagement

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Infant CLASS *Birth–18 months*	**Toddler CLASS** *15–36 months*	**Pre-K CLASS** *3–5 Years*

Unique Needs of Infants
- Dependence on adults
- Sensorimotor learning
- Face-to-face interaction
- Other-regulation

Unique Needs of Toddlers
- Exponential growth
- Dependence on adults
- Self-regulation
- Whole-body learning

Unique Needs of Preschool Children
- Greater independence
- Gross & fine motor skills
- Language/creativity
- Emergent literacy & math
- Observations of the world

CLASS Intervention
Includes a focus on how caregivers:
- Provide infants a secure base for exploration
- Respond to infants' needs in developmentally appropriate ways
- Encourage early language development

CLASS Intervention
Includes a focus on how caregivers:
- Help children establish autonomy
- Support children as they make connections between things they learn
- Guide children as they learn to regulate behavior

CLASS Intervention
Includes a focus on how teachers:
- Foster a secure, supportive base for children's learning and exploration
- Help children develop language and cognitive skills
- Construct environments and experiences that help children develop their abilities

K-3 CLASS *5–8 Years*	**UE CLASS** *4th–6th Grade*	**Secondary CLASS** *7th–12th Grade*

Unique Needs of Elementary School Children
- Connection to teacher
- Self-regulated learning
- Interesting & engaging activities
- Development of metacognitive skills

Unique Needs of Upper Elementary School Students
- School motivation
- Greater autonomy
- Engagement with learning
- Additional skill development

Unique Needs of Secondary Students
- Positive academic performance
- Peer relationships & cooperation
- Goal-setting
- Deeper understanding of material

CLASS Intervention
Includes a focus on how teachers:
- Develop warm, supportive relationships with children
- Manage children's time, attention, and behavior
- Use high quality learning formats
- Provide opportunities to express existing skills & scaffold more complex skills

CLASS Intervention
Includes a focus on how teachers:
- Develop strong relationships with students
- Provide meaningful choices
- Present activities and directions to maximize learning time
- Guide learning through modeling, multiple examples, and practice

CLASS Intervention
Includes a focus on how teachers:
- Create a challenging yet supportive environment
- Build opportunities for collaborative work
- Provide a well-regulated classroom environment
- Help students see how information is organized and interconnected

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Appendix B: CLASS Forms

Pre-K CLASS Domains, Dimensions, and Indicators

Domain	Emotional Support	Classroom Organization	Instructional Support
Dimension	Positive Climate Negative Climate Teacher Sensitivity Regard for Student Perspectives	Behavior Management Productivity Instructional Learning Formats	Concept Development Quality of Feedback Language Modeling
Indicator	Ex. Positive Climate: Relationships Positive affect Positive communication Respect	Ex. Behavior Management: Clear behavior expectations Proactive Redirection of misbehavior Student behavior	Ex. Concept Development: Analysis and reasoning Creating Integration Connections to the real world

CLASS PERMISSIONS AGREEMENT

THIS PERMISSIONS AGREEMENT (this "*Agreement*") is entered into as of the ___11th___ day of ___January_____ 2018___ (the "*Effective Date*"), by and between **Teachstone Training, LLC**, a Virginia limited liability company ("*Teachstone*" and ___Stefanie Barnes_____ ("*Requesting Party*"). Th Agreement consists of (i) this **Signature Page**, (ii) the attached **Permission Terms and Conditions** (the "*Permission Terms*"), an (iii) any exhibits referenced in this Agreement and attached hereto.

The parties agree as follows:

1. Teachstone is the owner of the "Classroom Assessment Scoring System" ("*CLASS*"), a teacher evaluation, scoring, and assessme tool and system and various related materials (collectively, the "*CLASS Materials*"). Requesting Party desires to obtain permissic from Teachstone to use and display specific CLASS materials as part of Requesting Party's doctoral dissertation. Teachstor agrees to grant such permission subject to Requesting Party's strict compliance with the terms of this Agreement.

2. Definitions. As used in this Agreement (attach additional page(s) as exhibits as necessary or to include additional special terms):

2.1. "*Authorized CLASS Materials*" means the following CLASS Materials: Pre-K CLASS score sheet, the CLASS Pre-Domains, Dimensions, and Indicators slide, and the CLASS Age Levels One Pager.

2.2. "*Permitted Use*" means publication in Liberty University's open-access institutional repository, the Digital Commons, an in the Proquest thesis and dissertation subscription research database.

2.3. "*Credit*" means the following credit acknowledging Teachstone as the owner of the CLASS Materials or Teachstone Marl used on the Pre-K CLASS score sheet in your dissertation: the full credit line below, acknowledging the original publicatio author, publisher, and permission must appear with the material in your work:

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_____ _____. For the other two authorized CLASS materials, specifically the CLASS Pre-K Domains, Dimensions, and Indicators slide and the CLASS Age Levels document, please include "Used with Permission by Teachstone Training, LLC" on each of the materials.

3. Administrative Fee. In order to offset Teachstone's costs associated with the administration of the CLASS permissions progra and this Agreement, Requesting Party shall pay to Teachstone a one-time administrative fee of $___FEE is WAIVED upon executic of this Agreement.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have caused this CLASS Permissions Agreement to be executed as of the Effective Date b their duly authorized representatives:

Teachstone Training, LLC
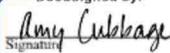
Amy Cubbage
Signature
121AA7EDC90547E
Amy Stephens Cubbage
Printed Name

Senior Advisor, Public Policy
Position/Title

January 10, 2018
Date

Address:
Teachstone Training, LLC
Attn: _____
675 Peter Jefferson Parkway, Ste 400
Charlottesville, VA 22911
E-mail Address: _____

[REQUESTING PARTY NAME]

Stefanie Barnes
Signature
Stefanie Barnes
Printed Name

Teacher
Position/Title

January 12, 2018
Date

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Lynchburg, VA 24515
Address

smbarnes@liberty.edu
E-mail Address

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CLASS Permissions Agreement   Signature Page

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8. Breach and Termination. Teachstone may terminate this Agreement upon written notice to Requesting Party if Requesting Party breaches any of the terms of this Agreement. Upon any termination of this Agreement, the License shall automatically terminate, and Requesting Party shall immediately cease all further use, display or distribution of the New Work containing the Authorized CLASS Materials and shall remove the Authorized CLASS Materials and all Derivative Works from all online copies of the New Work and all physical copies which are in the possession or under the control of Requesting Party. If Requesting Party breaches or violates any term of this Agreement, Requesting Party shall (a) be responsible and liable for all damages and losses incurred by Teachstone (and Teachstone expressly reserves all available legal and equitable rights and remedies); and (b) pay Teachstone all costs and expenses that Teachstone incurs in connection with enforcing this Agreement, including, all of Teachstone's attorney's fees, court costs and other legal costs.

9. Governing Law; Venue. This Agreement will be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia and the applicable federal laws of the United States, without regards to the conflicts of law provisions of any jurisdiction. Any and all claims and disputes arising out of, or relating to, this Agreement, or the performance or non-performance by either party of any of its obligations hereunder will be commenced and maintained only in a state or federal court of competent subject matter jurisdiction situated or located in Charlottesville, Virginia. Each party consents to the exclusive personal jurisdiction of and venue in any such court.

Appendix C: Parent Consent Form

Parent/Guardian Permission Form

I. Purpose

Your child is invited to be in a research study of the characteristics of a high-achieving, minority

school. Your child was selected as a possible participant because his/her school meets the criteria of

80% minority enrollment along with state assessment achievement and Title I status. As a parent,

your child has been selected based on their enrollment in a benchmark grade. I ask that you read this

form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing for your child to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Stefanie M. Barnes, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education

at Liberty University and has received permission from the Research Review Board of the ███████

County Public School system to conduct the research study entitled, A Collective Case Study of

Economically Disadvantaged High Achieving Minority Schools.

The purpose of this study is to observe, analyze, and discuss the characteristics that make an

economically disadvantaged, minority elementary, middle, and high school an effective and

academically successful setting. The researcher will particularly focus on the thoughts and practices

of the administrators, teachers, and students.

The current state of the education system is consistently changing and becoming more diverse.

Diversity has become a challenge because the expectations for students are becoming rigorous, and a

specific skill set is now needed to compete in the global workplace. Now that administrators,

stakeholders, community and state leaders realize this, the educational system has to undergo a major

overhaul. The task today is to guarantee that all students are career or college-ready when leaving

high school. As a teacher, I realize that this requires certain characteristics, and I feel that this study

could be beneficial in producing specific guidelines that could enhance the elementary and secondary

academic process, specifically an economically disadvantaged minority setting.

II. Participation in the Study

Your child has been asked to participate in this research study between the dates of September 2015-May 2016. If you agree for your child to be in this study, I will ask your child to do the following things:

1. Your child will be asked to participate in a focus group.

The focus group will emphasize what the roles of administrators, teachers, and students have in an effective, diverse, school setting. The focus group will last about 30 minutes.

2. Your child may be selected to complete an interview.

The interviews will be conducted to get a better understanding of how students think administrators and teachers assist in making sure students receive a great education in a safe environment. The interview will last about 30 minutes. Both the focus group and interview will ▬▬▬ **County Public Schools Division of Accountability and Assessment Research Guidelines and Application Procedures** CCPS Research Guidelines and Application Procedures [Revised 12/02/10] Page 2 The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from June 2, 2015 to June 1, 2016 Protocol # 1950.060215

be audio recorded to ensure the accuracy of the information collected. The total time will be an hour.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to have your child participate

will not affect your child's current or future relations with Liberty University or ███████ County

Public Schools. If you decide to allow your child to participate, he/she is free to not answer any

question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Withdrawal Procedures:

If you decide to withdraw permission after the study begins, please notify the school of your decision

or you may inform the researcher orally, by email or in a written paper. If informed orally, the

researcher will make a note on the consent form and have you initial the request. All other forms of

withdrawal will be kept and stapled to the original consent form. If your child has participated in the

focus group and interview, your child's audio recording will not be transcribed and your child's

interview responses will be shredded.

III. Risks and Discomfort

Minimal risks are anticipated as a result of your child's participation. As a general rule, researchers

are not permitted to conduct any studies that will disrupt the order of the typical instructional

program found in any ███████ County Public School. The risks include a breach of confidentiality

since signed consent forms are needed. This will be limited by keeping the signed consent forms in a

separate, locked box not located where the rest of the data will be kept. Otherwise, the risk for

participation is minimal and no greater than everyday activities.

IV. Benefits

As the parent and/or guardian of a student(s) participating in this research study, the researcher

believes that the information produced will improve the quality of instruction and types of services it

provides for all children in ███████ County Public Schools. There is no direct benefit to participating

in the study. The benefits to society include contributing in developing a blueprint or guidelines for

specific characteristics of a high achieving, minority setting.

Compensation

Your child will receive a $5 food coupon for his/her participation.

V. Confidentiality

Confidentiality. The records of this study will be kept private. If publication outside of Liberty University takes place in journal publications, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject, school, or school system. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. The audio recordings will be used for accurate transcription and member checks. All data will be stored in a secured location for the federally regulated time period of three years and will then be destroyed (approximately May 2019). As the researcher, I cannot assure that confidentiality will be kept in the focus group setting, but I will strongly encourage participants to not discuss who was involved and what was discussed. As previously stated consent and all other signed documents that can identify participants will be kept in a locked box that will be located separately from the other data associated with the study.

VI. Informed Consent

The researcher conducting this study is Stefanie M. Barnes. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at smbarnes@liberty.edu/ xxx-xxx-xxxx or her committee chair, Dr. Elizabeth Ackerman, at mackerman@liberty.edu/ xxx-xxx-xxxx.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Carter 134, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to have my child participate in the study.

_____I also agree for my child to be audio-recorded during focus group and interviews (if selected)

Please place an X on the line above.

Signature of researcher

If you have read and understood the information above and agree to let your child participate in this research, please print and sign your name below.

_____ _____

Name of Student (Please print) Name of School

_____ _____

Name of Parent/Guardian (Please print) Parent/Guardian Signature

_____

Date

Appendix D: Student Assent Form

Student Assent Form

I.   **Purpose**
     <u>Stefanie M. Barnes</u> has received permission from the Research Review Board of the ████ County Public School system to conduct the research study entitled, <u style="color:red">A Collective Case Study of Economically Disadvantaged High Achieving Minority Schools</u>. The purpose of this research is to:

1.   Study how your school helps you become a productive citizen.
2.   To get your thoughts on what school is like.

II. **Participation in the Study**
     You have been asked to participate in this research study between the dates of September 2015-May 2016. The manner of your participation will include the following: focus group and interviews

1.   A <u>focus group</u> means you and some other classmates will answer questions in a group. It won't be more than 10 in the group.

2.   An <u>interview</u> means you may also be picked to answer some more questions.

Participation in this study is voluntary and will not affect your grades or future classroom placements. If you decide to withdraw permission after the study begins, please notify the school of your decision. No, you do not have to be in this study. If you want to be in this study, then tell the researcher. If you don't want to, it's OK to say no. The researcher will not be angry. You can say yes now and change your mind later. It's up to you.

III. **Risks and Discomfort**
     Minimal risks are anticipated as a result of your participation. As a general rule, researchers are not permitted to conduct any studies that will disrupt the order of the typical instructional program found in any ████ County Public School.

IV. **Benefits**
     As a student participating in this research study, the researcher believes that the information found from this study will improve instruction and types of services it provides for all children in ████ County Public Schools.

     Treats

All students participating in the study will get a $5 food card for helping the researcher with this study.

V. Confidentiality

All information is confidential, meaning to be secret, and will only be used for research purposes. Anonymity is assured which means that your name will not appear in any written reports that come from information collected from the research. Information collected will be stored in a secured location until May 2019. At that time, all information associated with the present study will be destroyed.

VI. More Information

If you have questions or concerns about participating in this study, please contact your school administrator, teacher, or counselor at _____. You can ask questions any time. You can ask now. You can ask later. You can talk to the researcher. If you do not understand something, please ask the researcher to explain it to you again.

VII. Informed Assent

If your participation in this study has been explained and you have read and understood the information above, please print and sign your name below to show that you agree to participate in the study.

(Stefanie M. Barnes xxx-xxx-xxxx researcher, Dr. Beth Ackerman advisor)
Liberty University Institutional Review Board,
1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24515
or email at irb@liberty.edu

Appendix E: Teacher Permission Form

Teacher Consent Form

I. Purpose

You are invited to be in a research study of the characteristics of a high-achieving, minority school. You were selected as a possible participant because your school meets the criteria of 80% minority enrollment along with state assessment achievement and Title I status. As a teacher, you currently teach either third, fifth, eighth, or eleventh grade reading/language arts and or math. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Stefanie M. Barnes, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University. Ms. Barnes has received permission from the Research Review Board of the ▮▮▮▮▮▮ County Public School system to conduct the research study entitled, A Collective Case Study of Economically Disadvantaged High Achieving Minority Schools

The current state of the education system is consistently changing and becoming more diverse. Diversity has become a challenge because the expectations for students are becoming rigorous and a specific skill set is now needed to compete in the global workplace. Now that administrators, stakeholders, community and state leaders realize this, the educational system has to undergo a major overhaul. The task today is to guarantee that all students are career or college ready when leaving high school. As a teacher, I realize that this requires certain characteristics, and I feel that this study could be beneficial in producing specific guidelines that could enhance the elementary and secondary academic process, specifically economically disadvantaged minority settings.

The purpose of this study is to observe, analyze, and discuss the characteristics that make an economically disadvantaged minority elementary, middle or high school an effective and academically successful setting. The researcher will particularly focus on the thoughts and practices of the administrators, teachers and students.

II. Participation in the Study

You have been asked to participate in this research study between the dates of September 2015-May 2016. If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Teachers will be asked to complete a survey; the survey contains fifty questions which require a rating from 1-5. The survey should take about 30 minutes to complete. 2. Teachers who are willing will be observed in the morning and afternoon for about a 40-minute time frame.

3. Teachers who are willing will be selected to participate in a focus group, which will last no longer than a thirty minute and will be recorded.

4. Afterward, a few teachers will be selected to do an individual interview, which will last at least a half hour and be recorded. The time frame ranges from 1-2 hrs. total time for the study.

Participation in this study is voluntary and will not affect your performance evaluation. If you decide to withdraw permission after the study begins, please notify the school of your decision. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or ▇▇▇▇▇ County Public Schools. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Withdrawal Procedures:

If you would like to withdraw from the study, you may inform the researcher orally, by email, or in a written paper. If informed orally, the researcher will make a note on the consent form and have you initial the request. All other forms of withdrawal will be kept and stapled to the original consent form.

When you withdraw from the study, your survey and observations will be shredded. If you have participated in the focus group and interview, your audio recording will not be transcribed and your interview responses will be shredded.

III. Risks and Discomfort

Minimal risks are anticipated as a result of your participation. As a general rule, researchers are not permitted to conduct any studies that will disrupt the order of the typical instructional program found in any ▇▇▇▇▇ County Public School. The risks include a breach of confidentiality since a signed consent form is needed. This will be limited by keeping the signed consent forms in a separate locked box not located where the rest of the data will be kept. Otherwise, the risk for participation is minimal and no greater than everyday activities.

IV. Benefits

As a participant in this research study, the researcher believes that the information produced will improve the quality of instruction and types of services it provides for all children in Clayton County Public Schools. There are no direct benefits to participating in the study. The benefits to society include contributing to developing a blueprint or guidelines on specific characteristics of a high-achieving, minority setting.

Compensation:

Teachers will be entered into a drawing for a $50 Visa gift card. The drawing will occur after all the surveys, observations, interviews, and focus groups have been completed. Early withdrawal will disqualify individuals for the drawing.

V. Confidentiality

The records of this study will be kept private. If publication outside of Liberty University takes place in journal publications, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject, school, or school system. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. The audio recordings will be used for accurate transcription and participant checks. All data will be stored in a secured location for the federally regulated time period of three years and will then be destroyed (approximately May, 2019). As the researcher, I cannot assure that confidentiality will be kept in the focus group setting, but I will strongly encourage participants to not discuss who was involved and what was discussed. As previously stated, consent and all other signed documents that can identify participants will be kept in a locked box that will be located separately from the other data associated with the study.

VI. More Information

The researcher conducting this study is Stefanie M. Barnes. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at smbarnes@liberty.edu or xxx-xxx-xxxx or you may contact her committee chair, Dr. Elizabeth Ackerman, at mackerman@liberty.edu or 434-582-2445.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Carter 134, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

VII. Informed Consent

If you have read and understood the information above and agree to participate in this research, print and sign your name below.

_____ I also agree to be audio-recorded during focus group and interviews (if selected)

Please place an X on the line above.

Researcher Signature

_____ _____
Name of Teacher (Please print) Name of School

_____ _____
Teacher Signature Grade Level/Subject

_____

Appendix F: Frequency Table

Code	Frequency from Documents	Frequency from Interviews	Frequency from Focus Groups	# from observations
Accountability	27	13	12	12
Addressing Problems		7	6	12
Analysis		5	3	5
Assessment	27	3	5	
Benchmarks	27	1	3	
Brainstorming/Creating	3	5	2	4
Clarity of Learning	50	8	10	17
Clear Expectations	12	7	7	16
College Career Ready	6	13	10	15
Connections to Real World		14	9	4
Core Contents	27	5	8	8
Encouragement Affirmation	9	12	6	20
Feedback Loops		5	5	15
Flexibility & Student Focus		9	4	13
		4		
Georgia Performance Standards	27	5	6	10
Integration		5	2	7
Maximizing Learning Time		5	2	18

Non-Visibility [administration]

		2	15	
Parent Involvement	23	11	3	
Personal Experience (Teacher)				
		22	2	1
Preparation		9	3	13
Proactive		10	6	14
Professionalism	23	11	7	9
Prompting Thought Processes				
		5	4	16
Providing Information		8	8	18
Positive Effect/ Communications				
		11	6	18
Relationships		12	19	12
Resources	26	17	20	30
Respect		12	15	40
Responsiveness		8	2	40
Routines		4	10	25
Scaffolding		5	2	12
		6	*4*	*9*

Stereotypes

Supporting for Autonomy & Leadership	9	12	8		29
Student Comfort		7	6	5	18
Student Expression		7	9	7	23
Transitions		4	2	2	8
Teambuilding	10	7	4	3	24
Unappreciated [by administration]		3	12		15
Variety of Modalities	**25**	**12**	**13**	**13**	**63**

Appendix G: Tables of Focus Groups, Interviews and Observations

ELEMENTARY	ASSERTIONS	THEMES
	a. Differentiated instruction b. Small groups c. Collaborative learning d. Facilitating learning e. Use of technology i.e. accelerate reader, STAR math & reading, reading and math software programs, dojo behavior management program f. Choice boards g. Data driven h. Professional development i. Explicit instruction j. Lack of support for behavior, academics and professional needs by administration	a. The importance of school leadership and their effectiveness of communicating the school goals and remaining visible while protecting instructional time. b. Providing incentives for learning and recognition of staff members while enabling teachers' autonomy and trusting their professional judgment. c. Maintaining a school climate that promotes student progress and recognizes the achievement gap by supporting effective practices and the coordination of the curriculum.
MIDDLE SCHOOL		
	a. Globally competitive b. Responsible citizens c. Equal opportunity d. Georgia Milestones, GMass Fridays e. Character education f. Their gaps, background knowledge, exposure to vocabulary, code switching	a. There should be more visibility, recognition, and acknowledgment from administration for both students and staff accomplishments. b. The importance of a positive school climate decreases the achievement gap and strengthens the school goals providing a rigorous

	g. Student talk giving opinion, being listened to, progress in maturity h. Know that you care, learning and listening, student interests acknowledged i. Referral to counselor, peer mediation j. Teacher, student and parent accountability k. Administration familiarity with curriculum, interpersonal skills, awareness of student and staff accomplishments, visibility, consistent accountability for all. l. More visibility and a sense of content knowledge from administration	curriculum and effective practices being utilized. c. The need for more accountability among students and parents to ensure a safe and secure learning environment where student progress can be monitored and instructional time protected.
HIGH SCHOOL	a. Students should learn different things, along with science math and language arts b. Students act one way with their friends and another with teachers (more comfortable) c. Students are disobedient d. Teachers ensure students are on the right track, respecting adults and other	a. Students feel principals do their best to be visible and protect instructional time. b. Students there don't feel effective practices are used which could assist with higher achievement with the curriculum and a decrease in student misbehavior.

	students, and getting ready for high school.	
	e. School is not fun and lessons are interactive.	
	f. Students' job is to be respectful to teachers and accomplish achievement goals	
	g. Lack of mentorship, professional and overall support from administration specifically for new teachers in the building or to the profession	

Interview Table

ELEMENTARY	ASSERTIONS	THEMES
TWO AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE RESPONSES' SUMMARIES	a. Background experience huge part in interactions b. Fair classroom environment c. Professional rapport with colleagues d. Positive rapport with parents/students e. Respect for students f. Sense of empowerment for students g. Multiple intelligences, techniques and strategies utilized h. Use of technology to monitor academic/behavior concerns	a. The attitude and beliefs are integral in developing a fair and respectful environment for both students and their parents. b. The importance of recognition and accountability for students' actions improve both their academic and behavior in order to maintain a positive school climate. c. The use of technology to ensure a rigorous and comprehensive curriculum is implemented. The continuous execution of technology will

		decrease the achievement gap in conjunction with multiple intelligences and various techniques and strategies being utilized.
TWO AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE STUDENT RESPONSES' SUMMARIES	a. Physical attributes help to distinguish differences b. Always be nice c. Follow directions and school rules d. Teachers help with curriculum e. Assistance from parents with homework	a. The importance of understanding the school curriculum and following the procedures to ensure a safe school climate.
MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER SUMMARY RESPONSE INTERVIEWS FROM TWO AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES AND ONE AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE	a. Worked in an increased Hispanic/Latino population, speaks conversational Spanish b. Comfortable with a diverse setting c. Make call to parents d. Involve other teachers regarding students e. Goal setter for students f. Use real world experiences to build rapport with students g. Multiple communication utilized to keep in touch with parents h. A call to overhaul the school system since it's outdated	a. The attitudes and beliefs of the teacher has been integral in communication and establishing a solid rapport with staff, student and parents. b. The regard for the students' background improves the chance to increase academic achievement by providing a safe and positive school climate where self-efficacy is demonstrated. c. The ability to maintain high visibility and provide incentives to students by empowering them to set goals that

		coincide with school goals and curriculum.
TWO AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE SUMMARY INTERVIEW RESPONSES	a. Patience with others is essential b. Ask for help when needed c. Real world applications d. Parent involvement in day to day life at school	a. The importance of the school climate and the need for an understanding of the curriculum in order aptly prepare for a college-career ready future.
HIGH SCHOOL ONE AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE TEACHER AND ONE AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE PARENT LIAISON INTERVIEW SUMMARY RESPONSES.	a. Worked in a high percentage Hispanic/Latino environment b. Their[teacher]Caribbean background allows them to relate to diversity on a personal level c. Rapport with students established d. Various communication devices used to communicate with parents i.e language line, email, newsletter, website e. Participation in social events with staff f. Established classroom expectations and procedures[teacher] g. Multiple strategies and techniques utilized [teacher] h. Ensure parents are informed of grades [teacher] i. Extended tutorial times offered [teacher]	a. The combination of teachers' attitudes and beliefs enhance the overall school climate and the implementation of a multitude of strategies and techniques the will improve the chances of decreasing the achievement gap. b. The importance of a student, staff and parent rapport that enables class and curriculum to be effective when everyone understand their accountability level. c. The ability to maintain a rigorous and sustainable curriculum. This creates a safe school climate that empowers students to transition into a college/career environment.

Appendix H: PIMRS

PRINCIPAL INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGEMENT RATING SCALE

Principal Form

Published by:

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Principal Form 2.1

Principal Form 2.1 1

THE PRINCIPAL INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGEMENT RATING SCALE

PART I: Please provide the following information if instructed to do so by the person administering the instrument:

(A) District Name: _____

(B) Your School's Name: _____

(C) Number of school years you have been principal at this school:

1 5-9 more than 15

2-4 10-15

(D) Years, at the end of this school year, that you have been a principal:

1 5-9 more than 15

2-4 10-15

(E) Gender: ___ Male ___ Female

PART II: This questionnaire is designed to provide a profile of your leadership. It consists of 50 behavioral statements that describe principal job practices and behaviors. You are asked to consider each question in terms of your leadership over the past school year.

Read each statement carefully. Then circle the number that best fits the specific job behavior or practice as you conducted it during the past school year. For the response to each statement:

5 represents *Almost Always*

4 represents *Frequently*

3 represents *Sometimes*

2 represents *Seldom*

1 represents *Almost Never*

In some cases, these responses may seem awkward; use your judgement in selecting the most appropriate response to such questions. Please circle only one number per question. Try to answer every question. Thank you.

Principal Form 2.1 2

To what extent do you . . . ?

ALMOST
NEVER ALWAYS

I. FRAME THE SCHOOL GOALS

1. Develop a focused set of annual school-wide goals 1 2 3 4 5
2. Frame the school's goals in terms of staff
responsibilities for meeting them 1 2 3 4 5
3. Use needs assessment or other formal and informal
methods to secure staff input on goal development 1 2 3 4 5
4. Use data on student performance when developing
the school's academic goals 1 2 3 4 5
5. Develop goals that are easily understood and used
by teachers in the school 1 2 3 4 5

II. COMMUNICATE THE SCHOOL GOALS

6. Communicate the school's mission effectively
to members of the school community 1 2 3 4 5
7. Discuss the school's academic goals with teachers
at faculty meetings 1 2 3 4 5
8. Refer to the school's academic goals when making
curricular decisions with teachers 1 2 3 4 5
9. Ensure that the school's academic goals are reflected
in highly visible displays in the school (e.g., posters
or bulletin boards emphasizing academic progress) 1 2 3 4 5
10. Refer to the school's goals or mission in forums with
students (e.g., in assemblies or discussions) 1 2 3 4 5

III. SUPERVISE & EVALUATE INSTRUCTION

11. Ensure that the classroom priorities of teachers are
consistent with the goals and direction of the school 1 2 3 4 5
12. Review student work products when evaluating
classroom instruction 1 2 3 4 5

Principal Form 2.1 3

ALMOST
NEVER ALWAYS

13. Conduct informal observations in classrooms on a
regular basis (informal observations are unscheduled,
last at least 5 minutes, and may or may not involve
written feedback or a formal conference) 1 2 3 4 5
14. Point out specific strengths in teacher's instructional
practices in post-observation feedback (e.g., in
conferences or written evaluations) 1 2 3 4 5
15. Point out specific weaknesses in teacher instructional
practices in post-observation feedback (e.g., in
conferences or written evaluations) 1 2 3 4 5

IV. COORDINATE THE CURRICULUM

16. Make clear who is responsible for coordinating the
curriculum across grade levels (e.g., the principal,
vice principal, or teacher-leaders) 1 2 3 4 5
17. Draw upon the results of school-wide testing when
making curricular decisions 1 2 3 4 5
18. Monitor the classroom curriculum to see that it covers
the school's curricular objectives 1 2 3 4 5

19. Assess the overlap between the school's curricular
objectives and the school's achievement tests 1 2 3 4 5
20. Participate actively in the review of curricular materials 1 2 3 4 5

V. MONITOR STUDENT PROGRESS

21. Meet individually with teachers to discuss student
progress 1 2 3 4 5
22. Discuss academic performance results with the faculty
to identify curricular strengths and weaknesses 1 2 3 4 5
23. Use tests and other performance measure to assess
progress toward school goals 1 2 3 4 5

Principal Form 2.1 4

ALMOST
NEVER ALWAYS

24. Inform teachers of the school's performance results
in written form (e.g., in a memo or newsletter) 1 2 3 4 5
25. Inform students of school's academic progress 1 2 3 4 5

VI. PROTECT INSTRUCTIONAL TIME

26. Limit interruptions of instructional time by public
address announcements 1 2 3 4 5
27. Ensure that students are not called to the office
during instructional time 1 2 3 4 5
28. Ensure that tardy and truant students suffer specific
consequences for missing instructional time 1 2 3 4 5
29. Encourage teachers to use instructional time for
teaching and practicing new skills and concepts 1 2 3 4 5
30. Limit the intrusion of extra- and co-curricular
activities on instructional time 1 2 3 4 5

VII. MAINTAIN HIGH VISIBILITY

31. Take time to talk informally with students and
teachers during recess and breaks 1 2 3 4 5
32. Visit classrooms to discuss school issues with
teachers and students 1 2 3 4 5
33. Attend/participate in extra- and co-curricular activities 1 2 3 4 5
34. Cover classes for teachers until a late or substitute
teacher arrives 1 2 3 4 5
35. Tutor students or provide direct instruction to classes 1 2 3 4 5

VIII. PROVIDE INCENTIVES FOR TEACHERS

36. Reinforce superior performance by teachers in staff
meetings, newsletters, and/or memos 1 2 3 4 5
37. Compliment teachers privately for their efforts or
performance 1 2 3 4 5

Principal Form 2.1 5

ALMOST
NEVER ALWAYS

38. Acknowledge teachers' exceptional performance by
writing memos for their personnel files 1 2 3 4 5
39. Reward special efforts by teachers with opportunities
for professional recognition 1 2 3 4 5
40. Create professional growth opportunities for teachers
as a reward for special contributions to the school 1 2 3 4 5

IX. PROMOTE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

41. Ensure that inservice activities attended by staff
are consistent with the school's goals 1 2 3 4 5
42. Actively support the use in the classroom of skills
acquired during inservice training 1 2 3 4 5
43. Obtain the participation of the whole staff in
important inservice activities 1 2 3 4 5
44. Lead or attend teacher inservice activities concerned
with instruction 1 2 3 4 5
45. Set aside time at faculty meetings for teachers to
share ideas or information from inservice activities 1 2 3 4 5

X. PROVIDE INCENTIVES FOR LEARNING

46. Recognize students who do superior work with formal
rewards such as an honor roll or mention in the
principal's newsletter 1 2 3 4 5
47. Use assemblies to honor students for academic
accomplishments or for behavior or citizenship 1 2 3 4 5
48. Recognize superior student achievement or improvement
by seeing in the office the students with their work 1 2 3 4 5
49. Contact parents to communicate improved or exemplary
student performance or contributions 1 2 3 4 5
50. Support teachers actively in their recognition
and/or reward of student contributions to and
accomplishments in class 1 2 3 4 5
Principal Form 2.1 6

PRINCIPAL INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGEMENT RATING SCALE

TEACHER FORM

Published by:

Dr. Philip Hallinger

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Teacher Form 2.1

Teacher Form 2.1 1

THE PRINCIPAL INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGEMENT

RATING SCALE

PART I: Please provide the following information about yourself:

(A) School Name: _____

(B) Years, at the end of this school year, that you have worked with the current principal:

1 5-9 more than 15

2-4 10-15

(C) Years experience as a teacher at the end of this school year:

1 5-9 more than 15

2-4 10-15

(D) Gender of your principal: ___ Male ___ Female

PART II: This questionnaire is designed to provide a profile of principal leadership. It consists of 50 behavioral statements that describe principal job practices and behaviors. You are asked to consider each question in terms of your observations of the principal's leadership over the past school year.

Read each statement carefully. Then circle the number that best fits the specific job behavior or practice of this principal during the past school year. For the response to each statement:

5 represents *Almost Always*

4 represents *Frequently*

3 represents *Sometimes*

2 represents *Seldom*

1 represents *Almost Never*

In some cases, these responses may seem awkward; use your judgment in selecting the most appropriate response to such questions. Please circle only one number per question. Try to answer every question. Thank you.

Teacher Form 2.1 2

To what extent does your principal . . . ?

ALMOST ALMOST

NEVER ALWAYS

I. FRAME THE SCHOOL GOALS

1. Develop a focused set of annual school-wide goals 1 2 3 4 5

2. Frame the school's goals in terms of staff

responsibilities for meeting them 1 2 3 4 5

3. Use needs assessment or other formal and informal
methods to secure staff input on goal development 1 2 3 4 5
4. Use data on student performance when developing
the school's academic goals 1 2 3 4 5
5. Develop goals that are easily understood and used
by teachers in the school 1 2 3 4 5

II. COMMUNICATE THE SCHOOL GOALS

6. Communicate the school's mission effectively
to members of the school community 1 2 3 4 5
7. Discuss the school's academic goals with teachers
at faculty meetings 1 2 3 4 5
8. Refer to the school's academic goals when making
curricular decisions with teachers 1 2 3 4 5
9. Ensure that the school's academic goals are reflected
in highly visible displays in the school (e.g., posters
or bulletin boards emphasizing academic progress) 1 2 3 4 5
10. Refer to the school's goals or mission in forums with
students (e.g., in assemblies or discussions) 1 2 3 4 5

III. SUPERVISE & EVALUATE INSTRUCTION

11. Ensure that the classroom priorities of teachers are
consistent with the goals and direction of the school 1 2 3 4 5
12. Review student work products when evaluating
classroom instruction 1 2 3 4 5

Teacher Form 2.1 3

ALMOST ALMOST
NEVER ALWAYS

13. Conduct informal observations in classrooms on a
regular basis (informal observations are unscheduled,
last at least 5 minutes, and may or may not involve
written feedback or a formal conference) 1 2 3 4 5
14. Point out specific strengths in teacher's instructional
practices in post-observation feedback (e.g., in
conferences or written evaluations) 1 2 3 4 5
15. Point out specific weaknesses in teacher instructional
practices in post-observation feedback (e.g., in
conferences or written evaluations) 1 2 3 4 5

IV. COORDINATE THE CURRICULUM

16. Make clear who is responsible for coordinating the
curriculum across grade levels (e.g., the principal,
vice principal, or teacher-leaders) 1 2 3 4 5
17. Draw upon the results of school-wide testing when
making curricular decisions 1 2 3 4 5
18. Monitor the classroom curriculum to see that it covers
the school's curricular objectives 1 2 3 4 5
19. Assess the overlap between the school's curricular
objectives and the school's achievement tests 1 2 3 4 5
20. Participate actively in the review of curricular materials 1 2 3 4 5

V. MONITOR STUDENT PROGRESS

21. Meet individually with teachers to discuss student
progress 1 2 3 4 5
22. Discuss academic performance results with the faculty

to identify curricular strengths and weaknesses 1 2 3 4 5
23. Use tests and other performance measure to assess
progress toward school goals 1 2 3 4 5
Teacher Form 2.1 4
ALMOST ALMOST
NEVER ALWAYS
24. Inform teachers of the school's performance results
in written form (e.g., in a memo or newsletter) 1 2 3 4 5
25. Inform students of school's academic progress 1 2 3 4 5

VI. PROTECT INSTRUCTIONAL TIME

26. Limit interruptions of instructional time by public
address announcements 1 2 3 4 5
27. Ensure that students are not called to the office
during instructional time 1 2 3 4 5
28. Ensure that tardy and truant students suffer specific
consequences for missing instructional time 1 2 3 4 5
29. Encourage teachers to use instructional time for
teaching and practicing new skills and concepts 1 2 3 4 5
30. Limit the intrusion of extra- and co-curricular
activities on instructional time 1 2 3 4 5

VII. MAINTAIN HIGH VISIBILITY

31. Take time to talk informally with students and
teachers during recess and breaks 1 2 3 4 5
32. Visit classrooms to discuss school issues with
teachers and students 1 2 3 4 5
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34. Cover classes for teachers until a late or substitute
teacher arrives 1 2 3 4 5
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performance 1 2 3 4 5
Teacher Form 2.1 5
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NEVER ALWAYS
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acquired during inservice training 1 2 3 4 5
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44. Lead or attend teacher inservice activities concerned

with instruction 1 2 3 4 5

45. Set aside time at faculty meetings for teachers to
share ideas or information from inservice activities 1 2 3 4 5

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rewards such as an honor roll or mention in the
principal's newsletter 1 2 3 4 5

47. Use assemblies to honor students for academic
accomplishments or for behavior or citizenship 1 2 3 4 5

48. Recognize superior student achievement or improvement
by seeing in the office the students with their work 1 2 3 4 5

49. Contact parents to communicate improved or exemplary
student performance or contributions 1 2 3 4 5

50. Support teachers actively in their recognition
and/or reward of student contributions to and
accomplishments in class 1 2 3 4 5

Teacher Form 2.1 6

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Professor Dr. Philip Hallinger, author of the *Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale* (PIMRS), received his doctorate in Administration and Policy Analysis from Stanford University. He has worked as a teacher, administrator, and professor and as the director of several leadership development centers. He has been a consultant to education and healthcare organizations throughout the United States, Canada, Asia, and Australia.

The *PIMRS* was developed with the cooperation of the Milpitas (California) Unified School District, Richard P. Mesa, Superintendent. As a research instrument, it meets professional standards of reliability and validity and has been used in over 200 studies of principal leadership in the United States, Canada, Australia, Europe, and Asia.

The scale is also used by school districts for evaluation and professional development purposes. It surpasses legal standards for use as a personnel evaluation instrument and has been recommended by researchers interested in professional development and district improvement (see, for example, Edwin Bridges, *Managing the Incompetent Teacher,* ERIC, 1984). Articles on the development and use of the *PIMRS* have appeared in *The Elementary School Journal, Administrators Notebook, NASSP Bulletin,* and *Educational Leadership.*

The *PIMRS* is copyrighted and may not be reproduced without the written permission of the author. Additional information on the development of the *PIMRS* and the rights to its use may be

obtained from the publisher (see cover page)

Appendix I: IRB Approval Letter

June 2, 2015

Stefanie Marie Barnes

IRB Approval 1950.060215: A Collective Case Study of Economically Disadvantaged, High-

Achieving, Minority Schools

Dear Stefanie,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is

extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data

collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human

subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were

attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

Professor, IRB Chair **Counseling (xxx) xxx-xxxx** *Liberty*

University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971

Appendix J: Audit Trail

July 31, 2014   Safe assign Results (1% via Dr. Ackerman email)

August 4, 2014   Proposal Presentation

September 24, 2014   ▮▮▮ County RRB denial for data collection

October 8, 2014   IRB approval (conditional)

January 27, 2015   ▮▮▮▮ County RRB denial for data collection

January 29, 2015   ▮▮▮ County RRB denial for data collection

June 1, 2015   Gwinnett County RRB approved for data collection

June 2, 2015   IRB approval

August 8, 2015   ▮▮▮ County RRB approved for data collection

September 15, 2015   Met with third and fifth grade teams

Sept.16-Oct. 23, 2015 Observed various teachers (elementary)

November 4, 2015   Teacher focus group (elementary)

November 5, 2015   Met with teachers (middle)

Dec. 1- Jan 15, 2016   Observed various teachers (middle)

January 25, 2016   Focus group teachers (middle)

Feb. 1-Feb. 15, 2016   Observed various teachers (high)

February 23, 2016   Focus group teachers (high)

February 29, 2016   Focus group (elementary students)

March 5, 2016   Focus group (MS students)

May 1, 2016   Completed analysis of data

June 28, 2016   Handed in dissertation

August 30, 2016   Returned paper approval

October 3, 2016   Phone conference [chair and Liberty committee member] regarding latest

      revisions

October-December, 2016 Trying to locate an editor for my paper

April 9, 2017   Handed in latest revised dissertation

May 3, 2017   Received latest revisions

June 1, 2017   Phone conference with committee member/research consultant

June 12, 2017   Professional editor hired

July 7, 2017   Turned in for last reading

Appendix K: Permission Letter for PIMRS

www.philiphallinger.com
Dr. Philip Hallinger
7250 Golf Pointe Way
Sarasota, FL 34243
hallinger@gmail.com

August 8, 2013
Stefanie Barnes

Dear Stefanie:
As copyright holder and publisher, you have my permission as publisher to use the *Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale* (*PIMRS*) in your research study. In using the scale, you may make unlimited copies of any of the three forms of the PIMRS.
Please note the following conditions of use:
1. This authorization extends only to the use of the PIMRS for research purposes, not for general school district use of the instrument for evaluation or staff development purposes.
2. This is a single-use purchase for the author's graduate research, thereby requiring purchase of additional rights for use in any future research.
3. The user agrees to send a soft copy (pdf) of the *completed study* to the publisher upon completion of the research.
4. The user agrees to send a soft copy of the *data set* and coding instructions to the publisher upon completion of the research in order to enable further instrument development.
5. The user has permission to make minor adaptations to scale as necessary for the research.
6. If the instrument is translated, the user will supply a copy of the translated version.
Please be advised that a separate *permission to publish* letter, usually required by universities, will be sent after the publisher receives a soft copy of the completed study.

Sincerely,

Phillip Hallinger

Dr. Philip Hallinger 7250 Golf Pointe Way Sarasota, FL 34243 hallinger@gmail.com

November 23, 2017

Stephanie Barnes

As copyright holder and publisher, you have my permission to use the PIMRS in your research and to include the PIMRS scale in your dissertation. I understand that your University may also reproduce single copies and give my assent for that purpose.

Sincerely,

Professor Philip Hallinger

Appendix L: Survey Spreadsheets

Elementary Teacher Surveys

ID#	Frame Goals	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Communicate Goals	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
130	3	3	2	4	5	5	4	4	2	5
131	0	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
151	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5
143	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
129	5	4	3	5	4	5	4	3	3	1
145	5	4	5	5	5	3	4	4	3	1
141	3	4	1	4	3	4	4	3	5	1
146	3	4	4	4	3	2	2	2	4	3

ID#	S &E instructions	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Curriculum	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20
130	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	4	3
131	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	4
151	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
143	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
129	4	1	2	4	4	3	4	4	4	3
145	2	2	4	3	1	4	4	3	4	3
141	2	3	5	2	5	2	4	4	4	3
146	2	4	4	2	3	2	2	4	2	2

ID#	Progress	Q22	Q23	Q24	Q25	Time	Q27	Q28	Q29	Q30
130	1	4	4	3	1	3	5	1	5	5
131	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	2	5	5
151		5	5	5		4	4		4	4
143	3	5	5	5	5	5	3	3	5	4
129	3	5	5	4	1	3	4	1	5	4
145	2	3	4	4	3	2	2	2	4	2
141	1	5	4	1	1	2	2	2	3	2
146	3	4	2	2	5	2	2	4	3	2

L	Visible	Q32	Q33	Q34	Q35	Teachers	Q37	Q38	Q39	Q40
130	1	4	5	5	4	4	4	3	5	1
131	4	3	3	1	1	5	4	4	4	4
151		4	4			4	4		5	
143	3	3	3	3	3	4	5	3	4	4
129	1	1	3	1	1	5	4	3	3	3
145	1	1	4	1	1	2	2	1	1	1
141	2	2	3	1	1	4	4		3	2
146	3	4	2	2	4	2	2	2	2	3

ID#	PD	Q42	Q43	Q44	Q45	Learning	Q47	Q48	Q49	Q50

130	5	5	5	5	5	4	1	1	1	4
131	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	2	4
151	5	5	5	4	5		5			
143	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	3	3
129	4	5	5	5	3	1	2	1	1	1
145	4	4	4	4	4	1	2	2	1	1
141	3	3	4	4	4	4	2	2	1	4
146	2	2	4	4	4	2	4	3	2	

Middle School Surveys

ID#	Frame Goals	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Communicate Goals	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
350	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
351	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5
352	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
353	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
354	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4
355	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
356	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	4	5	4
357	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5

	S &E instructions	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Curriculum	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20
350	5	5	4	5	4	3	3	4	4	4
351	4	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	5
352	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
353	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
354	5	4	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	4
355	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	4	5
356	5	4	4	5	5	4	5	5	5	5

		Q22	Q23	Q24	Q25		Q27	Q28	Q29	Q30
357	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
	Progress					Time				
350	3	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3
351	3	4	5	3	4	4	4	3	5	5
352	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	4
353	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
354	4	5	5	4	4	3	4	2	4	4
355	4	4	5	4	4	3	4	2	3	4
356	5	4	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	4
357	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5

		Q32	Q33	Q34	Q35		Q37	Q38	Q39	Q40
	Visible					Teachers				
350	3	2	3	2	2	4	2	2	3	3
351	3	4	5	5	3	5	5	3	3	4
352	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
353	1	3	5	2	2	5	5	5	5	5
354	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	4
355		4	4	4	5	4	5	3	3	3
356		4	5	2	2	5	5	3	4	4
357	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5

		Q42	Q43	Q44	Q45		Q47	Q48	Q49	Q50
	PD					Learning				
350	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	2
351	4	4	4	4	5	3	2	3	4	3
352	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
353	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5

35										
4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3
35										
5	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	5
35										
6	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	4
35										
7	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5

Appendix M: Observational Cross Analysis Organizer

Appendix N: Administrators and Teachers Cross Analysis Organizer

Administration Survey Results

	ELEMENTARY	MIDDLE	HIGH
	DEFINES	SCHOOL	MISSSION
FRAMES GOALS			
Question # 1	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^
Question # 2	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^
Question # 3	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^
Question # 4	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^
Question # 5	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^
AVERAGE	100%	100%	100%
COMMUNICATES SCHOOL GOALS			
Question # 6	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^
Question # 7	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	50% @ 4^
Question # 8	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	50% @ 4^
Question # 9	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^
Question # 10	50% @ 4^	0% @ 4^	50% @ 4^
AVERAGE	90%	80%	70%
AVERAGE FOR CATEGORY	95%	90%	85%
MANAGING THE INTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM			
SUPERVISES & EVALUATES INSTRUCTION			
Question # 11	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	50% @ 4^
Question # 12	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	50% @ 4^
Question # 13	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	50% @ 4^
Question # 14	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^
Question # 15	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	50% @ 4^
AVERAGE	100%	100%	60%
COORDINATES CURRICULUM			
Question # 16	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^
Question # 17	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	50% @ 4^
Question # 18	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^
Question # 19	50% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^
Question # 20	100% @ 4^	0% @ 4^	50% @ 4^
AVERAGE	90%	80%	80%
MONITORS STUDENT PROGRESS			
Question # 21	100% @ 4^	0% @ 4^	0% @ 4^
Question # 22	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^
Question # 23	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^
Question # 24	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^
Question # 25	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^

AVERAGE	100%	100	80%
AVERAGE FOR CATEGORY	96.6%	93.3%	73.3%

@ = at ^ = above			
	DEVELOPING STUDENT CLIMATE		
PROTECT INSTRUCTIONAL TIME			
Question # 26	50% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	0% @ 4^
Question # 27	50% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^
Question # 28	100% @ 4^	0% @ 4^	50% @ 4^
Question # 29	0% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	50% @ 4^
Question # 30	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^
AVERAGE	60%	80%	60%
MAINTAIN HIGH VISIBILITY			
Question # 31	0% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	50% @ 4^
Question # 32	50% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	50% @ 4^
Question # 33	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^
Question # 34	50% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	50% @ 4^
Question # 35	50% @ 4^	0% @ 4^	50% @ 4^
AVERAGE	50%	60%	60%
PROVIDE INCENTIVES FOR TEACHERS			
Question # 36	0% @ 4^	0% @ 4^	0% @ 4^
Question # 37	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	50% @ 4^
Question # 38	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	50% @ 4^
Question # 39	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	50% @ 4^
Question # 40	50% @ 4^	0% @ 4^	50% @ 4^
AVERAGE	60%	60%	40%
PROMOTE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING			
Question # 41	50% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	50% @ 4^
Question # 42	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^
Question # 43	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	50% @ 4^
Question # 44	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	50% @ 4^

Question # 45	50% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	50% @ 4^
AVERAGE	80%	100%	60%
PROVIDE INCENTIVES FOR LEARNING			
Question # 46	50% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^
Question # 47	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	50% @ 4^
Question # 48	50% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	50% @ 4^
Question # 49	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	50% @ 4^
Question # 50	0% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	0% @ 4^
AVERAGE	60%	100%	50%
AVERAGE FOR CATEGORY	62%	80%	54%

Teacher Survey Results

	ELEMENTARY	MIDDLE	HIGH
@= at ^ = above	DEFINES	SCHOOL	MISSSION
FRAMES GOALS			
Question # 1	50% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^
Question # 2	88% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	88% @ 4^
Question # 3	63%@ 4^	100% @ 4^	63%@ 4^
Question # 4	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	88% @ 4^
Question # 5	75% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	75% @ 4^
AVERAGE	60.35%	100%	88.8%
COMMUNICATES SCHOOL GOALS			
Question # 6	75% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	50% @ 4^
Question # 7	88% @ 4^	100 @ 4^	75% @ 4^
Question # 8	63% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	75% @ 4^
Question # 9	63% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	63% @ 4^
Question # 10	50% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	50% @ 4^
AVERAGE	68%	100%	62.6%
AVERAGE FOR CATERGORY	64%	100%	75.7%
MANAGING THE INTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM			
SUPERVISES & EVALUATES INSTRUCTION			
Question # 11	63% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	63% @ 4^
Question # 12	63% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	50% @ 4^
Question # 13	88% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	57% @ 4^ /7
Question # 14	63% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	57% @ 4^/7

Question # 15	75% @ 4 ^	100% @ 4^	57% @4^/7
AVERAGE	58%	100%	56.8%
COORDINATES CURRICULUM			
Question # 16	63% @ 4^	88% @ 4^	43% @ 4^/7
Question # 17	88% @ 4^	88% @ 4^	71% 2 4^/7
Question # 18	88% @ 4^	88% @ 4 ^	71% @ 4^/7
Question # 19	88% @ 4^	88% @ 4^	57% @ 4^/7
Question # 20	38% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	28% @ 4^/7
AVERAGE	73%	90.4%	54%
MONITORS STUDENT PROGRESS			
Question # 21	13% @ 4^	75% @ 4^	42% @ 4^/7
Question # 22	100% @ 4^	88% @ 4^	57% @ 4^/7
Question # 23	88% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	86% @ 4^/7
Question # 24	63% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	75% @ 4^
Question # 25	38% @ 4^	88% @ 4^	63% @ 4^
AVERAGE	60%	93.5%	64.6%
AVERAGE FOR CATEGORY	63.6%	86.9%	58.4%
DEVELOPING STUDENT CLIMATE			
PROTECT INSTRUCTIONAL TIME			
Question # 26	38% @ 4^	63% @ 4^	38% @ 4^
Question # 27	50% @ 4^	88% @ 4^	13% @ 4^
Question # 28	13% @ 4^	50% @ 4^	38% @ 4^
Question # 29	63% @ 4^	63% @ 4^	63% @ 4^
Question # 30	63% @ 4^	88% @ 4^	25% @ 4 ^
AVERAGE	45%	70.4%	35%
MAINTAIN HIGH VISIBILITY			
Question # 31	13% @ 4^	63% @ 4^	38% @ 4^
Question # 32	38% @ 4^	63% @ 4^	25% @ 4^
Question # 33	38% @ 4^	88% @ 4^	75% @ 4^
Question # 34	13% @ 4^	63% @ 4^	13% @ 4^
Question # 35	25% @ 4^	50% @ 4^	13% @ 4^
AVERAGE	25%	65.4%	32.8%
PROVIDE INCENTIVES FOR TEACHERS			
Question # 36	75% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	63% @ 4^
Question # 37	75% @ 4^	75% @ 4^	25% @ 4^
Question # 38	13% @ 4^	38% @ 4^	13% @ 4^
Question # 39	50% @ 4^	50% @ 4^	13% @ 4^

Question # 40	25% @ 4^	88% @ 4^	13% @ 4^
AVERAGE	48%	72%	25%
PROMOTE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING			
Question # 41	75% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	50% @ 4^
Question # 42	75% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	50% @ 4^
Question # 43	100 % @ 4^	100% @ 4^	25% @ 4^
Question # 44	100% @ 4^	100% @ 4^	25% @ 4^
Question # 45	88% @ 4^	88% @ 4^	50% @ 4^
AVERAGE	88%	97.6%	40%
PROVIDE INCENTIVES FOR LEARNING			
Question # 46	38% @ 4^	63% @ 4^	38% @ 4^
Question # 47	50% @ 4^	63% @ 4^	13% @ 4^
Question # 48	13% @ 4^	63% @ 4^	13% @ 4^
Question # 49	0 @ 4^	75% @ 4^	50% @ 4^
Question # 50	38% @ 4^	63% @ 4^	16% @ 4^/7
AVERAGE	28%	65.4%	26%
AVERAGE FOR CATEGORY	46.8%	74.%	32%