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WHAT EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES CONTRIBUTE TO HIGHER THAN EXPECTED
ACHIEVEMENT IN STUDENT PERFORMANCE FOR PUBLIC
SCHOOLS IN THE STATE OF INDIANA?

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the areas of teaching methods, teacher-student relationships, school structure, school-community partnerships or school leadership were significantly embedded in practice and acted as a change agent among school systems that achieve higher than expected results on their state standardized testing while controlling for their socio-economic status. Another area of insight gained from the comparison of the specific practices at the building level that were found in *high-achieving* schools and may not be present in schools identified as *low-achieving*.

Individual characteristics of students impact the learning environment for all children. Educators can make informed decisions by examining what teaching methods, a school's structure, teacher-student relationships, school to community partnerships, and what school leadership aspects are common among schools identified as *high-achieving*. If the identification within these five areas showed a significant relationship for improved student performance for *high-achieving* schools, the classroom teacher and building administration may use the results as a guide for student improvement.

The study used a 50-question survey divided into five constructs. The data showed significant differences in implementation between the *high-achieving* and *low-achieving* schools in four of the five constructs. The four constructs that were significantly higher in level of implementation as compared to low-achieving schools were teaching methods, teacher-student relationships, school-community partnerships and school leadership. Of the four constructs

showing significance, teacher-student relationships showed the highest amount of variance for *high-achieving* schools as compared to *low-achieving* schools. School structure did not show statistically significant differences in variance for *high-achieving* schools.

Interesting findings of differences between *high-achieving* schools and *low-achieving* schools were noted in the instructional methods construct for ensuring proficiency in reading and math, frequently assessing reading levels for all students, linking instruction to learning benchmarks, and implementing flexible skill grouping. Differences were also noted for high-achieving schools for facilitating two-way home/school communication, creating partnerships with parents and families and offering career exploration as part of the curriculum.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The organization of today's schools has created a disjointed relationship between the *professionals* and the parents. At the same time, the economic downturn, the rising divorce rate, and an expectation of the teacher to teach basic human relations and moral values that used to be taught at home, has created an increased challenge for teachers (Esteve, 2000). Some factors highlighting the importance of the school-community relationship and parent influences was summarized in the October issue of the *Teachers College Record*. Alexander and Entwisle (2001) concluded that,

The socializing influences of home and school themselves are situated within a broader context of social-structural constraints that influence, if not determine, the quality and character of what is experienced in those settings and the social lenses through which children filter their experience. (p. 802)

Esteve shared that in the past,

Education managed to establish certain core values to be reflected in school life and to be transmitted by the teachers. These values arose from an essentially convergent socialization process; that is to say, it was a unification process that integrated all children into the dominant culture. This is the melting pot model that was developed in the United States by John Dewey (1916). (pp. 200-201)

Statement of Problem

As the previous examples indicate, the family structure has an impact on what is required by teachers in schools today. How these factors relate to student performance is a concern for teachers, parents, and every other stakeholder in education today. “Recent national data tell us that achievement gaps between students attending high-poverty schools and students attending more affluent schools exist even as U.S. students begin kindergarten” (Borman, Brown, & Hewes, 2002, p. 50).

What aspects of the educational environment define a positive teacher-parent relationship for today’s public education students and can this relationship positively affect potential student success? Do you think that a positive community cooperation and teacher-child relationship will significantly impact the level of success for any child regardless of their socioeconomic status?

This study addresses specific educational issues in today’s challenging society as well as leadership and the organization of schools. This study attempted to single out current practices and attributes that are creating a positive difference in public schools that achieve higher than expected results in Indiana.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine what aspects can be identified or are prevalent among school systems that achieve higher than expected results on their state standardized testing while controlling for the socio-economic status. Another area of insight can be gained from a comparison of the practices and attributes that are found in *high-achieving* schools and may not be present in schools identified as *low-achieving*. Individual characteristics of students impact the learning environment for all children. Educators can make informed decisions by examining what teaching methods, a school’s structure, teacher-student

relationships, school to community partnerships, and what school leadership aspects are common among schools identified as *high-achieving*. If the identification within these five areas shows a significant relationship for improved student performance for *high-achieving* schools, the classroom teacher and building administration may use the results as a guide for student improvement.

Schools with high ratios of low socio-economic student populations are given Title 1 funding. When the sampling is complete, the schools identified in the study for Title 1 funding can use the results to make decisions on curriculum design, areas of emphasis, and program design that can make a difference. The results of this study can provide a guide to making decisions in allocating these funds toward the areas statistically identified as prevalent among schools identified as *high-achieving* in *high-poverty* communities in Indiana.

Research Questions

The following questions guided this study and were answered through a sampling and comparison of school corporations identified as *high* and *low achieving*:

1. Is there a significant difference in the curriculum alignment and widespread monitoring of the school curriculum present in schools that are identified as *high-achieving* as compared to *low-achieving* schools?
2. Is there a significant difference in the teacher-student relationship present in schools that are identified as *high-achieving* as compared to *low-achieving* schools?
3. Is there a significant difference in the instructional time, alternative schooling options or support for grade-level transitions prevalent in schools that are identified as *high-achieving* as compared to *low-achieving* schools?

4. Is there a significant difference in the presence of *community-shared* responsibility in the education process for schools identified as *high-achieving* as compared to low-achieving schools?
5. Is there a significant difference in the educational leadership aspects for schools identified as *high-achieving* as compared to *low-achieving* schools.

Null Hypotheses

The study encompassed the following null hypotheses:

H₀1. There is no significant difference in the curriculum alignment and widespread monitoring of the school curriculum present in schools that are identified as *high-achieving* as compared to *low-achieving* schools.

H₀2. There is no significant difference in the teacher-student relationship present in schools that are identified as *high-achieving* as compared to *low-achieving* schools.

H₀3. There is no significant difference in the instructional time, alternative schooling options or support for grade-level transitions prevalent in schools that are identified as *high-achieving* as compared to *low-achieving* schools.

H₀4. There is no significant difference in the presence of *community-shared* responsibility in the education process for schools identified as *high-achieving* as compared to low-achieving schools.

H₀5. There is no significant difference in the educational leadership aspects for schools identified as *high-achieving* as compared to *low-achieving* schools.

Definition of Terms

In order to provide consistency and understanding of this study, the following terms were selected for definitions:

Child Development Project (CDP) is “a comprehensive, whole-school improvement program with selected elementary schools across the United States” (Schaps & Lewis, 1998, p. 23).

Free and Reduced Population are students who have family income lower than the average mean of students in Indiana who then qualify for Federal assistance to pay for their breakfast and lunch in public schools in the state of Indiana.

Grounded Theory is a specific form of ethnographic inquiry that, through a series of carefully planned steps, develops theoretical ideas. Throughout the process, it seeks to ensure that the theory emerging arises from the data and not from some other source (Crotty, 1998, p. 78).

High-achieving is a school or school corporation that has a higher than expected average Indiana ISTEP+ score as compared to other districts with a similar complexity index for socio-economical status in relation to other school corporations in Indiana.

High-poverty is families where the average income and other social factors, such as the lack of a high school diploma, single parent status, and unemployment rates, indicate they are below the state average causing income disparities that create a challenge for their children who are enrolled in a public school.

ISTEP+ is the annual Indiana state standardized testing of approved standards for public instruction.

Low-achieving is a school or school corporation that has a lower than expected average Indiana ISTEP+ score as compared to other districts with a similar complexity index for socio-economical status in relation to other school corporations in Indiana.

Low-poverty refers to families where the average income and other social factors, such as a high school diploma, a college degree, and employment rate, indicate they are above the state average creating more time and resources for support for their children who are enrolled in a public school.

Low Socio-economic Status (Low SES) is a designation for students who qualify for free and reduced lunch assistance as defined by an average income in the lower percentage of the mean for the state of Indiana. Other factors such as single-parent families, non-high school graduates, and unemployment are also considered as factors related to low socio-economic status.

Shared Decision Making (SDM/SBM) is a process of consensus building where all stakeholders have the opportunity to influence and share in the decision-making process of the governance of a school.

Success is defined as graduating from high school, and/or performing above the state standard for passing on the Indiana ISTEP+ annual test.

Title 1 pertains to federal funding for school corporations to help specifically with reading and writing for students who qualify for free and reduced lunch assistance.

Limitations

The key limitation of this study was the lack of a recent statistical analysis related to high and low-achieving schools with respect to their socio-economic status after the Toutkoushian and Michael (2006) study. The study could provide better insight if *high-achieving* and *low-achieving* schools were identified according to their recent socio-economic differences in 2008 or 2009. The top and bottom 10 school corporations identified in 2006 may be different than the top and bottom ten school corporations identified in 2008 or 2009.

The researcher gathered additional Public Law 221 rankings based on Indiana standardized testing for 2006 through 2008 to provide recent insight for the same 20 school corporations identified during the 2006 study. Regardless of whether they were the highest or lowest performing schools for 2009, the information gathered for comparison for 2006 through 2008, as well as the timing of the follow-up investigation within four years of 2006, provided reasonable assurance that the findings of the study were relevant for meaningful discussion. Tables 10, 11, 12 and 13 in the appendix and summarized in Chapter 5 addressed this limitation in an attempt to show relevancy for the use of these *high* and *low achieving* school systems.

Delimitations

The approach of the study conducted in 2006 was reliable and scientifically based with conclusions drawn from statistical analysis and data provided from the Department of Education for the State of Indiana. The study was utilized in policy decision making for the K-12 Education Subcommittee, Indiana Government Efficiency Commission for action during the 2007 legislative session and beyond (Toutkoushian & Michael, 2006).

Type of Study

This study utilized a quantitative analysis of data and utilized a type of ethnographic inquiry called grounded theory. The researcher investigated the statistical relevance of five independent variables after identifying ten *high-achieving* and ten *low-achieving* school corporations from the quantitative and researched-based analysis of the 293 school corporations listed in the State of Indiana. Grounded theory was utilized in the meaningful correlation and interpretation of results and discussion section for this study. Grounded Theory is both the method of inquiry and the product of inquiry (Charmaz, 2005). The theoretical assumptions that developed from the use of grounded theory methodology perfectly fit the data set. These

methods consisted of simultaneously collecting and analyzing data, with each informing the other (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). Grounded theory provided flexible guidelines and built theories through successful data collection. Each method employed in simultaneous data collection informed analysis and provided heuristic exploration where the process “seeks to ensure that the theory emerging arises from the data and not from some other source” (Crotty, 1998, p. 78). Using grounded theory in the process of data collection provided insight for the five independent variables of iterations of data analysis when completed. After completing the analysis of the five constructs comprising questions related to methods, relationships, structure, partnerships, and leadership, a comparison of how these 20 schools have ranked in I-STEP+ (Indiana’s annual standardized test score) from 2006 to 2008 allowed for further comparisons and a validation of data attained in the survey utilized in this investigation.

Summary

This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 presented an introduction for the study, a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, null hypotheses, limitations of the study, delimitations for the study, definition of terms, type of study, and a summary. Chapter 2 presents a review of the related literature. Chapter 3 contains the methodology and procedures employed with the study. These specific areas include: type of study, the sample, research design, instrumentation, data collection process, statistical analysis, research questions, null hypotheses, and the summary. Chapter 4 presents the summary and analysis of the data. Chapter 5 reflects a review of the findings and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this literature review was to investigate student success regardless of socio-economic status and provide examples of high-achievement despite considerable barriers for today's social challenges. Although this may seem cliché and just another study of what is already known, the researcher attempted to narrow the focus to what was working and how this impacted the individual teacher in the classroom. These factors for investigation were cited as a recommendation for further study by Toutkoushian and Michael (2006).

Did the dynamics of the family, a relationship of their socio-economic status or the student's support at home have an impact on the achievement level of students in different areas of Indiana? How these factors relate to student performance was an important aspect for teachers, school administrators, and decision makers of school funding during the years of 2003 to 2009 (Rothstein 2004). "Recent national data tell us that achievement gaps between students attending high-poverty schools and students attending more affluent schools exist even as U.S. students begin kindergarten" (Borman et al., 2002, p. 50). Different levels of school funding are dependent on the socio-economic status of a community, changes in student enrollment, and academic performance. We see a direct correlation of socio-economic status to the achievement level in schools today. Funding, family, and community support are all factors that contribute to the achievement gap between high-poverty and affluent districts (Rothstein 2004).

The over-arching theme the researcher attempted to investigate in this literature review was meant to define the effects of school intervention including the teacher-parent relationship with lower socio-economic students and how this relationship could positively affect potential student success. Do you think that a positive community cooperation and teacher-child relationship will significantly impact the level of success realized by lower socioeconomic students in *at-risk* student populations? Why do some schools with high poverty rates rank well above average on annual standardized achievement tests while others rank near the bottom in the State of Indiana? Do some schools that are expected to achieve at a high percentage not perform above their expectation?

This literature review followed these six areas of concentration to investigate the relationship between student learning/achievement in public schools with a concentration on the challenges that face public education today:

1. Barriers for early education for the lower socioeconomic status (SES) student population.
2. Align, monitor, and manage the curriculum.
3. The teacher-student relationship affect on student motivation.
4. Re-organization of education: moral education, discipline, and schedules.
5. Community shared responsibility in the education process.
6. Effective district and school leadership.

The first topic of investigation provided background data about socially problematic factors impacting current education initiatives and a historical basis to help frame our study of the remaining five factors of how school districts and what specific educational practices are

used to foster an effective learning environment that can increase student performance in today's society.

Barriers for Early Education for the Lower Socioeconomic Status Student Population

Does a positive attitude, having manners, showing respect, or knowing the value of hard work matter in today's society? How many students arrive at school each day, picked up and dropped off by a bus, without the love and support they need to face another day at school? Are parents engaged in their child's education? Why do we have Title I funds to help support a morning breakfast program that parents did not ask for? Many parents, whose children participate in the breakfast program, do not realize they participate in this federally funded program. These are tough questions for our society and even more difficult for educators who face these challenges every day. The lack of success in school by many low socio-economic parents as well as the emphasis toward increased data driven decision-making of today's schools has not surprisingly created a disjointed relationship between the *professionals* and the average parent. "The experiences at home and at school that shape children's development influence not just how they think but also what they do. Habits of conduct, once established, tend to persist, as do reputations grounded in those habits" (Alexander & Entwisle, 2001, p. 802).

A nationally recognized program, *Teach for America*, sweeping through many major cities in the United States recognizes the need for "eliminating the damaging disparities in opportunity that exist between wealthy and poor children in our country" (Teaching as Leadership, 2009, p. 1). In their instructional text for teachers, they state:

We believe that where a child is born should not determine his or her life's course, and yet, the harsh reality is that children in poorer communities where families make less than

\$35,000 a year are *17 times less* likely to go to college than children of families who make more than \$90,000. (p. 1)

These instructional texts for the *Teach for America* program call the educational disparity the achievement gap between those who have the resources and those who struggle at or below the poverty line. By the time students “reach grade eight, students from low-income communities are *three years behind* their peers in math and reading. By grade 12, the gap has widened to four years” (Teaching as Leadership, 2009, p. 1). Former U. S. Secretary of Education, Paige, reported, “Nearly 70% of inner-city and rural fourth graders cannot read, even at a basic level. It is our greatest failure as a nation. It is our failure as a people” (p. 1).

The most widely known study from the 1960s, commonly referred to as *The Coleman Report*, concluded socioeconomic status [factors] bear a strong relation to academic achievement (Coleman et al., 1966). This study gained national prominence and numerous other researchers over the next two decades explored this issue of economic disparity. Among the researchers who confirmed Coleman et al.’s study, through aggregate measures, ensured that low SES students do not achieve as highly as upper SES students, include Klein (1971), Jencks (1972), Walsh and Witte (1985), Walsh (1986), and Brooks (1988). They, in some manner, showed the percentage of low-income pupils at a particular school and compared this number to the aggregate measures of student achievement, then were able to report their findings as a percentage of students above or below the median with correlations to their family income.

Although these studies had defensible data explaining their outcome, there seemed to be an outcry to look at these same studies from a different perspective where one might conclude the SES relationship is only one factor that contributes to the achievement gap of low income,

low achieving schools (Gladwell, 2008; Kozol, 2000; Rothstein, 2004; Weissbourd, 2003; White, Reynolds, Thomas, & Gitzlaff, 1993; Zdenek & Schochor, 2007).

After investigating a number of previous studies, White et al. (1993) and Wright and Bean (1974) used the same data as Coleman et al. (1966) to investigate the success of the students but at an individual level. They concluded that, “although SES and achievement are positively correlated, the relationship is weaker than members of the first group alleged” (White et al., 1993, p. 332). On the surface it appears these studies conflict, however they are actually in agreement. There also seems to be a problem with student achievement of families at or near the poverty level. The one correlation these two groups have is to what degree a family’s income relates to average student achievement. White et al. summarized this debate when they reported:

Contrary to continuing popular belief, knowledge of a student’s SES, or that of his peers, provides only modest assistance in accurately predicting his or her performance on standardized tests. Past work that concludes that SES has a dramatic impact on student achievement at the individual or school level should not be used as a basis of policy decisions involving individual students. Recommendations such as a massive reorganization of the student population based on SES would likely do very little to equalize achievement levels among schools, because SES of the individual student plays too small a role in achievement. Other assessments that say that low SES children cannot learn should also be dismissed. The key to student achievement is not as simple as the income of their households. (p. 342)

The investigation of these complex barriers began with the level of household income, yet revolved around lack of opportunity, parental literacy rates, family support, along with numerous other factors that were intertwined, compounding the complexity factors of inner-city,

lower achieving schools as well as busy families in all socio-economic levels. One area of emphasis to help combat student non-compliance that can lead to educational disconnect is an emphasis in character education. “Character education has become a very popular theme in education since the 1990s because of the increase of violence in schools, discipline concerns, and a national call to action for character education” (Zdenek & Schochor, 2007, p. 514).

Many proposals offered by organizations concerned by this perceived increase in violence and non-compliance reveals a belief that with stronger moral literacy curriculum, these problems can be alleviated and change the focus toward increased educational emphasis (Zdenek & Schochor, 2007). Advocates of this position suggest “that in conjunction with improving home and neighborhoods lives, kids need to be taught how to act in what can be considered a morally adept way within school walls” (p. 515). Rothstein (2004) indicated that the government must address a host of issues: health care, housing, and unemployment, besides educational needs for poor children to succeed in school. Even though children are resilient and cope with what obstacles are placed in front of them, he states that if many of their medical issues such as vision problems and regular inner-ear infections were addressed, as often as needed, the gap in achievement would be narrowed.

Yet, despite the resilience of today’s youth, their lack of success in school continues to be a factor some educators have spent their entire life trying to bring to the attention of the education community, the governmental policy makers, and the general public. Kozol (2000), who has personal experience in neighborhoods, schools, and families in the South Bronx, states:

I came away from working on these books with deep discouragement about the social policies that shape conditions of existence for these children but renewed respect for their

tenacity and courage and a sense of fascination and delight in the particulars of their emerging personalities. (p. 6)

Kozol has worked as an educator, an author, and friend of inner-city children his entire life. He has written numerous articles and has published an urban schools book titled *Savage Inequalities* (Kozol, 1991); and a book about the medical and social problems of the South Bronx, called *Amazing Grace* (Kozol, 1995).

Since the Coleman et al. report in 1966, numerous studies in the 1970s and 1980s, as well as in recent years, attempted to come up with ideas on how to combat the achievement gap of the inner-city schools and the rural lower socioeconomic achievement disparities. The call for attention to this social inequality remains an important topic of concern today, Weissbourd (2003) states “there is an alarming rise in greed, delinquency, and disrespect in public education” (p. 6). With so many state and federal initiatives that focus on accountability for local schools, we are left asking what is an appropriate, or what is perhaps a more effective approach through policy creation or funding, if we continue to see inequality of opportunities in our lower socioeconomic schools? Gladwell (2008) states,

If a million teenagers had been given the same opportunity, how many more Microsoft’s would we have today? To build a better world we need to replace the patchwork of lucky breaks and arbitrary advantages that today determine success, the fortunate birth dates and the happy accidents of history, with a society that provides opportunities for all. (p. 268)

This provides insight into how Bill Gates found opportunities for success and numerous athletes found successful opportunities because their birth date created extra advantage where they were bigger, stronger, and more mature than others in their same age groups during times where all-

stars were named to special teams and extra sessions for practice to become more advanced in their sport of choice.

In summary, Nelson, Palonsky and McCarthy (2007), state:

If we want to eliminate poverty and the *underclass* in American society, we need to ensure that every child has equal educational opportunity. The academic achievement gap is the most important civil rights issue of the new century. Integration, affirmative action, Title I, and Head Start are legacies from those who knew school achievement was key to creating a more just society. Maintaining, extending, and even expanding these programs and policies is the best way to close the gap that prevents people of color from taking their rightful place in the United States. (pp. 245-246)

Alignment, Monitor, and Manage the Curriculum

Education has continued to change over time and encompasses many aspects including formal written guidelines and textbooks, testing along State standards to flexible grouping and hands-on investigation. These are just a few of the aspects that affect the learning environment and to what degree a student is able to learn inside and outside of the classroom. There are also hidden curriculum aspects such as social behavior, and the unwritten rules of different expectations of student behavior in the classroom. “All of these aspects affect how the school curriculum is developed, written, taught, and tested. These complexities of the school curriculum greatly affect student achievement –especially the achievement of low-performing students of poverty” (Barr & Parrett, 2007, p.141).

Research demonstrates that to be effective, schools must provide all students with a curriculum that is research-based with evidence of proven success (MacIver & Balfanz, 2000). Along with this aspect, there have been research studies that show if schools make a commitment

to enroll students in a rigorous curriculum they will achieve more (Bottoms & Anthony, 2005; Edmonds, 1979; Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993). The premise seems simple enough, if you enroll a student in Algebra, work with him and expect mastery learning, he will eventually learn Algebra. If that same student is placed in a math-concepts class that focuses on basic computation and is never introduced to the concepts of Algebra, that student will never learn Algebra.

In the research-based book, *The Kids Left Behind*, Barr and Parrett (2007) offered 10 basic concepts that schools should embed in their practices that have proven to be successful for low SES schools who achieve higher than expected results:

1. Establish a rigorous prescribed curriculum for ALL students
2. Implement a research-based curriculum
3. Coordinate vertical and horizontal curriculum planning
4. Use standards and assessment to align the written curriculum
5. Monitor the written and taught curriculum
6. Ensure a diverse curriculum
7. Use curriculum mapping
8. Use pacing guides and assessment calendars
9. Use flexible skill grouping, and
10. Identify model lessons (p. 156)

The task of developing, aligning, managing, and monitoring a curriculum that is consistent with standards, assessments, and instruction (the taught curriculum) is a highly challenging, long-term process that never ends. Yet without it, efforts to provide improved professional development, high quality instructors, research-based classroom instruction, and extra instructional time may

be ineffective. Students of poverty must have the opportunity to attend schools that have or are currently undertaking this work.

Teacher-Student Relationship Affect on Student Motivation

The need for a change in focus from state and national standards to also include a social conscious approach may be evident from the discussion in earlier examples. What should we focus our efforts toward to effectively engage students and families in the learning process? In a recent series of weekly reports in the *Indianapolis Star*, Tully (2009) routinely describes his experiences in Manual High School in Indianapolis where teachers, administration and even secretaries struggle with relationship building. He describes students who have very little support from home and have very little experience seeing any examples of kids from their neighborhood that have seen success by doing well in school. Manual High School had a graduation rate of 39% in the 2008-2009 school year (Tulley). Tully discusses the importance of socially engaging with kids to help them stay on a positive path toward success and eventually high school graduation. Even though he states the school routinely sees “arrests for assault, drug possession and other crimes”, he describes the essence of the column with “Yet amid the chaos, there is hope” (Tulley, 2009, p. A1).

This portion of the review focused on the relationship between the student and the classroom teacher, a teacher’s daily response and interaction, and the effects of early elementary influence by the teacher as a positive role model. Esteve (2000) illustrated how different teaching is today and how it had evolved over the past 20 years:

These days, many teachers need to examine their own attitudes to teaching in order to positively accept the presence in their classes of children whose early education was received in divergent systems of socialization. Faced with this diversity of pupil

background, teachers are forced to diversify their teaching methods. It is no exaggeration to state that the task of the primary school teacher in socially deprived areas is more that of a child-welfare assistant than that of a conventional school teacher. (p. 201)

With such a diverse student make-up for many teachers, there is a need to look at the teacher-child relationship and how fostering this connection can possibly renew an atmosphere of caring and thus achievement in the local school. “If the child looks to the teacher as a caring and inspiring mentor, the family should follow this lead and make a positive connection to the *professional* education system in the public schools” (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development [ASCD], 2009, p. 30).

Ferguson (2002), a Harvard University economist and researcher, surveyed more than 30,000 Black, Hispanic, Asian, and mixed-race students. One interesting result concluded “the distinctive importance of teacher encouragement as a source of motivation for non-White students.” (p. 11). Ferguson also concluded teachers need to “inspire the trust, elicit the cooperation, stimulate the ambition and support the sustained industriousness” (p. 11) of those underachieving groups. Howes, Hamilton, and Matheson’s (1994) study on the impact of a positive teacher-child relationship reported that when teachers responded positively to children during peer interactions, the children were more accepting of each other. Supportive teacher-child relationships have been found to impact academic achievement by affecting students’ learning. Baker (1999) and Wang, Haertal, and Walberg (1994) reported that supportive child-teacher relationships reduce student alienation, particularly among poor and minority children, many of whom are at risk for negative school outcomes.

When considering the importance of the child-teacher relationship, one could also consider the importance of teacher’s influence upon a child’s moral and democratic value

development as they increase in age. Some studies suggest that moral development must occur and is more impactful at an earlier age and specifically in the primary grade before age nine (Piaget, 1932). Similar evidence concerning the strong, early influence and subsequently declining importance of *authority* is presented by Kohlberg, Hoffman, and Hoffman (1964), and Lee (1971). Solomon, Ali, Kfir, Houlihan, and Yaeger's (1972) study suggests it is important to make a positive social connection in the primary grades and states:

Should the major finding of this study, that democratic values and behavior are substantial by the eighth-grade level, prove general (across samples as well as situations) and replicable, it will suggest that children in this society develop a basic groundwork which should have implications for the attainment of democratic orientations with more specific political content. (p. 637)

In her study of academic achievement of minority students, Gregory (2000) compiled hundreds of studies that show the importance of the teacher-child relationship. With regards to teacher-caring she states:

Higher levels of support from teachers contribute to higher levels of perceived competence, autonomous self-regulation, and feelings of greater emotional security with adults and peers at school. The development of these psychological processes was linked to higher levels of engagement. Quite simply, while family support is very important, the support that students receive from teachers had a stronger and more direct influence on student engagement. Students who experienced teacher support in schools were more likely to be engaged in the learning process, to have more favorable attitudes toward school, and far less likely to engage in behaviors that would jeopardize their academic success. (p. 292)

It is also important for us to consider how pre-conceived notions of students affect learning and contribute to the achievement gap. Nelson et al. (2007) reviewed hundreds of studies on the teacher's role in the education of minorities in public schools today. In one segment, they state:

Research indicates that teachers perceived White children as more capable, expect more from them, and were more supportive of their efforts to be academically successful. They searched less aggressively for ways to help students of color because, on some level, they already had drawn the conclusion that they had less potential. Consequently, the instruction children of color received was not tailored to their potential for success and did little to reduce the academic achievement gap. (p. 258)

As a number of our studies have shown, supportive teacher-child relationships can have an impact in student achievement levels, especially with 'at-risk' populations. The one finding that is echoed by Kohlberg et al. (1964), Lee (1971), and Solomon et al. (1972) indicates that a positive teacher-child relationship is especially important in the primary grades, where peer relationships and influence emerge as more impactful than in the secondary grades.

Re-organization of Education: Moral Education, Discipline, and Schedules

The school's organization in their educational role to implement a curriculum of moral education may be a next step in deciding how fostering community pride in schools can bring back commitment, support and a partnership that will positively affect student achievement. We have investigated factors creating barriers for early education for the lower SES student population along with the investigation of the teacher-child relationship affecting student motivation toward increased gains in the classroom (ASCD, 2009). How do these two aspects

interact with the organizational structures of attempting to create an effective implementation of curriculum for moral education in the public schools?

Character education. Gutmann (1987) proposed “Cultivating character is a legitimate – indeed, an inevitable- function of education” (p.41). Gutmann’s view of the decision-making process insisted on local debate and deliberation where citizens along with local educators decide the curriculum and process of implementation. Gutmann stated “Preserving a realm of local democratic control over schools not only makes control more effective but permits the content of education to vary, as it should, with local circumstances and local democratic preferences” (p.74). Zdenek and Schochor (2007) agreed with this philosophy and stated:

The need for organizations embarking on programs of moral education to develop their own localized meanings, objectives, and procedures implemented by a dedicated staff, well trained in the methods of developing moral literacy in their students. Through this contextualized form of moral guidance, schools can advance toward their goals of developing a morally literate student body. (p. 528)

There are many programs organizing a community-centered approach to character education as well as a comprehensive individual program that focuses on moral literacy. “The United States Air Force Academy is a fine example of an institution that is putting a comprehensive character education program into action” (Berkowitz & Fekula, 1999, p. 18). They have identified a clearly stated character mission and “identified three core objectives for character education; a. striving to instill forthright integrity, b. service before self and, c. excellence in all one does” (p. 18). This institution is promoting the development of character as a fundamental goal of education. Their program has defined a clear mission, strategies of

implementation and a thorough self-evaluation component that rates their effectiveness to help with future decisions on the organization of their program.

The history of character education dates back to early American education when the Bible was used as the main text for reading, then the McGuffey Reader became popular in many classrooms around 1836. This group of readings centered on Biblical stories but added poems and heroic tales. “While children practiced their reading or arithmetic, they also learned lessons about honesty, love of neighbor, hard work, thriftiness, and courage” (Lickona, 1997, p. 45). In the 1970s, a value-laden education with the introduction of the Kohlberg (1976) moral dilemma discussions re-emerged. “Values clarification stressed not imposing values, but rather helping students choose their values freely” (Harms, Fritz, & Rockwell, 2004, p. 24).

In 1992 the Josephson Institute of Ethics called together more than 30 educational leaders representing state school boards, teachers’ unions, universities, ethnic centers, youth organizations and religious groups. They found unanimous consensus in six essential ethical values, now known as the Six Pillars of Character, which could be taught by public and private institutions without risk of socioeconomic, ethnic, political, gender or religious offense. These pillars are “trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship” (as cited in Harms et al., 2004, p. 25).

Nebraska’s Character Counts! is one initiative that has implemented character education programs where 123,000 youth have been directly involved. “Over 700,000 people have been reached indirectly with information about character education through the media and hands-on activities” (as cited in Harms et al., 2004, p. 25).

“The 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk* was the catalyst for NCLB, today’s standards-based reform movement” (as cited in Nelson et al., 2007, p. 126). In the 1980s, there was an

emphasis on teaching commerce, science, industry, and technology innovation. “In 1994, Congress added additional goals to improve the quality of teacher education and increase parental involvement in schools” (p. 127). Prior to the movement in the 1990s and specifically before *America 2000*, the standards-based reform concentrated on minimum standards, or the lowest level of acceptable achievement. With No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, there is a strong push to have states require higher standards and develop standardized assessments where all students were expected to reach specific proficiencies. NCLB also requires “separate measurable annual objectives for (1) economically disadvantaged students, (2) students from major racial and ethnic groups, (3) students with disabilities, and (4) students with limited English proficiency” (p.128-129).

NCLB legislation does not mandate character education. Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn and Smith (2006) state, “The No Child Left Behind Act asks schools to contribute not only to students’ academic performance but also to their character. Both the federal government and the National Education Association (NEA) agree that schools have this dual responsibility” (p. 448). Their study centered on California character education programs and the relationship to academic achievement. High-performance schools in California showed evidence of academic achievement and specific character education programs. Benninga et al. stated:

In our sample, elementary schools with solid character education programs showed positive relationships between the extent of character education implementation and academic achievement not only in a single year but also across the next two academic years. Over a multi-year period from 1999 to 2002, higher rankings on the API and higher scores on the SAT-9 were significantly and positively correlated with four of our character education indicators; 1) a school’s ability to ensure a clean and safe physical

environment, 2) evidence that a school's parents and teachers modeled and promoted good character, 3) high quality opportunities at the school for students to contribute in meaningful ways to the school and its community, and 4) promoting a caring community and positive social relationships. (p. 450)

The researchers concluded from their study of California high-achieving schools that the things *good schools* do are the four indicators of good character education listed previously, they refer to these as the four indicators.

This study is in contrast to a number of the examples reviewed thus far. The California study illustrates an emphasis on character education in a high-performing academic school. This illustration allows us to make broader generalizations about the importance of character and moral education in public schools today, without the belief that we are only making reference to low socioeconomic schools (p. 452).

In the conclusion of the study the authors offer:

It is clear that well-conceived programs of character education can and should exist side by side with strong academic programs. It is no surprise that students need physically secure and psychologically safe schools, staffed by teachers who model professionalism and caring behaviors and who ask students to demonstrate caring for others. (Benninga et al, p. 452)

A final example of character education programming and organization is by Berkowitz and Bier (2005) when they compared 33 character education programs across the United States that showed scientific evidence of effectiveness; they were able to prove statistically where a program showed a positive impact on a number of factors. In this comparison, they emphasized the social-emotional and character development of the child. Most character education studies

today focus on the relevance to academic success in light of the standards movement of NCLB. Some of the most important aspects of character education are very difficult to judge and certainly cannot be compared to academic achievement. Berkowitz and Bier talk about performance character, the showing of critical thinking, goal setting, and perseverance. They state:

The key point in looking at complexity of character is that to nurture good character, schools need to hit on all cylinders. No school would feel successful if its graduates were altruistic and caring but cheated routinely, nor if they were scrupulously honest but sadistic bullies. This notion of coherence in character is what many mean when they speak of a person's integrity. (p. 65)

Berkowitz and Bier (2005) explain their rationale for next steps in character-education programs such as the parental involvement and promotion of relationships as partners within the school system. Berkowitz and Bier state that this type of arrangement is rare and certainly takes increased effort on both sides. They offer many ideas such as after school programming, healthy character education, field trip participation and increased participation where parents can serve as positive moral leaders inside and outside of the classroom. Berkowitz and Bier finish with a definition of positive character education:

Character education is a perfect complement to academic fervor. Parental involvement in schools is a win-win-win proposition for students, parents, and schools. Society also wins. The effective education of the whole child fosters the development of involved, responsible citizens. (p. 69)

There are a number of character education programs that individually have shown success. This study looked at the history of character education in the United States, moved to a

model program from the United States Air Force, looked at Nebraska, Minnesota, and California's attempts at a defined approach to character education, and finally a comprehensive look at 33 programs with respect to parental involvement in character education. All have their own unique ways at approaching and attempting to address the moral and civic problems outlined in the first part of the review. The review now shifts toward the parent involvement aspect as the emphasis is to investigate what research is available on a hypothesis that an involved, engaged community along with a positive teacher-child relationship will create increased academic success in our children of lower socio-economic populations.

Community Shared Responsibility in the Education Process

The belief in a shared responsibility for education is echoed in the statement that "Community schools bring together the school and community to focus on academics, enriching opportunities for students, and services designed to remove barriers to learning" (Bingler, Blank, & Berg, 2007, p. 25). Bingler et al. present an example of new ideas that help to justify the importance of understanding that education is not simply a process where students learn solely from instruction provided by the teacher in the classroom. "Effective teaching and learning takes communication, parent involvement, and positive reinforcement from home on a daily basis" (p. 25). How can schools and communities encourage parents to become active participants in their child's educational process? One idea is the sharing of power between the *professionals* and the parents, to embrace meaningful input and provide easy and realistic avenues of communication between the school, the teacher and the parent. Whitmore and Norton-Meier (2008) give specific examples that open a window into a common household of an at-risk family, trying to be involved in their child's education. When literacy comparisons are created between the school

and home, an atmosphere of negativity and a feeling of inadequacy among the parent who wants to be involved are fostered. Whitmore and Norton-Meier state:

In particular, we know that to compare family literacy and school literacy [it] establishes a deficit orientation toward some families, cultures, and languages that perpetuates the struggle of some children in school, fails to build on the strengths that exist in all families and neighborhoods. (p. 460)

In an attempt to define parent involvement “we, as educational professionals, need to consider their point of view” (Whitmore & Norton-Meier, 2008, p. 460). A lens that views homes as practicing educational settings, rich with literacy resources and expertise, suggests families that are normally not accepted or welcomed within schools can be important resources that enable teachers to redefine expectations for children and families traditionally labeled *at-risk*. We propose that a willingness to share power with parents through our respect for their literacy, along with inviting parents into the school as wise and contributing members of the *academic* and *intellectual* culture for its students, can actively transform home-school relationships” (p. 460).

Our attempt at creating understanding goes beyond lower socioeconomic considerations and “needs to bridge the racial tensions of a multi-racial school setting” (Blum, 1999, p. 140). Blum focused on Kohlberg’s findings of the Cluster school in Cambridge, Massachusetts, which reminds us that the view from home is different from at school and we need to strive for positive community involvement no matter what our differences may be. Blum states:

The Cluster school went part of the way toward an ideal multi-racial community- one that embraces cultural and racial difference, and uses these differences educationally and socially to strengthen students’ attachment and loyalty to the larger community, while the

students continue to have appropriate attachments and investment in their distinct ethno-racial identities, cultures and sub-communities. (p. 140)

The change in focus that may be prompted by the literature may require a change in the teacher mind-set. No longer will the teacher be able to shut the door and teach with the belief that what they say is between them and the student; to require an open-door philosophy where parents, other professionals and the community are a welcome sight in the classroom. Lewis, Schaps, and Watson (1996) illustrate this very point:

Such changes cannot be expected to come quickly or easily. Because adults, too, are constructive learners, they need the same five conditions that children do. School improvement hinges on a sense of community and collaboration among teachers; conditions that enable teachers to risk changing practice and to admit and learn from mistakes. (p. 21)

“A community-building approach takes time and a defined process if it is to be effective” (Lewis et al., 1996, p. 17). One such approach that is well defined comes from Schaps (2003) who gives four specific considerations to keep in mind: “1) actively cultivate respect, support relationships among students, 2) emphasize common purposes and ideals, 3) provide regular opportunities for service and cooperation, and 4) provide developmentally appropriate opportunities for autonomy and influence” (p. 32).

Numerous articles have been written about democratic education, character education, student behavior, school curriculum and the role of the community in public education (Lewis et al., 1996; Schaps, 2003; Schaps & Lewis, 1998, 1999). The research comes from the Child Development Project (CDP), lasting over two decades, looking at a comprehensive, whole-school improvement program with selected elementary schools across the United States. Much

of the work of the center concentrates on the development of citizenship characteristics and how this can be accomplished through a community partnership. Schaps echoes a concern with the connection of the family, the student and the school. From Horace Mann to John Dewey to Ernest Boyer, our leading thinkers in the field of education have been as concerned with citizenship and character as they have been with academic matters. In fact, for most of our history as a nation, preparation for citizenship has been the *primary* goal of public schooling. “Only since Sputnik has concern for academic achievement eclipsed the focus on character and citizenship” (Schaps & Lewis, p. 23).

Schaps and Lewis (1998) call for a commitment to community support in schools while we focus on developing the behavior of children, molding them into caring and committed adults. They provide to us, their definition of an educational community as “A sense of community is a student’s experience of being valued, influential, contributing participant in a group whose members are committed to each other’s learning, growth, and welfare” (p. 24-25). Schaps and Lewis go on to draw from sociologists, and human behaviorists when explaining the natural connection between the child, the school, and the parent. Schaps and Lewis also provide several suggestions on how to create a caring community within the classroom.

In every interaction, you are either building community or destroying community.

Schools have no choice about whether to shape citizenship and character. Every aspect of school organization and climate- from discipline policy to fund-raising strategy- does so. The only choice is whether to do it well (Comer as cited in Schaps & Lewis, 1998).

Schaps and Lewis (1999) revisited the importance of the community connection in schools, this time highlighting the perils a school may encounter on the road to change. Schaps and Lewis state:

We have not retreated from our belief in the importance of building community, but we now worry that, if implemented poorly or half-heartedly, community building may be detrimental to students or, at the very least, will ‘fail’ and be discarded, like so many prior education reforms. (p. 216).

Schaps and Lewis offer the following caveats,

1. ‘caring’ does not mean ‘easy’,
2. teachers are still central in the student-centered classroom,
3. school wide change is essential,
4. school values must be examined and align with the community, and
5. assessment must be aligned philosophically with instruction. (p. 216-217)

Eventually, we may need to address these same obstacles as we move toward our investigation of an effective community outreach program with a low SES population. “Some aspects of classroom practice, such as provision for student autonomy and influence, are closely linked to our definition of community” (Battistich, Solomon, Watson, & Schaps, 1997, p. 143).

The final relationship in the discussion of a community connection, character building, and the implications viewed in young adults, was to look at problem behavior in students compared to the students’ sense of their school as a community.

As our society becomes ever more diverse, we face increasing risks of polarization and social conflict. How do we develop communities that value and promote understanding of and respect for others that are inclusive and open, with permeable rather than rigid boundaries? The development of school communities that promote such values may be crucial, for the school is perhaps the only remaining social institution that reaches members of all the diverse groups represented in our society. Moreover, the school has a

major responsibility for helping students to develop the abilities and inclinations needed by citizens in a democracy. (Battistich et al., 1997, p. 148)

The studies presented provide for different points of view as we consider the impact of our study results. These studies also provide insight when one considers the long-term possible effects of creating change. From this research it can be concluded, that although it may not guarantee success for every child, community or situation, creating a positive connection between school, the student and community may create an opportunity to make a positive change in some child's life.

Effective District and School Leadership

Is a high-achieving, low socio-economic school, run by teachers or administrators? Shared decision-making (SDM) and school-based management (SBM) are movements of reform present in today's approach to ensure effective teaching and learning. These approaches create a different way of looking at leadership than the traditional administrator's role of making the decision and having the teachers follow the given structure without question. "The current school reform agenda aims at changing the governance structure of schools so that local teachers and administrators share the authority to make decisions about the students in their schools and the ways they are taught" (Nelson, Palonsky, & Carlson, 2000, p. 371). These authors present the point that in some research, "SDM/SBM are promising grass-roots phenomenon that are harnessing the energy of teachers and administrators to reform schools on the local level" (Nelson et al., p. 372). Furthermore, they present the idea that:

An expanded role in school management may not be right for all teachers, but those who choose to take on extra nonteaching tasks and participate in SDM/SBM do so because

they believe it will result in better education for students. Teacher involvement in SDM/SBM cannot help but deliver better education. (p. 372)

Nelson et al. (2000) also present one conflicting view in favor of administrator-controlled leadership. “To consider restructuring schools and empowering teachers may be intellectually pleasing, but it ignores the demands placed on schools, the authority vested in administrative offices, and the research on school reform” (p. 373-374). They base the latter point of view on a summarized discussion where they state “Research thus far does not support the claim that teacher management increases instructional effectiveness” (p. 378). They anchor this opposing view by stating “unless shared decision making proves to be for the good of students, school leadership should remain in the hands of school administrators” (p. 378).

“High poverty schools can achieve high academic performance, but this work cannot be accomplished without effective system-wide leadership” (Barr & Parrett, 2007, p. 75). In their book, *The Kids Left Behind*, Barr and Parrett describe eight specific actions that they say are essential at the district level:

1. Demonstrate moral and political will.
2. Acknowledge poor performance and seek solutions.
3. Promote a vision of high achievement for ALL students.
4. Establish measurable goals and monitor progress.
5. Institute accountability and data-driven instructional improvement.
6. Target student needs to prioritize resources and funding.
7. Provide relentless support for teachers and principals.
8. Support focused professional development. (p. 75)

After explaining these actions in detail, the authors go on to say “research has clearly identified the relationship between effective leadership and improving achievement in high-poverty schools, and we know that new leadership skills and traits are essential for student success” (Barr & Parrett, 2007, p. 75). Carter’s (1999), *No Excuses*, is a report that describes seven school principals recognized nationally for their high-achievement in high-poverty schools. The beginning of the text states, “Principals must be free.” (p. 5). The author goes on to describe what aspects are important for success.

Effective principals decide how to spend their money, whom to hire, and what to teach. Unless principals are free to establish their own curricula, seek out their own faculties, and teach as they see fit, their teaching will not be its best. (p. 5)

The five aspects of what teachers and schools can do have been investigated from numerous research points of view in this literature review. These aspects have given the researcher some insight into investigating high and low performing schools in Indiana. The results of the following scientific study should give sufficient information grounded in these five areas outlined for the investigation and the discussion to follow in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to determine what aspects can be identified or were prevalent among school systems that achieve higher than expected results on their state standardized testing while controlling for their socio-economic status. Individual characteristics of students impact the learning environment for all children. Student performance can be improved by examining what teaching methods, school structure, teacher-student relationships, school to community partnerships, and school leadership aspects are common among schools identified as *high achieving*. If the identification within these five areas shows a significant relationship for improved student performance for *high-achieving* schools, the classroom teacher and building administration may use the results as a guide for student improvement.

Schools with high ratios of low socio-economic student populations are given Title 1 funding. When the sampling is complete, there may be schools identified that have had the opportunity to allocate extra funding through Title 1 assistance through the Federal government. The results of this study can provide a guide to making decisions in allocating these funds toward the areas statistically identified as prevalent among schools identified as *high-achieving* in *high-poverty* communities in Indiana.

Type of Study

This study utilized a quantitative analysis of data and utilized a type of ethnographic inquiry called grounded theory. The researcher investigated the statistical relevance of five independent variables after identifying ten *high-achieving* and ten *low-achieving* school corporations from the quantitative and researched-based analysis of the 293 school corporations listed in the State of Indiana.

Grounded theory was utilized in the meaningful correlation and interpretation of results and discussion section for this study. Grounded Theory is both the method of inquiry and the product of inquiry (Charmaz, 2005). The theoretical assumptions that developed from the use of grounded theory methodology perfectly fit the data set. These methods consisted of simultaneously collecting and analyzing data, with each informing the other (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). Grounded theory provided flexible guidelines and built theories through successful data collection. Each method employed in simultaneous data collection informed analysis and provided heuristic exploration. Author Crotty (1998) describes grounded theory as “a specific form of ethnographic inquiry that, through a series of carefully planned steps, develops theoretical ideas. Throughout the process, it seeks to ensure that the theory emerging arises from the data and not from some other source” (p. 78).

Using grounded theory in the process of data collection provided insight for the five independent variables of iterations of data analysis when completed. After completing the analysis of the five constructs comprising questions related to methods, relationships, structure, partnerships, and leadership, a comparison of how these 20 schools have ranked in I-STEP+ (Indiana’s annual standardized test score) from 2006 to 2008 allowed for further comparisons and a validation of data attained in the survey utilized in this investigation.

The Sample

The Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) identifies 293 public school corporations in the 2009 Indiana School Directory. These public schools submit annual census data that provides numbers of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch prices. These qualifications provide information of the socio-economic status of the community for these public schools.

A study completed by Toutkoushian and Michael (2006) ranked all 293 schools according to their poverty factor of variables that included parent education level, marriage status, student free and reduced percentages, average annual household income and home ownership. After identification of these socio-economic levels and social factors were gathered, the study performed a statistical analysis of how these factors are related to where a school corporation would be expected to score on the Indiana ISTEP+ annual achievement test. The study then compared this theoretical value to all 293 actual ISTEP+ school corporation averages for the 2005-2006 scores. In the 2006 study, all 293 school corporations received a difference score for their theoretical value as compared to their actual score; ranking all corporations by their plus or minus difference. The top and bottom 10 school corporations were summarized indicating schools with the highest difference at both extremes, labeling them as *high-achieving* and *low-achieving* school corporations (Table 9).

These top and bottom 10 school corporations were chosen as the sample school corporations for further study in this analysis. The top and bottom 10 school corporation e-mail addresses, school addresses and the names of each superintendent, two elementary principals, and two secondary principals were obtained for the mailing of a survey (Toutkoushian & Michael, 2006).

Research Design

The study utilized survey methodology to gather information of the ten highest and ten lowest ranked Indiana public school corporations from Toutkoushian and Michael's (2006) scientific study of schools that achieved higher and lower than expected results as compared to their socio-economic expectation on the Indiana ISTEP+ standardized test. Of the surveys that were not returned, the researcher chose an equal number of respondents of the top ten *high-achieving* and *low-achieving* school corporations to encourage a better response and ensure sufficient data and sample size to detect statistical significance for analysis.

The utilization of the survey design allowed the researcher to collect data in a timely manner, mitigate the costs of conducting the research, and allow the researcher to determine attributes of the population from participant responses. The survey research design allowed for inferences to be made about the differences between teaching methods, school structure, teacher-student relationships, school to community partnerships, and school leadership aspects that are common among schools identified as *high-achieving* with a comparison to schools who are identified as *low-achieving* in the state of Indiana.

Instrumentation

The researcher designed a survey with the help of Dr. Terry McDaniel, Educational Leadership, Administration, and Foundations (ELAF) professor at Indiana State University. The researcher also relied on assistance and guidance from Dr. Robert Boyd, department professor for the ELAF department at Indiana State University and Dr. Patrick Spray, Superintendent of Mill Creek Community Schools. The survey was critically analyzed and suggestions provided from seven urban school administrators in Marion County, Indianapolis, Indiana. The survey has 10 questions related to each of the five major areas (constructs) noted in the research questions

and null hypotheses for this investigation: a) Teaching methods, b) School structure, c) Teacher-student relationships, d) School to community partnerships, and e) School leadership aspects. These five areas of study (constructs) were identified and justified as relevant through the research section in Chapter 2.

Fifty survey questions were selected from the self-evaluation rubrics located at the end-of-chapter reproducible forms from *The Kids Left Behind* (Barr & Parrett, 2007). *The Kids Left Behind* is a synthesis of research on what works in high-performing, high-poverty schools around the nation conducted by the Solution Tree (formerly National Education Service) located in Bloomington, Indiana. The Solution Tree provided written permission¹ (Appendix D) for the use of the reproduced survey questions (Appendix C).

The survey questions outline the specific aspects and attributes for the five independent variables researched in each of the identified school corporations with attention given to how they accommodate the challenges encountered with public education students at every level. The rubric ranging from one to nine, instructs the respondent to decide if the specific practice is non-existent, beginning, common practice, or wide-spread and enhanced routinely (Table 8). The instructions ask the respondent to be identified as a central office administrator, elementary administrator, or secondary administrator.

Data Collection Process

After identifying the 10 *highest-ranked* school corporations and ten *lowest-ranked* school corporations according to the criteria provided from Toutkoushian and Michael's (2006) scientific study, the researcher mailed the survey to the superintendent, another central office

¹ From *The Kids Left Behind: Catching Up the Underachieving Children of Poverty* (questions from pages 79, 101, 121, 140, 159, 180, 202, and 220), by R. D. Barr and W. H. Parrett, 2007, Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press. Used with permission.

administrator if available, one or more elementary principals and one or more secondary principals for each school corporation. These individuals were responsible for the implementation of curriculum aspects in their respective school districts. All 20 schools gave the superintendent, a central office administrator (if available), elementary principals and secondary principals this survey and asked each to provide feedback.

During the tabulation of results, the researcher used the identification of *high-achieving* and *low-achieving* as well as administrative levels to compile answers in a table that included the dependent variable of *achievement* and independent variables of the five constructs of *methods*, *relationships*, *structure*, *partnerships*, and *leadership*. The variable *administrative levels* was used to see interaction effects from elementary administration, secondary administration and central office administration. This method allowed the researcher to see the differences in achievement versus all five constructs, along with a comparison of how administrative levels provided insight when assessing whether any one of the five constructs was different between the levels of achievement. Having the opportunity to compare the dependent variable versus the five constructs (independent variables) across different administrative levels ensured that the number of respondents included in the analysis had sufficient data and generalization to make inferences and conclude meaningful results with respect to the null hypotheses.

To maintain anonymity, the researcher requested feedback from at least two administrators at each level, requesting the respondent only identify himself or herself as elementary, secondary, or central office. For further anonymity in smaller school corporations with only one central office administrator, the researcher randomly identified schools by an asterisk indicating *high-achieving* and no asterisk for *low-achieving* during the mailing in order to not create any differences for school corporations when mailing or tabulating results.

Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis investigated one dependent variable and five independent variables labeled as fixed factors. The dependent variable was the *achievement level* of an Indiana school corporation that achieved higher or lower than expected results for the complexity factors of the school corporation in relation to the other 292 school corporations in Indiana. The five independent variables were: teaching methods, school structure, teacher-student relationships, school to community partnerships, and school leadership aspects. The sample mean scores were computed utilizing Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software from responses to survey items that pertain to each of the five independent variables for *high-achieving* and *low-achieving* schools.

Data was gathered from administrators at three different areas of responsibility from ten school corporations at the highest and ten school corporations from the lowest end for Indiana ISTEP+ as identified in the statistical analysis from the 2006 study by Toutkoushian and Michael at Indiana University. In the sample section of Chapter 1 as well as the data analysis section of Chapter 3, the 2006 study was summarized to help explain how the researcher identified and defined schools as *high-achieving* and *low-achieving*.

A two-way factorial ANOVA was used to save time and increase general reliability. Additional information was gained allowing a test for main and interaction effects. Error variance is more precise because other variables and interactions can be tested. This lower occurrence of error yields greater *F* values and increased the chances of finding significance. A two-factor ANOVA was conducted to measure the main effects of the independent variables of the five factors of: teaching methods, school structure, teacher-student relationships, school to community partnerships, and school leadership aspects. A two-way factorial ANOVA was

performed for data collected regarding the five independent variables with regards to their *high or low-achieving* status in the state of Indiana.

Research Questions

The following questions guided this study and were answered through a sampling and comparison of school corporations identified as *high and low achieving*:

1. Is there a significant difference in the curriculum alignment and widespread monitoring of the school curriculum present in schools that are identified as *high-achieving* as compared to *low-achieving* schools?
2. Is there a significant difference in the teacher-student relationship present in schools that are identified as *high-achieving* as compared to *low-achieving* schools?
3. Is there a significant difference in the instructional time, alternative schooling options or support for grade-level transitions prevalent in schools that are identified as *high-achieving* as compared to *low-achieving* schools?
4. Is there a significant difference in the presence of *community-shared* responsibility in the education process for schools identified as *high-achieving* as compared to *low-achieving* schools?
5. Is there a significant difference in the educational leadership aspects for schools identified as *high-achieving* as compared to *low-achieving* schools.

Null Hypotheses

The study encompassed the following null hypotheses:

H₀1. There is no significant difference in the curriculum alignment and widespread monitoring of the school curriculum present in schools that are identified as *high-achieving* as compared to *low-achieving* schools.

H₀2. There is no significant difference in the teacher-student relationship present in schools that are identified as *high-achieving* as compared to *low-achieving* schools.

H₀3. There is no significant difference in the instructional time, alternative schooling options or support for grade-level transitions prevalent in schools that are identified as *high-achieving* as compared to *low-achieving* schools.

H₀4. There is no significant difference in the presence of *community-shared* responsibility in the education process for schools identified as *high-achieving* as compared to *low-achieving* schools.

H₀5. There is no significant difference in the educational leadership aspects for schools identified as *high-achieving* as compared to *low-achieving* schools.

Summary

In this chapter, the following design components were presented and described; as well as the research questions and null hypotheses, data sources, research design, instrumentation, data collection process, and the statistical analyses to be used. Chapter 4 presents findings to questions posed in Chapter 1 and 3. Chapter 5 presents a summary of the findings, an analysis of results, discussion of the implications, and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this study was to determine what aspects can be identified or are prevalent among school systems that achieve higher than expected results on their state standardized testing despite their socio-economic status. Another area of insight can be gained from a comparison of the practices and attributes that are found in *high-achieving* schools and may not be present in schools identified as *low-achieving*. Individual characteristics of students impact the learning environment for all children. Educators can make informed decisions by examining what teaching methods, a school's structure, teacher-student relationships, school to community partnerships, and what school leadership aspects are common among schools identified as *high-achieving*. If the identification within these five areas shows a significant relationship for improved student performance for *high-achieving* schools, the classroom teacher and building administration may use the results as a guide for student improvement.

Schools with high ratios of low socio-economic student populations are given Title 1 funding. When the sampling is complete, there are schools identified that have had the opportunity to allocate extra funding through Title 1 assistance through the Federal government. The results of this study can provide a guide to making decisions in allocating these funds toward the areas statistically identified as prevalent among schools identified as *high-achieving* in *high-poverty* communities in Indiana.

Normality

Preliminary analyses examined the distribution of respondent scores in a histogram for all five constructs of (instructional) methods, relationships, structure (of the school), partnerships, and leadership. Along with the view of the histograms for the five constructs, the assumption that the dependent variable is normally distributed was tested. Skew and kurtosis of the dependent variable, achievement (high and low-achieving) was tested and examined. In this study, the assumption of normality was valid with no violation of skew or kurtosis. Each construct showed a normal distribution on a normal Q-Plot.

Power

The research data was then placed in SPSS statistical software to run a univariate analysis of variance, which provides a greater test for statistical power. Violations of this assumption make it more likely the null hypothesis will be rejected when it is false. In order to test the assumption that the dependent variable had the same variance for high-achieving and low-achieving respondents, Levene's Test of the Equality of Variances was utilized. If the Levene's test detected a significant difference in the variances between high-achieving and low-achieving respondents, then an adjusted t-test that does not assume equal variances would be employed. Power was closely considered if the significance is not found in the ANOVA statistical analysis. A follow-up discussion on power was given that addresses the construct of structure and investigate the level of variance determined by the two-way factorial ANOVA.

Univariate Analysis of Variance

The following five tables are output from the SPSS statistical software after data was analyzed using a two-factor ANOVA to see correlations and compute differences between high and low achieving schools on all five areas of study: Methods, Relationships, Structure,

Partnerships, and Leadership. The two-factor ANOVA is a comparison that can statistically determine the difference score between survey results for *high-achieving* schools versus *low-achieving* schools.

This section presents an in-depth look at the five null hypotheses as they relate to the results from the univariate analysis of variances in the ANOVA. A summary for each data table is included.

Achievement and Instructional Methods

The first construct analyses examined the Instructional Methods on a rubric of non-existent (1) to fully embedded, enhanced routinely (9) for high and low achieving schools. Ratings for Instructional Methods are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Instructional Methods

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial η^2	Observed Power ^b
Achievement	10.867 ^a	1	10.867	5.786	.019	.073	.661
Error	138.982	74	1.878				
Total	149.850	75					

Dependent Variable: COMPUTE methods = (^a1 + ^a2 + ^a3 + ^a4 + ^a5 + ^a6 + ^a7 + ^a8 + ^a9 + ^a10) / 10
^a $r^2 = .073$ (Adjusted $r^2 = .60$); ^bComputed using alpha = .05

A significant statistical difference was found $F(1,74) = 5.79, p = .019, r^2 = .073$. The $F(1,74)$ value was 5.74. If the F observed is equal or larger than the F -critical statistic (3.92), and falls in the region of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means the F -value or the summary statistic for the analysis of variance is high or showed that there was a significant

difference from the mean square between *low-achieving* schools and *high-achieving* schools.

The R^2 must also be significantly different from 0 to reject the null. In teaching methods, the R^2 value is .073. This is the coefficient of multiple determination and shows that only 7.3% of the variance was shared among the criterion variable of achievement. The significance test showed that $p = .019$ for teaching methods. With the standard set at a 95% certainty or $p < .05$ the null is rejected stating 98.1% certainty that the difference calculated for the level of curriculum alignment and widespread monitoring of the school curriculum present was different between *high* and *low-achieving* schools.

Achievement and Teacher-Student Relationships

The second set of analyses examined the Teacher-Student Relationships on a rubric of non-existent (1) to fully embedded enhanced routinely (9) for high and low achieving schools.

Ratings for Teacher-Student Relationships are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Teacher-Student Relationships

Source	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Sig.	Partial η^2	Observed Power ^b
Achievement	17.451 ^a	1	17.451	9.832	.0029	.117	.871
Error	131.463	74	1.777				
Total	148.914	75					

Dependent Variable: COMPUTE relationships = (^b1 + ^b2 + ^b3 + ^b4 + ^b5 + ^b6 + ^b7 + ^b8 + ^b9 + ^b10) / 10; ^a $r^2 = .117$ (Adjusted $r^2 = .105$); ^bComputed using alpha = .05

A significant statistical difference was found $F(1,74) = 9.82$, $p = .002$, $r^2 = .117$. The $F(1,74)$ value was 9.82. If the F observed is equal or larger than the F -critical statistic (3.92),

and falls in the region of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means the F -value or the summary statistic for the analysis of variance is high or shows that there is a significant difference from the mean square between *low-achieving* schools and *high-achieving* schools. The R^2 must also be significantly different from 0 to reject the null. In teacher-student relationships, the R^2 value is .117. This is the coefficient of multiple determination and shows that only 11.7% of the variance is shared among the criterion variable of achievement. The significance test shows that $p = .002$ for teacher-student relationships. With the standard set at a 95% certainty or $p < .05$, the null is rejected stating 99.8% certainty that the difference calculated for the level of engagement and presence of a positive teacher-student relationship is different between high and low achieving schools.

Achievement and School Structure

The third set of analyses examined the School Structure on a rubric of non-existent (1) to fully embedded enhanced routinely (9) for high and low achieving schools. Ratings for School Structure are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

School Structure

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial η^2	Observed Power ^b
Achievement	4.372 ^a	1	4.372	2.700	.105	.035	.368
Error	119.809	74	1.619				
Total	124.181	75					

Dependent Variable: COMPUTE relationships = (^c1 + ^c2 + ^c3 + ^c4 + ^c5 + ^c6 + ^c7 + ^c8 + ^c9 + ^c10) / 10; ^a $r^2 = .035$ (Adjusted $r^2 = .022$); ^bComputed using alpha = .05

There was no significant statistical difference $F(1,74) = 2.70, p = .105, r^2 = .035$. The $F(1,74)$ value was 2.70. If the F observed is equal or larger than the F -critical statistic (3.92), and falls in the region of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means the F -value or the summary statistic for the analysis of variance for school structure is lower than the critical value and shows that there is not a significant difference from the mean square between *low-achieving* schools and *high-achieving* schools. In teaching methods, the R^2 value is .035. This is the coefficient of multiple determination and shows that only 3.5% of the variance is shared among the criterion variable of achievement. The significance test shows that $p = .105$ for school structure. With the standard set at a 95% certainty or $p < .05$, the null is not rejected stating 95% certainty that the amount of implementation in the instructional time, alternative schooling options or support for grade-level transitions prevalent is not different between high and low achieving schools. The average mean is higher for the high achieving schools, but that difference is not able to be statistically determined as significant within these parameters. The observed power has been calculated at .368 for the construct of school structure for this ANOVA. This means there is a 36.8% chance the ability to reject the null is false. That percentage of probability would not lead to change in the parameters or consider that there is a chance that this construct would be determined any different from our sample. The sample does not show that there is a significant difference in this area.

Achievement and School Partnerships

The fourth set of analyses examined the School Partnerships on a rubric of non-existent (1) to fully embedded enhanced routinely (9) for high and low achieving schools. Ratings for School Partnerships are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

School Partnerships

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial η^2	Observed Power ^b
Achievement	19.261 ^a	1	19.261	13.051	.001	.150	.946
Error	109.206	74	1.476				
Total	128.467	75					

Dependent Variable: COMPUTE relationships = (^d1 + ^d2 + ^d3 + ^d4 + ^d5 + ^d6 + ^d7 + ^d8 + ^d9 + ^d10) / 10; ^a $r^2 = .150$ (Adjusted $r^2 = .138$); ^bComputed using alpha = .05

A significant statistical difference was found $F(1,74) = 13.05$, $p = .001$, $r^2 = .150$. The $F(1,74)$ value was 13.05. If the F observed is equal or larger than the F -critical statistic (3.92), and falls in the region of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means the F -value or the summary statistic for the analysis of variance is high or shows that there is a significant difference from the mean square between *low-achieving* schools and *high-achieving* schools. In school-community partnerships, the R^2 value is .150. This is the coefficient of multiple determination and shows that only 15% of the variance is shared among the criterion variable of achievement. The significance test shows that $p = .001$ for community-shared responsibility. With the standard set at a 95% certainty or $p < .05$, the null is rejected stating 99.9% certainty that the difference calculated for the level of the presence of *community-shared* responsibility in the education process is different between high and low achieving schools.

Achievement and School Leadership

The fifth and final set of analyses examined the School Leadership on a rubric of non-existent (1) to fully embedded enhanced routinely (9) for high and low achieving schools.

Ratings for School Leadership are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

School Leadership

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial η^2	Observed Power ^b
Achievement	10.455 ^a	1	10.455	4.624	.035	.059	.5646
Error	167.331	74	2.261				
Total	177.786	75					

Dependent Variable: COMPUTE relationships = (°1 + °2 + °3 + °4 + °5 + °6 + °7 + °8 + °9 + °10) / 10; ^a $r^2 = .059$ (Adjusted $r^2 = .046$); ^bComputed using alpha = .05

A significant statistical difference was found $F(1,74) = 9.82$, $p = .002$, $r^2 = .117$. The $F(1,74)$ value was 9.82. In school leadership, the R^2 value is .117. This is the coefficient of multiple determination and shows that only 11.7% of the variance is shared among the criterion variable of achievement. The significance test shows that $p = .002$ for school leadership. With the standard set at a 95% certainty or $p < .05$, the null is rejected stating that 98% certainty that the difference calculated for the educational leadership aspects are different between *high* and *low-achieving* schools.

Average Means for the Five Constructs

Another summary set of data shows the differences in the five constructs for the average means of the constructs for high-achieving schools as compared to low-achieving schools. This information is contained in Table 6.

Table 6

Average Means of the Constructs for High-achieving Schools as Compared to Low-achieving Schools

Construct	High-achieving	Low-achieving	Mean diff	Sig diff
Methods	5.33	4.53	0.80	*
Relationships	4.93	3.90	1.03	*
Structure	4.97	4.37	0.40	
Partnerships	4.77	3.83	0.94	*
Leadership	5.37	4.53	0.84	*

Note. *significant difference as detected by two-factor univariate ANOVA analysis.

A complete listing of the average mean for scores on each of the individual survey questions is listed. The information contained in Table 7 lists the respondent's average mean for *high-achieving* and *low-achieving* schools divided into the five constructs. A difference score is also noted for each question listed.

Table 7

Average Mean Scores of Individual Survey Questions

Construct	Question Number	Teaching Methods	High Mean	Low Mean	Diff.	
A	3	Initiate and support student-led conferences?	2.64	3.74	-1.10	low
A	7	Ensure ongoing vertical planning, articulation, and alignment?	5.64	5.12	0.48	
A	11	Ensure proficiency in reading and math for adolescent students?	6.27	4.98	1.29	*
A	16	Provide additional instructional time for students who have fallen behind?	6.18	5.10	1.08	high
A	20	Implement and value flexible skill grouping?	4.97	3.62	1.35	*
A	24	Encourage teaching to multiple intelligences through relevant, active learning?	5.24	4.24	1.00	
A	28	Implement and value pacing guides and assessment calendars?	4.70	4.31	0.39	
A	33	Keep the underachieving students of poverty in mind while creating and instituting an aligned curriculum?	4.94	4.60	0.34	
A	37	Frequently assess reading levels of all students?	6.45	4.69	1.76	*
A	50	Link instruction to learning benchmarks?	6.06	4.69	1.37	*

Table 7 (continued)

Construct	Question Number	Teacher-Student Relationships	High Mean	Low Mean	Diff.	
B	6	Engage parents in meaningful work?	4.42	3.24	1.18	
B	9	Build student capacity in anger management, conflict resolution, and peer mediation?	4.64	4.19	0.45	
B	13	Understand externally centered students?	3.79	4.45	-0.66	
B	17	Understand the culture of poverty and how it differs from middle-class culture?	5.39	4.98	0.41	
B	22	Publicize student performance of all required subgroups, even if the information reflects low school or subgroup performance?	6.48	4.40	2.08	*
B	26	Hold high expectations of all students especially the underachieving children of poverty?	6.79	4.83	1.96	*
B	32	Conduct home visits and improve partnerships with families?	3.12	2.90	0.22	low
B	38	Foster and support resilient (highly achieve despite obstacles) students?	5.48	4.17	1.31	*
B	41	Plan for student mobility and have strategies in place for transient students entering the classroom?	4.73	3.05	1.68	*
B	45	Connect the successes of resilient students to the improvement needs of others?	4.12	2.62	1.50	*

Table 7 (continued)

Construct	Question Number	School Structure	High Mean	Low Mean	Diff.	
C	4	Provide effective preschool programs and all-day kindergarten?	5.79	5.71	0.08	high
C	15	Provide effective transition support to kindergarten?	4.73	4.62	0.11	
C	19	Provide effective transition support to middle school?	5.27	4.17	1.10	
C	25	Provide effective transition support for suspended and expelled students?	4.85	4.52	0.33	
C	30	Provide additional instructional time?	5.52	4.69	0.83	
C	35	Provide effective transition support to elementary school?	4.85	4.07	0.78	
C	42	Create small, supportive learning environments and communities?	4.73	4.88	-0.15	
C	44	Provide and support alternative schools?	4.15	4.31	-0.16	
C	47	Provide effective transition support to high school?	5.58	5.19	0.39	high
C	49	Reorganize and extend the school day?	3.67	2.83	0.84	low
School-Community Partnerships						
D	1	Offer career exploration as part of the curriculum?	5.21	3.62	1.59	*
D	5	Provide assistance for effective learning at home?	3.91	3.74	0.17	low
D	10	Help parents learn?	4.03	2.95	1.08	low
D	14	Create partnerships with parents and families?	5.24	3.95	1.29	*

Table 7 (continued)

Construct	Question Number	School-Community Partnerships	High Mean	Low Mean	Diff.	
D	21	Have a plan for engaging volunteers?	4.33	3.43	0.90	
D	27	Engage parents and families as resources?	4.97	3.74	1.23	
D	31	Support and encourage parents to improve communication skills?	4.58	3.83	0.75	
D	34	Support targeted professional development and action?	4.61	3.76	0.85	
D	39	Facilitate two-way home/school communication?	5.91	4.48	1.43	*
D	46	Engage parents and families in decision-making	5.30	4.40	0.90	
Leadership						
E	2	Have Systematic efforts in place to monitor, evaluate, and sustain progress?	5.97	5.55	0.42	high
E	8	Possess building principals who reflect the school district's vision that all students achieve proficiency and success?	7.27	5.81	1.46	*high
E	12	Provide time for teacher collaboration and support for the development and maintenance of professional learning communities?	5.03	5.57	-0.54	
E	18	Embed assessment in all aspects of teaching and learning?	5.91	4.33	1.58	*
E	23	Support assessment literacy learning teams?	4.76	4.55	0.21	

Table 7 (continued)

Construct	Question Number	Leadership	High Mean	Low Mean	Diff.	
E	29	Engage students, parents, and stakeholders in all assessment issues?	4.55	3.81	0.74	
E	36	Focus improvement efforts on assessment for learning and data literacy?	5.58	4.36	1.22	
E	40	Use the results of assessments to modify instruction?	6.06	4.19	1.87	*
E	43	Use student achievement data to identify ineffective, struggling, or outstanding teachers?	4.61	3.21	1.40	*
E	48	Have established policies that prioritize and direct additional funding to the lowest performing students and schools?	3.70	4.07	-0.37	low

*indicates > 1.29 difference in the average mean. High = both scores higher than 5.10. Low = both scores lower than 4.10.

Table 8 presents the degree of implementation or the district perceived level of progress for each survey question that was answered. The rubric used was a scale purposely designed to not allow the respondent to choose a median score that created reflection of the degree of implementation from one (no action has been taken) to nine (very widespread, enhanced routinely). This rubric guided respondents to critically analyze the level of implementation of the process or specific initiative offered by the question asked in the survey.

Table 8

Degree of Implementation/District Progress

Timeframe	Agenda	Does my school or district...
Beginning	What is my school's or district's progress?	1. No action has been taken. 2. Efforts are limited 3. Results are being gained
Embedding	Efforts and results are being enhanced.	4. Somewhat embedded 5. Common practice 6. Common and some enhanced
Sustaining	Practices are widespread, policies are in place, and results are increasing.	7. Widespread some enhanced 8. Widespread enhanced annually 9. Very widespread, enhanced routinely

Table 9 presents the five constructs with the average mean for each of the different administrative levels that responded to the survey. The three levels were district administration (high and low adm), secondary administration (sec) and elementary administration (ele). The table indicates which of the four constructs were deemed significant through the two-factor ANOVA statistical analysis as well as some summary comments describing that all high-achieving schools scored with a higher average mean than all of the low-performing schools for the 76 respondents that contributed a complete survey. In Chapter 5, a discussion about the difference in administrative responses is listed.

Table 9

Average Mean of the Levels of Survey Response

	High adm	High sec	High ele	Avg Mean	Low adm	Low sec	Low ele	Avg mean	Mean diff	Sig Diff
Methods	5.50	5.10	5.40	5.33	4.70	4.10	4.80	4.53	0.80	*
Relationships	5.00	4.90	4.90	4.93	4.10	3.40	4.20	3.90	1.03	*
Structure	5.40	4.60	4.90	4.97	4.70	4.00	4.40	4.37	0.40	
Partnerships	4.70	5.00	4.60	4.77	3.60	3.60	4.30	3.83	0.94	*
Leadership	5.60	5.20	5.30	5.37	5.00	3.50	5.10	4.53	0.84	*
	5.24	4.96	5.02		4.42	3.72	4.56			
				all higher				all lower		

Note. *significant difference as detected by two-factor univariate ANOVA analysis. Eight out of 10 of the average means for central office administrators were scored higher than the average mean for the constructs scored for all respondents. Nine out of 10 of the average means for secondary administrators were scored lower than the average mean for the constructs scored for all respondents.

Summary

Of the 76 respondents, 34 (45%) were labeled as *high achieving* schools and 42 (55%) were labeled as *low-achieving* schools. Within the 34 high achieving respondents, ten were labeled as district administrators, 12 were secondary administrators, and twelve were elementary administrators. Within the 42 low-achieving respondents, 16 were district administrators, 14 were secondary administrators, and twelve were elementary administrators. The analysis of data included descriptive statistics, tests for normality, skew and kurtosis and a univariate analysis of a two-way factorial ANOVA to determine if there were significant differences in the levels of

implementation of the five constructs of methods, relationships, structure, partnerships, and leadership. These five constructs of 10 questions from the survey were compared to the fixed factor of high and low achievement. All of the five constructs showed a higher average mean for *high-achieving* as compared to *low-achieving*.

Statistical significance was found using the two-factor ANOVA where running a univariate analysis of variance determined that the differences found in four of the five constructs did not happen by chance and the academic and social practices surveyed within the dependent variable (achievement level) were responsible for the difference. There were statistically significant differences in implementation between the *high-achieving* and *low-achieving* schools in four of the five constructs. The 10-question construct of structure did not show a measurable difference in this study between *high-achieving* and *low-achieving* schools. Of the four constructs showing significance, relationships showed the highest amount of variance for *high-achieving* schools as compared to *low-achieving* schools (4.93 - 3.90 or 1.03 difference) followed by partnerships (4.77 – 3.83 or .94 difference) then leadership with (5.37 – 4.53 or .84 difference). Instructional methods showed the least amount of variance for *high-achieving* schools as compared to *low-achieving* schools (5.33 – 4.53 or .80 difference).

Chapter 5 addresses what factors could be responsible for the statistical significance found in the constructs of teaching methods, teacher-student relationships, school-community partnerships, and school leadership. A discussion follows to help explain that school structure showed a higher average mean for high achieving schools but was not considered significant within the parameters of the ANOVA test used in this study.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This chapter contains four sections beginning with a summary of the data in the research study and an explanation of the validity of the sample. The next section presents the analysis of those findings where a comparison of the constructs is discussed as well as the different levels of administrator perspectives. The third section entitled individual differences in survey results contains a discussion about how these findings relate to the educational approach in teacher leadership, administrative leadership and prioritizing funding for public schools. The final section is a summary of recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the areas of teaching methods, teacher-student relationships, school structure, school-community partnerships or school leadership are significantly embedded in practice and act as a change agent among school systems that achieve higher than expected results on their state standardized testing while controlling for their socio-economic status. Another area of insight can be gained from a comparison of these practices and attributes that can be identified in *high-achieving* schools and may not be present in schools identified as *low-achieving*. Individual characteristics of students impact the learning environment for all children.

Educators can make informed decisions by examining what teaching methods, a school's structure, teacher-student relationships, school to community partnerships, and what school leadership aspects are common among schools identified as *high-achieving*. If the identification within these five areas shows a significant difference for improved student performance for *high-achieving* schools, the classroom teacher and building administration may use the results as a guide for student improvement.

Validity of the Sample

The data presented in Chapter 4 is a compilation and comparison of the survey results attained from 10 *high-achieving* and 10 *low-achieving* schools as identified by Toutkoushian and Michael's (2006) study from the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy in Bloomington, Indiana and presented in Table 10 listed in the appendix. The study that identified these high and low-achieving schools was conducted four years ago. To address one limitation of the study, the data provided in Appendix A and Appendix B identify the same 20 school corporations listing their positive or negative standardized scores in the 2005-2006 school year as well as their 2006 through 2008 Public Law 221 rankings published in 2009 (Appendix C and D).

Public Law 221 is the accountability system in Indiana, which began in the 2005-2006 school year. The system was put in place to "hold schools responsible for educating Indiana students based on high standards and challenges them to continuously improve achievement" (Indiana Department of Education, 2009, para 1). The Indiana Department of Education places all public schools that voluntarily seek accreditation in a school improvement category based on assessments in English and mathematics as well as their Adequate Yearly Progress under NCLB. The performance categories are based on the percentage of students passing the annual ISTEP+ test and the school's positive or negative growth rate in consecutive years. The five categories of

school improvement and performance are exemplary progress, commendable progress, academic progress, academic watch, and academic probation. Depending on the base score when a school corporation is labeled in a category, their increase and a continuation of a commendable or exemplary rating may be difficult to keep. It is not unusual to see the majority of school corporations in Indiana labeled in the watch category when their ISTEP+ scores have stabilized at 70, 80 or 90% passing. Although there are many factors that contribute to fluctuations in this label, such as student mobility and socio-economic status, the system does provide a standard for comparison for *high* and *low-achieving* schools.

Outside of the School City of East Chicago for the top 10 high-achieving schools, the labels, according to the PL 221 system of continuous progress, show a very consistent number of exemplary and commendable designations for the top ten schools from 2006 through 2008 (Appendix C). The same consistent relationship is noted in Appendix D for the bottom ten schools as well. Their rankings remained with the majority in the watch category and none ranking as commendable or exemplary over the last three years. Without a statistically based comparison in 2009, it cannot be said with certainty the top or bottom 10 schools have remained at both ends of the spectrum for achievement. However, based on this data and the correlation to the statistically based study in 2006, one can conclude using these 20 schools provides reasonable validity to the claim they are considered *high* or *low-achieving*.

Discussion of Hypothesis for Structure

One reason there may be no difference in the instructional time, alternative schooling options or support for grade-level transitions prevalent in the schools sampled may be in direct correlation to financial constraints of all schools in Indiana. Many schools are not able to provide the needed programs listed in the questions on the survey. The programs that were

surveyed included alternate education opportunities, full-day kindergarten, summer remediation, small class sizes, small academies in the middle and high school and required community service. All of these programs were in areas where the state of Indiana had cut funding in recent years. The state of Indiana only provided tuition support at a minimal level for full day kindergarten and had slashed summer remediation support in 2008 and in 2009. If funding was at a level that these programs could be supported, there may be a difference in this area as well as showing a difference between *high* and *low-achieving* schools in the future.

Individual Differences in Survey Results

In the next analysis, the researcher looked at the outliers of the specific survey questions comparing the high and low scores as they relate to the average mean of the questions and a comparison of the levels of perceived implementation at the three administrative levels. The researcher concentrated comparison in Table 7 and then finally in Table 9.

Teaching methods. The results in Table 7 provide detailed insight that can create plausible conclusions that can be used by building level administrators and classroom teachers as they attempt to implement strategies that show a difference in practice between *high-achieving* and *low-achieving* schools. In the summary of findings for teaching methods, a recognizable difference in the average means shows reflects a considerable difference in the emphasis of (a) ensuring proficiency in reading and math, (b) implementation of flexible skill grouping, (c) frequent assessment of reading levels of all students, and (d) linking instruction to learning benchmarks. These findings are consistent with the research conducted by Barr and Parrett (2007) when they stated “A careful approach to collecting, monitoring, analyzing, and prescribing interventions from well-maintained data on low-performing children is essential to their success in school” (p. 165).

The highest average mean for the construct of methods, curriculum alignment and widespread monitoring of the school curriculum present in schools, is providing additional instructional time for students who have fallen behind. This requirement for all educators is obvious, yet, is difficult to implement unless everyone is willing to look at a different approach than the traditional school day and structure. Every teacher can embrace this emphasis within his or her classroom and it is imperative that school administration be supportive in flexible classroom organization and scheduling.

Parent-teacher partnerships. The construct of parent-teacher partnerships is another area within Table 7 that provides detailed inspection that can help educators realize a lack of emphasis contributes to a division between *high* and *low-achieving* outcomes. In the results for parent-teacher partnerships, we see a noticeable difference in the average mean score between *high-achieving* and *low-achieving* schools for (a) offering career exploration as part of the curriculum, (b) creating partnerships with parents and families, and (c) facilitating two-way home/school communication. These findings are echoed by Barr and Parrett (2007) when they stated “the busy parents of today need as much assistance as possible to communicate with teachers” (p. 99). Barr and Parrett (2007) also go on to describe the importance of career exploration because of a lack of professional background for many parents when they state “for middle and high school students, few learning experiences provide such powerful motivations as career exploration, job shadowing, and career internships” (p. 98).

The construct of parent-teacher partnerships in Table 7 also shows an area of low implementation for all schools in (a) providing assistance for effective learning at home, and (b) helping parents learn. This area of the construct is one in which many educators feel they should not be held responsible to implement. The old school way was the approach to provide and

present the material and the students should be held responsible to learn the material on their own. The realization for today is that busy parents in today's society may not have the time, skills or resources to effectively support the student with the mandates and standards expected for mastery learning. *High-achieving* schools work to bridge this gap and provide parent education opportunities after school hours, weekends, and during the summer. If all schools are to be as effective as the schools listed as *high-achieving* in this investigation, they have to implement effective teacher-parent relationships including providing assistance to parents at home and helping parents learn. These are the two areas where all schools in this investigation have room for improvement.

Policy and funding. In Table 7, there are a number of principal and district administrative perceptions among all respondents that lead to informative conclusions. One area of insight that was rated lowest for all the average means was whether schools have established policies that prioritize and direct additional funding to the lowest performing students and schools. Both *high* and *low-achieving* schools scored this question as the lowest of the ten questions in the construct.

Schools with low socio-economic populations are provided Title 1 funding to help literacy scores and add additional time for individual students who qualify. This response leads the researcher to question whether schools in need of the most individualized attention and lower class sizes actually receive the most funding in relation to the per-pupil expenditures for other high performing schools. Without district policies in place to provide the additional funding to lower performing schools, there is the possibility that funding is prioritized according to an individual's agenda or the preference of an influential group such as fine arts, athletics, or other areas outside of being driven by student performance. This is an area that would benefit from

additional research to help make determinations and guide the resources in ways that help struggling students.

District Leadership Self Perceptions

Table 9 is the final area that leads to an informative discussion about the respondents in the study. Table 9 illustrates how each of the three levels of administrators responded to the five constructs of methods, relationships, structure, partnerships, and leadership. Eight out of 10 of the average means for central office administrators were scored higher than the average mean for all respondents in the study. This data indicates, despite being an educational leader of a high or low-achieving school, their perception of the level of implementation of effective school programming was above average in nearly all categories. These results lead to the question whether the district administrators perceive the district as functioning at a level equal to what they would expect as a high-performing school system or if they have answered the survey as a positive leader who defends what the corporation does no matter what the data indicates. The fact that the majority of district administrators indicated a high-level of implementation for nearly all constructs shows that the central office administrator either does not know the level of implementation of good practice within their district or they are indeed responding on the survey as a positive leader who believes their school corporation does or should be implementing the practices needed to be a high-achieving school. Either way, this is another area of interest for further research.

Table 9 also showed that 9 out of 10 of the average means for secondary administrators were scored lower than the average mean for all five constructs scored for all respondents. This is also an interesting set of data for a specific level, which includes middle and high school principals and assistant principals. This data may suggest that lack of emphasis in teaching

literacy; difficulty in scheduling skill grouping and an emphasis on end of course assessments causes a lower score on most of the constructs presented. Many of the survey questions required knowledge of teaching emerging readers, elementary and kindergarten schedules and transitions as well as data driven decisions for grades K-6. This is another area that could lead to further research to inspect how elementary administrators implement teaching methods, teacher-student relationships, and school structure differently than secondary administrators.

Discussion

A statistical difference was found in the curriculum alignment and widespread monitoring of the curriculum in schools identified as *high-achieving*. Distinct differences were seen in ensuring proficiency in reading and math. Frequent assessment of reading levels of all students, as well as implementing and valuing of flexible skill grouping was noted. The high-achieving schools were more willing to publicize student performance of all required subgroups even if the information reflected low school or subgroup performance

High-achieving schools held high expectations for all students especially the underachieving children of poverty. These schools make a plan for student mobility and have strategies in place, foster and support resilient (highly achieving students despite obstacles) students and connect the success of these students to improve the needs of other students. High-achieving schools provide effective transition support for suspended and expelled students as well as make a concerted effort to offer real-life connections to career education as part of the curriculum.

The high-achieving schools did a better job working with parents by creating partnerships with parents and families. One way high-achieving schools foster a positive support opportunity is by offering full-day kindergarten and effective pre-school programs. This is especially

important in areas where single parent households of high-poverty communities are be able to provide opportunities for the single parent to secure full-time employment with no support structures or money for all-day child care. *The Kids Left Behind* (Barr & Parrett, 2007) illustrates this very point when it states:

The following transition practices should be considered in any district enrolling underachieving poor students:

- Provide full-day kindergarten. Districts should make full-day kindergarten available to all students with demonstrated needs.
- Provide effective preschool programs. Districts should work with their communities to ensure the availability of Head Start, Even Start, and other proven models of pre-kindergarten intervention to disadvantage children. (Barr & Parrett, 2007, p. 216)

With these early education opportunities available during the pre-school and elementary years, high-achieving schools facilitate two-way home/school partnerships and communication.

These data indicate that high-achieving schools do a better job of connecting and supporting young parents with the tools necessary to help students become proficient in the early grades. This early intervention helps parents and children focus on education by taking away some of the barriers associated with the cycle of poverty found in these areas. The young parent is able to be more self-sufficient and have additional time and fewer worries associated with poverty issues thus providing more focus for education initiatives. *The Kids Left Behind* (Barr & Parrett, 2007) supports this discussion when it states,

Schools that successfully teach poor and minority students have made a concerted effort to address the needs of their most challenging students. Since children and youth cannot

learn when they are sick, hungry, cold, or afraid, effective schools must try to alleviate these problems as an essential precondition for learning. (Barr & Parrett, 2007, p. 95)

With more focus toward the skills necessary for early literacy gains, the school helps students become better prepared to learn in all subjects through mastery of literacy skills needed in history, science, and math. If a child can master the skills of reading and writing, they are able to master other disciplines that will help them be successful throughout elementary school. These skills in turn help them achieve higher results on Indiana standards throughout their educational careers and on annual Indiana standardized tests. The mastery of skills early in an educational career, will help a student's sense of accomplishment that will foster a positive and productive approach to success in all grades while in public schools.

One effective approach cited in the data is the connection to using data through the use of student achievement and assessments to modify instruction. High-achieving schools showed a significant difference in their use of assessments in all aspects of guiding classroom teaching and learning for students. If low-performing schools are going to be committed to performing at a higher level, they need to have systematic efforts in place to monitor, evaluate, and sustain progress with the students they have in the classroom. Public schools today will not be able to choose what students are in their classroom. Yet, with a systematic approach that includes data driven-driven decision-making and a prescribed approach to alter their teaching methods, they should be able to see sizeable gains on annual assessments. These gains in their assessments will make a difference in the proficiency and skill set for the students in their classroom.

The data we have cited asserts that building leadership is also noted as a key factor toward guiding high-achieving schools to higher performance. Carter's (1999), *No Excuses*, is a report that describes seven school principals recognized nationally for their high-achievement in

high-poverty schools. The beginning of the text states, “Principals must be free.” (p. 5). The author goes on to describe what aspects are important for success.

Effective principals decide how to spend their money, whom to hire, and what to teach.

Unless principals are free to establish their own curricula, seek out their own faculties, and teach as they see fit, their teaching will not be its best. (p. 5)

School administration needs to have systems and procedures in place to help guide their building administrators to reflect the school district’s vision that all students will achieve proficiency and success.

One method that ensures this will happen is a clear approach of shared leadership guided by building administration and a commitment to a quality shared approach that is clearly communicated to staff. The teaching staff will be able to follow prescribed strategies that can be monitored and success can be evaluated and celebrated in every classroom. “The current school reform agenda aims at changing the governance structure of schools so that local teachers and administrators share the authority to make decisions about the students in their schools and the ways they are taught” (Nelson, Palonsky, & Carlson, 2000, p. 371). A continuous quality approach embraced by all educators in a district will make a difference in the success of the students.

The data indicates that an emphasis is needed in the early grades. Many of the secondary administrators showed a tendency to be concerned with other factors present in middle and high school students outside of literacy in the classroom. Many secondary administrators cited that literacy and changing their educational approach was secondary to the problems found with students that were not achieving at grade level. If the student does not have the skills necessary to succeed in coursework by the middle grades, they are more problematic and thus become

more difficult to being guided to be successful at that level. Secondary administrators showed a much more negative outlook when looking at their ability to make a difference with unsuccessful students. This data reinforces the need for early literacy to be able to achieve sizeable gains with children before they reach middle or high school.

All schools need to focus on instilling a positive work ethic in young students (grades K-6) to ensure they have the skills and character traits necessary to move forward in the secondary grades. Students in today's society are not having these skills and character traits reinforced on a daily basis at home and a concerted effort is needed at school on a daily basis. High-performance schools in California showed evidence of academic achievement and specific character education programs. Benninga et al. stated:

In our sample, elementary schools with solid character education programs showed positive relationships between the extent of character education implementation and academic achievement not only in a single year but also across the next two academic years. Over a multi-year period from 1999 to 2002, higher rankings on the API and higher scores on the SAT-9 were significantly and positively correlated with four of our character education indicators; 1) a school's ability to ensure a clean and safe physical environment, 2) evidence that a school's parents and teachers modeled and promoted good character, 3) high quality opportunities at the school for students to contribute in meaningful ways to the school and its community, and 4) promoting a caring community and positive social relationships. (p. 450)

The old-school approach that the child can and will learn if the material is presented to them is not working. Parent education and a commitment at home where the parent is held responsible in supporting the mission of the school is essential.

This is certainly a cry for help to all parents that are not providing the necessary support at home. Education cannot be seen as the sole responsibility of the school. Schools need to continue to increase the level of parent education and involvement if we are going to see low-performing schools make a measurable gain toward becoming a high-achieving school. This is not just a request for doing what is needed to raise test scores. This is data that should inspire all of our parents, communities, and educators to work together, value the programs and initiatives of high performing schools and ensure these programs remain in place to help all children graduate from high school and become the best they can be no matter what barriers they may face.

Recommendations for Further Study

To further the results of this study, this researcher would suggest the following recommendations for future research.

1. This study would offer additional insight by expanding the survey pool to include teachers. The classroom teachers may be able to address the specific questions of what is working with students at the classroom level and where the programs may be in place but not effective in practice.
2. A study that specifically addresses why the district administrator ranks programs and policy higher than any other group surveyed would certainly provide insight into questions about school leadership. Does the school superintendent need to be the positive “yes, we are doing all we can”, leader to keep the district moving? Is the leader of a district so out of touch with actual practice within the district that he/she has no idea of what programs are in place that are making a difference? Do the questions on the survey seem like they are something they should expect to be in

- place but the data of whether they are truly working show a difference than how they respond?
3. The study could also be expanded to only include Title 1 schools with over 50% poverty rate populations. This type of study could lend credence to what is working in schools that present some of the most challenging obstacles for teacher, administrators, students and parents as well as the construct of teacher-parent relationships needed in schools today.
 4. A study where any one of the five constructs of teaching methods, teacher-student relationships, school structure, school-community partnerships, and school leadership aspects become the primary focus on what works in *high-achieving* schools. Any one of these five constructs could be a catalyst of change for district administration, building principals and teachers in the classroom.
 5. The study could also investigate secondary administration versus elementary administration and the different focus needed to become a high-achieving school or investigate what aspects are working differently at either level.

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APPENDIX A: TOP 10 SCHOOLS ABOVE UPPER BOUNDARY FOR ESTIMATED VS.**ACTUAL ISTEP+ SCORES SURVEYED**

School Corporation	2005-06 ISTEP+ % Actual	2005-06 ISTEP+ % Estimated	2005-06 ISTEP+ % Diff.
River Forest School Corporation	57%	43%	14%
Plainfield Community School Corporation	80%	68%	12%
School City of East Chicago	43%	32%	11%
School Town of Speedway	68%	58%	10%
Milan Community Schools	73%	63%	10%
Beech Grove City Schools	70%	61%	9%
Argos Community Schools	74%	66%	8%
West Central School Corporation	66%	58%	8%
East Howard School Corporation	81%	73%	8%
Union Township School Corporation	82%	74%	8%

Source: Toutkoushian and Michael (2006).

**APPENDIX B: BOTTOM 10 SCHOOLS BELOW LOWER BOUNDARY FOR
ESTIMATED VS. ACTUAL ISTEP+ SCORES SURVEYED**

School Corporation	2005-06 ISTEP+ % Actual	2005-06 ISTEP+ % Estimated	2005-06 ISTEP+ % Diff.
Lake Station Community Schools	42%	49%	-7%
Southwestern Consolidated Schools Shelby	64%	71%	-7%
Seymour Community Schools	57%	64%	-7%
Franklin Township Community Schools	63%	71%	-8%
Crothersville Community Schools	52%	61%	-9%
Eminence Community Schools	60%	69%	-9%
Goshen Community Schools	50%	59%	-9%
Rensselaer Central Schools	55%	64%	-9%
MSD Shakamak Schools	50%	60%	-10%
Monroe-Gregg School District	59%	70%	-11%

Source: Toutkoushian and Michael (2006).

APPENDIX C: TOP 10 SCHOOLS SURVEYED/PL221 LABEL 2006-2008

School Corporation	2006	2007	2008
River Forest School Corporation	Watch	Watch	Watch
Plainfield Community School Corporation	Commendable	Commendable	Commendable
School City of East Chicago	Probation	Watch	Probation
School Town of Speedway	Watch	Watch	Watch
Milan Community Schools	Commendable	Watch	Watch
Beech Grove City Schools	Watch	Watch	Watch
Argos Community Schools	Commendable	Commendable	Commendable
West Central School Corporation	Watch	Watch	Watch
East Howard School Corporation	Commendable	Commendable	Commendable
Union Township School Corporation	Commendable	Exemplary	Commendable

Source: Indiana Department of Education (2009).

APPENNDIX D: BOTTOM 10 SCHOOLS SURVEYED/PL 221 LABEL 2006-2008

School Corporation	2006	2007	2008
Lake Station Community Schools	Watch	Watch	Watch
Southwestern Consolidated Schools Shelby	Watch	Watch	Watch
Seymour Community Schools	Watch	Watch	Aca progress
Franklin Township Community Schools	Watch	Aca progress	Aca progress
Crothersville Community Schools	Watch	Watch	Watch
Eminence Community Schools	Watch	Watch	Watch
Goshen Community Schools	Watch	Watch	Watch
Rensselaer Central Schools	Aca progress	Aca progress	Watch
MSD Shakamak Schools	Watch	Watch	Watch
Monroe-Gregg School District	Watch	Watch	Watch

Source: Indiana Department of Education (2009).

APPENDIX E: COVER LETTER

Dear School Leader,

I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership, Administration, and Foundations department at Indiana State University. The study for which I am conducting research is an analysis of what specific aspects high-performing schools have as compared to other districts in the state of Indiana. The intention of the study is to identify specific educational practices that may aid in the decision making for educational programming by administration, building leaders and teachers in the classroom.

This study is designed to gather input from twenty school corporations in the state of Indiana through the use of a survey that is included in this enclosure. The purpose of the study is to identify specific practices within five areas of research-based foundations that are considered as good practice in education today.

While your participation in this study is important for my research to be complete, please understand that your participation is voluntary and there is no penalty for those who choose not to participate in the study. Your responses will remain anonymous throughout the study and you and your school district will not be identified at any time. If you choose to participate in this study, do not write your name on the questionnaire. No one will be able to identify you, nor will anyone be able to identify the school corporation for whom you are employed.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact my committee chair or myself. If you have any questions about your role as a research participant, please contact the Indiana State University Institutional Review Board at IRB@indstate.edu or (812) 237-8217.

I have enclosed a self-addressed, stamped envelope for your convenience in returning your completed survey. To expedite the analysis of data, please return your completed survey as soon as possible. I am extremely grateful for your participation as I understand that the demands on your time are significant. Thank you, in advance, for your participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Thomas A. Keeley (Doctoral Candidate)
Phone: (317) 502-7582
Email: tkeeley@bgcs.k12.in.us

Dr. Terry McDaniel (Committee Chair)
Phone: (812) 237-2906
Email: tmcdaniel@indstate.edu

APPENDIX F: FOLLOW-UP LETTER

DATE

Dear School Leader: _____,

Greetings! A few weeks ago, I requested your participation in a survey that is a part of my research for a doctorate in Educational Leadership, Administration, and Foundations at Indiana State University.

If you have already completed and returned the survey, please accept my sincere thanks. Your participation is appreciated as it is my hope that the work of this study will be a benefit to the profession.

If you have not completed and returned the study at this time, please consider doing so. I understand that you have serious demands on your time and have intentionally designed the survey so that it requires only minutes away from your work.

If you have misplaced the survey or if you did not receive a survey in the initial mailing, please email me at tkeeley@bgcs.k12.in.us or call me at (317) 502-7582 and I will mail you another survey immediately.

Please accept my sincere thanks for your participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Tom Keeley
Doctoral Candidate
Indiana State University

APPENDIX G: PERMISSION TO USE SURVEY

November 6, 2009

Hi, Mr. Keeley,

Thanks for the quick reply, and thank you for your interest in using Solution Tree materials in your doctoral dissertation. We have reviewed your request to use questions from pages 79, 101, 121, 140, 159, 180, 202, and 220 of *The Kids Left Behind* by Robert D. Barr and William H. Parrett. We are pleased to grant permission for the use of this material, provided that the following guidelines are respected:

1.) The material is used in the same manner described in your Permission Request Form dated October 29, 2009, specifically, used in your doctoral dissertation and placed in 60 research surveys that will be mailed to public schools in Indiana from December 2009 until February 2010. Also, the survey will be placed in the appendix and posted online at indianastate.edu after the dissertation is accepted.

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We appreciate your interest in Solution Tree Press!

Regards,

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