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The effect of Distinguished Educators on academic gain of Louisiana Academically Unacceptable schools

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THE EFFECT OF DISTINGUISHED EDUCATORS ON

ACADEMIC GAIN OF LOUISIANA ACADEMICALLY

UNACCEPTABLE SCHOOLS

by

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ABSTRACT

Ruby Cassandra Coleman Scroggins

THE EFFECT OF DISTINGUISHED EDUCATORS ON ACADEMIC GAIN OF LOUISIANA ACADEMICALLY UNACCEPTABLE SCHOOLS

(Major Professor: Dr. David E. Gullatt)

The purpose of this study was to examine the degree of academic growth of

Academically Unacceptable schools in Louisiana which have been assigned a

Distinguished Educator. Distinguished Educators are external change agents who are

placed in Academically Unacceptable schools in Louisiana. The data were generated

from the Louisiana Department of Education. The study investigated if English

Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics scores significantly increased in schools which

were assigned a Distinguished Educator. School Performance Scores for third, fourth,

and fifth grades were examined to determine growth, as well. The *ex post facto* design

study consisted of different school configurations which included 139 Academically

Unacceptable schools which housed third and fifth-grade classes and 149 Academically

Unacceptable schools which housed fourth-grade classes. These schools are located

throughout the State of Louisiana.

This research design used a Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient to

examine if there was a significant relationship in scaled scores for ELA and

mathematics and School Performance Scores between schools that were assigned a Distinguished Educator and schools which were not assigned a Distinguished Educator. This study also used a 2 X 3 factorial multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to investigate the mean differences for LEAP and *i*LEAP ELA and mathematics variables. Results showed that there was neither an interaction, nor a main effect of either dependent variable, which were the fourth-grade LEAP, the third and fifth-grade *i*LEAP, ELA and mathematics scaled scores, or the school performance scores.

The analysis of fourth-grade data revealed a significant relationship between Distinguished Educator assignment and school year. Schools with Distinguished Educator assignments outperformed the other schools on the LEAP ELA and mathematics assessments across years by roughly half of a standard deviation in both LEAP assessments. Based on the analysis of the results, the amount of gain was not significant for ELA, mathematics or scaled scores for third, fourth, or fifth grades.

There was no statistically significant relationship between the level of school improvement in Academically Unacceptable schools and the assistance provided by the Distinguished Educator. There was no significant level of growth in scaled scores for English Language Arts and mathematics in schools which are assigned a Distinguished Educator and schools which have not been assigned a Distinguished Educator. However, for the fourth-grade sample, it was concluded that there was an interaction between LEAP ELA, LEAP mathematics, and SPS by year.

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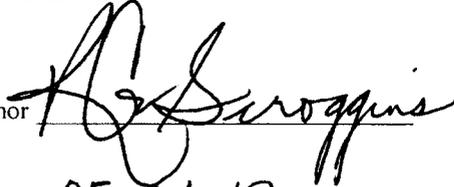
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DEDICATION

This dissertation and the subsequent completion of the requirements for the

Doctor of Education Degree are dedicated to my husband, Jerome, and my

sons, Jeromey and James. Had it not been for the encouragement these three so freely

gave (high expectations and constant pressure to persevere), I would have surely given

up this past year. I would like to also thank my mother and father for their constant

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through this program. For without Him, nothing is possible. The prayers of so many of

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through this whole process, they do not even realize how much that meant to me and

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

With the implementation of the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) Act, (United States Department of Education, 2004), increased awareness has been placed on accountability and the success or failure of schools throughout the United States. Louisiana is one of the states which has been plagued with a larger than national average of failing schools. Twelve Louisiana schools found in East Baton Rouge Parish are failing, and nearly twenty other schools across Louisiana are in dire need of improvement (Sentell, 2008). These schools have not made the necessary academic improvements over several years as verified by state mandated standardized tests. Other Academically Unacceptable schools have suffered state takeovers due to poor student achievement. According to Sentell, (2011), the State Superintendent of Education in Louisiana has suggested longer school days and extended school year as possible solutions to the failing schools and poor student achievement.

Low-performance of students and schools in the American educational system is correlated with a number of factors, such as: (a) low economic status and the existence of special needs students, (b) lack of state accountability with standardized testing scores. (c) the number of uncertified and under qualified teachers to select from for needed teaching positions. and (d) racial differences

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(Schrag, 2004). These factors make it statistically difficult for schools which serve minority students and those who speak little or no English, and who are often referred to as English as a Second Language students (ESL), to become proficient in reading and mathematics. States may apply for waivers from the United States Department of Education to exclude the ESL subgroup of students from taking the state-mandated tests. Many school districts believe that these students are doomed to fail the tests, largely due to a language barrier. Extra federal funding assists districts in providing additional resources in an effort to provide more educational opportunities.

It is reported that race may also be a factor associated with low performance in schools due to the disproportionate number of minority students who are being placed in special education classes (Baltodano et al., 2005). Accountability in schools must include personal development of students if the goal is to prevent school dropouts in the future. As school dropout rates increase, the prison rate increases as well. Teachers who believe that students can be taught with extra effort, strategies, and parent engagement to exclude community influences tend to reach students who are considered as low-performing students in Academically Unacceptable schools (Cassel, 2001).

A lack of consensus exists in determining how resources should be allocated and utilized in many Academically Unacceptable schools. This lack of agreement may be attributed to the leadership at the district level, and the birth of Supplemental Educational Services (SES). Low income students are eligible to enroll in supplemental educational services if they are enrolled in a Title I school

that the state has deemed in need of improvement for more than one year. Supplemental educational services are directly correlated with free extra academic help, which may be in the form of tutoring or remediation in reading. language arts, and mathematics. This extra help may be provided after school, on weekends, or during the summer months. There is evidence that desegregated schools produce higher student achievement in high poverty schools (Orfield & Lee, 2005). The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) suggests that high poverty eighth-grade students perform closer to the fourth-grade level than they do to the eighth-grade-level (Balfanz, 2009).

The low-income twelfth-grade students, who were assessed by NAEP, had scale scores similar to non-low income eighth-grade students. Also, 35% of high-income students scored at or above the proficient level, as only 10% of low-income student counterparts scored. These data suggest that low- income students are nearly twice more likely to score below the basic level of achievement than are high-income students (Science and Engineering Indicators, 2002).

According to LeFloch et al. (2008), there have been mandates for external support to Academically Unacceptable schools. No Child Left Behind (2004), legislation offered suggestions for districts and states to assist with school improvement. However, many schools have not received intensive assistance due to limited resources. Title I schools have been provided some monetary assistance for improvements.

The present emphasis on accountability in schools across the United States points to the critical importance of personal development of students. The Nation

At-Risk Report (1983), summarized information about failing schools across America. Students were found to have stopped taking college preparatory courses and replaced those courses with general courses. Also, time that was spent on homework was less and requirements for higher levels of mathematics had declined during the years of 1975 and 1980 within the United States. Surprisingly, the study also found that a very small number of academically capable students entered into the teaching profession. In fact, many of the teachers in the field came from the bottom quartile of high school and college graduates.

Professional development and effective academic achievement are both components of school accountability. Repeated studies show that juvenile delinquents and prison inmates lack personal development. Many delinquents have experienced academic failure due to poor academic instruction, poor leadership, and poor teaching practices (Christle et al., 2005). It has also been documented that youth who are involved in the juvenile justice system experience overall academic deficits and are often low-performing in the classroom (Brown, et al., 2008).

A study of high-performing, high poverty schools in Wisconsin revealed that the schools had common characteristics. These characteristics included high quality leadership, focused professional development, data driven decision making, stakeholder involvement, and instructional programs designed to enhance student achievement (North Central Regional Education Laboratory, 2002).

Schools selected for the NCREL study contained instructional leadership that included (a) purposeful and proactive administrative leadership, (b) sense of community, (c) data-based decision making and program monitoring, (d) student-

centered programs and services designed around individual needs. and (e) high

expectations for all students. In addition to high quality instructional leadership.

professional development programs in these exemplary programs involved: (a) staff

initiated professional development, (b) opportunities for staff interaction, and (c)

peer coaching and mentoring. The curriculum and instruction component in these

target schools was defined by emphasis on teacher-directed project-based

instruction as the primary delivery methodology, the curriculum was well aligned

with state standards, and local and state assessment data was utilized as a tool to

drive instruction (NCREL, 2002).

Stakeholder involvement within high-performing high-poverty schools

included both parents and the community. Methods were developed that included

multiple means of contacting and working with parents, and utilization of the school

as a community center. The instructional programs of these schools were

organizationally designed to provide small class sizes and alternative support

programs targeting students through early warning systems and frequent formative

assessments (Manset et al., 2000).

Educational researchers in the State of Illinois have also addressed the

school improvement issue by studying successful high poverty, high-performing

schools to identify common characteristics among these programs. Identified

schools were awarded the distinction of Golden Spike Schools. McGee (2004)

identified five critical commonalities from high poverty, high-performing schools in

the Golden Spike school program: (a) leadership, (b) literacy, (c) personnel, (d)

community engagement. and (e) other factors of low income and minority students

and their peers. The goal of this study was to provide qualitative and quantitative data in ways of closing the achievement gap.

First, leadership in the Golden Spike schools was identified as exemplary. More than 90% of the schools were guided by strong, visible leadership that advocated high learning standards, high expectations, and a culture of success for all. The principal and leadership team created a "can do, will do" culture. Second, these high-performing schools achieved success with an emphasis on early literacy. Each school included an early literacy program for reading instruction on a daily basis (McGee, 2004).

The third critical characteristic addressed the instructional staff. The schools were staffed with talented, hardworking teachers who believed that every child can and will learn. These teachers held the expectation that all students had the ability to achieve high standards, and were adamant about children not failing. The Golden Spike schools created instructional programs that increased academic learning time. Maximized instructional time during the day was created through the use of alternative scheduling strategies such as block scheduling (McGee, 2004).

The fourth critical characteristic identified by McGee, (2004) was a focus to involve the community. Extensive parental involvement was targeted as a school-wide effort. Parents were welcomed into the school as partners in education. Expectations were clear for parents, and this clear communication was given often and through various forms of media.

Schools that replicate such school improvement models of implementation have experienced success in programs throughout the United States. The Success

for All Foundation. (2011), partnered with Long Branch, New Jersey to increase student achievement. Students were provided early literacy; teachers were challenged to incorporate best practices, and high-quality professional development. According to Success for All (2008), Detroit Edison Public Academy is an example of a school which achieved high academic gains due in part to effective collaboration, early literacy initiatives, and strong leadership which focused on setting and attaining goals to improve student achievement. The goal setting by strong administrators included using data to drive instruction and assisting teachers with implementation strategies. After a three year period, a 30% increase in students reading at or above grade level was achieved (Success for All Foundation, 2008).

Other types of interventions have been developed to assist high poverty, Academically Unacceptable schools, such as assigning external change agents to effect change from outside of the school. According to Duke et al (2005), state-approved external evaluators and consultant groups are hired to work with the staff and the communities to assist in developing and implementing a school improvement plans and writing school improvement grants. Louisiana school district officials are working to find ways to utilize external support with fidelity. To assist principals in working with teachers and other staff members to increase student academic achievement, Louisiana school leaders have provided a program through the University of Virginia at Darden to provide the Turnaround Program (Duke et al.. 2005).

The Virginia School Turnaround Specialist Program (VSTSP) was developed by the former Governor of Virginia, Mark Warner. Governor Warner's background enabled him to create the Turnaround Program, which provides collaboration between the University of Virginia Curry School of Education and Darden Graduate School of Business Administration (Duke, et al., 2007).

Several principals from across the State of Louisiana, along with administrators from Kentucky, North Dakota and South Dakota, were being provided intensive educational support, feedback, and merit bonuses to turn the academic achievement of the school around positively. Twenty schools were selected to form this cohort program in the summer of 2005 (Duke et al., 2005). During the first two cohorts, the central assumption of the Turnaround Program design examined the conditions that the newly assigned principals perceived as reasons why their schools were not performing.

Instead of a survey or deductive approach, an inductive research design was implemented which relied on perceptions and descriptions of school conditions through self assessments by the principals. During the first few months of the first cohort, principals were in constant contact with the University of Virginia through school visits from University team leaders, through presentations by email, and specific site training (University of Virginia School Turnaround Research, 2010).

The researcher participated in the University of Virginia School Turnaround Specialist Program as an Assistant Principal of Instruction during the years of 2006-2008. In the spring of each year, principals were contacted by phone and email to determine and express if any additional conditions would require extra attention.

All responses provided by the identified principal participants were transcribed and reviewed for compatibility with previous responses. When ambiguities and unclear responses were encountered, research team members contacted the principals and requested clarification and confirmation of the findings. The Virginia Turnaround Program was initiated more as a qualitative research design rather than data driven quantitative design (University of Virginia Turnaround Annual Report, 2010).

The Virginia Turnaround Program provides full participation in the research process of all those who are affected in the Academically Unacceptable schools. This allows for social change through collaboration for increased opportunities for teachers and for the students that they serve. The program has a focus that is driven towards teaching school leaders how to become effective leaders using strategies and action plans that are school specific. The practices and theories in the Turnaround Program are used as a support system for a three-year period. The Turnaround Program in Louisiana is one that has been adopted by educational legislation and modeled from the business sector.

Statement of the Problem

According to the Louisiana Department of Education (2010), Louisiana launched an accountability system in 1999 which provided a minimum performance score of 30. In 2003, the minimum performance score was increased to 45 and was raised again in 2005 to 60. Currently, the minimum performance score is 75. Due to the increased performance standards, the number of schools designated as Academically Unacceptable has risen. Many schools have failed to meet the

minimum standard. In 2010, Louisiana education officials included a list of two hundred one schools that were on the Watch List. Watch List schools earned a school performance score between 65 and 74.9. Watch lists schools do not receive sanctions, but they are notified that they will move into Academically Unacceptable status if they do not achieve a school performance score of 75 or above (LDOE, 2010). A thorough investigation was completed to determine if the school performance scores remained the same between the school sessions 2008-2009 to 2009-2010. Also, English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics scaled scores increase was measured in each of the selected schools.

The response from Louisiana education officials to the achievement gap includes the use of external change agents and revisions of the standardized testing program. The introduction of school performance scores has increased parental understanding of the quality of educational programs of neighborhood schools compared to other schools within the district and across the state. Schools are mandated to provide extra help for at-risk students through tutoring and remedial assistance (LDOE, 2008).

Educational officials in Louisiana have chosen to follow the model found in the Kentucky school system with some variation. Kentucky educational officials place Highly Skilled Educators in schools to assist as external change agents before those schools are deemed academically unacceptable. In Louisiana, Academically Unacceptable schools receive the services of a Distinguished Educator from the State Department of Education (Stevens, 2001).

The Louisiana Distinguished Educator program (LDOE, 2009) was founded on the premise that external change agents can impact student achievement. An effective change agent is described as someone who has been formally given the primary responsibility of helping to manage and coordinate change in an organization (Hutton, 1994). The literature also suggests that these persons provide strategies to help implement school improvement. The extent of involvement of change agents in motivating and supporting school reform may include the brainstorming and initiation processes within schools, implementation of these processes, and the institutionalization of these processes within the school cultures involved (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991).

The Distinguished Educators, which are assigned yearly to Academically Unacceptable schools in Louisiana are required to (a) model instructional leadership practices, (b) assist school personnel in improving student achievement, (c) assist the school in collecting, analyzing and interpreting school data reports, and (d) assist with the implementation of the curriculum as it aligns with the Grade Level Expectations (GLE) and the Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum (LCC). In order for the Distinguished Educator to implement these requirements, they must also monitor, assess, and assist teaching and learning in the classroom. Distinguished Educators are trained to promote and support the use of professional learning communities among the staff which aids in the improvement of communication among and between students, staff, parents, and the community. The networking and sharing of information by Distinguished Educators with district personnel, Regional Service Center staff, Louisiana Department of Education staff, and other

Distinguished Educators substantiate the recommendations that the Distinguished

Educators make to local superintendents and school boards which serve to increase

student achievement (LDOE, 2009).

The qualifications for becoming a Distinguished Educator in Louisiana

consist of: (a) Louisiana Type A/Level III Teaching Certificate or a master's degree

or National Board Certification, (b) minimum of five years experience

management/supervisory position, school administration, adult training, or

classroom experience, and (c) must have worked within one of the aforementioned

areas within the last three years (LDOE, 2009). From 1999 to 2010, there have been

66 Distinguished Educators assigned to 147 Louisiana schools.

The standardized testing process entails state, district, and specific school

performance as it relates to the Integrated Louisiana Educational Assessment

Program (*i*LEAP) and the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP)

forms of Graduation Exit Exam (GEE) standardized testing. The trend to use

standardized testing has been in place for several decades, with the federal

government allocating millions of dollars for the education of American children.

The Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) is a part of the

criterion referenced testing (CRT) program in Louisiana. This assessment is a

component of the high stakes testing program that the Louisiana Department of

Education officials have designed to measure how well individual students and

subgroups of the school population have mastered the content standards outlined in

the Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum.

The LEAP test is given to fourth and eighth-grade students each spring. Beginning in the spring of 1999, the English Language Arts and Mathematics tests were administered to public school students in the specified grades to measure their knowledge base of skills in the two areas. Students are required to obtain a specific score in order to progress to the fifth and ninth-grades (Educational Improvement and Assistance LDOE, 2007).

The LEAP tests are multiple choice tests which are timed during administration. Scores are compared with those of a similar norm-referenced group of students across the United States in order to rank students for placement purposes. The equity and equality of educational opportunities for all students emerged as a circumstance to consider. The validity of test items was questioned based on the experiential backgrounds of students of low socioeconomic and ethnic groups. Many educators believe in the self-fulfilling prophesy and believe that students can not learn (Horton, 2005). The researcher further found that "There are savage inequalities in the quality of instruction. Many teachers face students who are poor or wealthy, and make certain assumptions because of their own backgrounds, that students can't make it" (p. 59).

The Integrated Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (iLEAP) is a part of the norm-referenced (NRT) Testing Program for Louisiana which is aligned with the Louisiana Grade Level Expectations (GLE). Prior to the iLEAP, students in the third, fifth, sixth, seventh, and ninth-grades were assessed using the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, also an NRT. The iLEAP is an integration of the NRT and CRT yielding two types of scores. according to the Louisiana content standards.

However, officials do not mandate that students who are administered the iLEAP attain a specific score or level to be promoted to the next grade as does the LEAP test (Testing and Standards LDOE, 2007).

Louisiana education officials adopted the use of the LEAP for the fourth and eighth-grades and the GEE for the tenth and eleventh-grades as part of the state accountability program. Students in the third, sixth, seventh, and ninth-grades are required to participate in standardized testing, as well. The LEAP and GEE are high stakes assessments for students. These tests must be satisfactorily completed for consideration for promotion or high school graduation.

Louisiana students are faced with the requirements for fourth and eighth-graders to attain a score of at least Approaching Basic and Basic on the English language arts and mathematics portion of the LEAP in order to pass to the fifth and ninth-grades. Students must also meet the necessary requirements that address the grades earned in academic subjects and attendance requirements that are submitted and approved by the district and the state (Caddo Parish School Board, 2009).

Scores from the tests are combined with formulas which include attendance scores and dropout rates to solidify a School Performance Score (SPS). Schools receive a numerical score each year. Kindergarten to fifth-grade configurations scores are combined with an attendance index of 10 percent, and an assessment index of 90 percent. According to the Louisiana Department of Education (2009), the first baseline school performance scores were provided in 1999. The state average was listed as 69.9, the 2009 goal was 100. At that time, 69 schools were considered to be Academically Unacceptable (AUS). The original definition for

receiving a label of Academically Unacceptable was receiving a school performance score of less than 30. The current definition of receiving a label of Academically Unacceptable is earning a school performance score of less than 60.

Table 1 provides a visual representation of the performance labels and school performance score distributions in alignment with accountability standards, for schools in Louisiana during the 2010-2011 school session. At the present time, there are at least seven levels of AUS (LDOE, 2008).

Table 1

Louisiana School Performance Labels and Scores

Performance Label	School Performance Score (SPS)
Academically Unacceptable	Below 45.0
Academic Warning	45.0 – 59.9
One Star	60.0 – 79.9
Two Stars	80.0 – 99.9
Three Stars	100.0 – 119.9
Four Stars	120.0 – 139.9
Five Stars	140.0 and above

In an effort to provide parents with a better understanding of school performance labels, the Louisiana Department of Education has provided a means for measuring school performance through the use of letter grades (LDOE, 2010). Table 2 represents the letter grades in correlation with school performance scores.

The research reported here addressed schools whose SPS categorized a label of

Academically Unacceptable.

Table 2

Letter Grades for Schools and Scores

Letter Grades	SPS Range
A	120.0200.0
B	105.0119.9
C	90.0104.9
D	65.089.9
F	064.9

A performance label of Academically Unacceptable, or a growth label of a

School in Decline, warrants a level of correction action by the Louisiana State

Department of Education. District Assistance Teams, which consist of central

office administrators and curriculum supervisors, meet monthly to assess teaching

and learning, as well as to recommend strategies to increase growth. Distinguished

Educators assigned to a school also serve on this team to provide support with

improvement efforts and/or reconstitution plans.

The Louisiana Accountability Plan incorporates tutoring as an opportunity

for students to improve academic skills prior to high stakes testing, or as

remediation following unsuccessful attempts at mandatory testing. According to the

Louisiana State Department of Education mandates, students must have

opportunities for tutoring that occur either before, during, or after school, as well as Saturday sessions (LDOE, 2009).

Criteria for participation in tutoring programs are contingent upon students scoring Unsatisfactory the previous year (retained students), as well as those students scoring at or below the 30th percentile on the third-grade or seventh-grade standardized test. Individualized, skills targeting tutoring programs are implemented to prevent schools from becoming or remaining at the Academically Unacceptable status. The concept of school accountability is not only specific to Louisiana, but to all states across America. Hassel, Hassel, and Rhim (2007) concluded that schools that persistently fail will benefit from guidance on what will work quickly to improve student and school outcomes.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine and measure the growth of Academically Unacceptable schools that had been assigned a Distinguished Educator as an external change agent for increasing student academic success. This study also examined trend data and test scores of selected schools across Louisiana that have been deemed Academically Unacceptable. A thorough investigation was conducted to determine if the school performance scores were affected by the Distinguished Educator Program.

In this study, the researcher focused on the following variables: (a) schools deemed Academically Unacceptable, (b) school performance scores, and (c) performance labels. The researcher also investigated the following: (a) trend data,

(b) the correlation of 2008, 2009. and 2010 standardized test scores, and (c) the level of improvement of scaled scores for ELA and mathematics.

Schools that were assigned Distinguished Educators during the school terms 1998-1999 and 2002-2003 increased in average growth rate in school performance scores at the end of each year by three points. The effect of the Distinguished Educators during this time on school growth was less than the growth that was attained with far fewer schools with Distinguished Educators in 2002-2003. Growth during the year of 1999-2000, with 90 schools as compared with growth during the year of 2001-2002, with 24 schools show similar average growth patterns of three points (LDOE, 2009).

Theoretically, the ideal educational environment should provide a setting in which all students meet the academic standards that each particular state sets forth for mastery. However, statistics and experience continually prove that most students do not demonstrate their abilities at the mastery level on state-mandated standardized tests. To maximize the potential of students, teachers, administrators, and districts, it may be necessary to provide external change agents to assist in maximizing the potential of school districts to achieve success in all schools for all students.

Theoretical Framework

The framework upon which this study was based is the Effective School Improvement (ESI) Model. School effectiveness focuses on student outcomes, classroom and school characteristics, and what should be changed. School improvement focuses on changing the quality of teachers and attempts to determine

how schools can change to foster increased improvement (Creemers & Hoeben, 1998). The Effective School Model suggests that low-performing schools need external support in the educational context for improvement. Creemer and Hoeben suggest that external support should foster some external pressure for improvement to begin. These pressure points are: (a) market mechanisms which foster competition between schools; (b) external evaluation and accountability, which measures the student outcomes with a validated standardized tests; (c) external agents, policy makers, educational consultants, and researchers which give suggestions and support on how to improve; and (d) participation of the society in educational and societal changes in which society influences school and demands improvements through government policies.

School climate and culture play a vital role in the success, expectations, and weaknesses of a school. Teddlie and Reynolds (2000) suggest a correlation between student achievement and a stable set of school processes. Nine variables were identified that have proven to increase student academic achievement: (a) effective leadership, (b) teacher and teaching effectiveness, (c) focusing on learning, (d) generating positive school culture, (e) high expectations of achievement and behavior, (f) emphasizing student responsibilities and rights, (g) monitoring progress at all levels, (h) staff development, and (i) parental involvement.

In an attempt to improve school performance, the Children First Act of (1999), embarked upon the beginnings of the plan of action developed by the Louisiana Department of Education to collect and analyze standardized test data for the purposes of reporting back to districts and schools. As determined, Louisiana

politics, funding, and teacher preparation are fundamental variables in creating an atmosphere for the acceptance of change in the educational system.

According to the Louisiana Department of Education (2007), The Distinguished Educator Program was established in 1999, with the Passage of Louisiana R.S. 17:10.4, to assist assertively in ensuring that low-performing schools meet or surpass their growth targets according to the Louisiana Accountability System. This program provides direct assistance to schools that do not reach their growth targets and thus enter into an Academically Unacceptable School (AUS) status. Schools with a baseline below 60 enter or advance in AUS levels. At the present time, there are at least seven levels of AU status (LDOE, 2008).

In examining what has been successful and unsuccessful in Louisiana, one may take a close look at what is being implemented in successful schools across the country. This can be a basis for fostering a climate for effective change agents. The Distinguished Educator Program links these strategies, innovations, and features which are provided with fidelity in the implementation process. This program can afford teachers the opportunity to acquire a broader knowledge base and serves as a "go to" for retrieving key information that will yield effective instruction and improved academic achievement. Systematic reform demands not just a paradigm shift between teachers and students, but also the reexamining of roles and relationships of everyone in the education system community (Ratner, 2010).

Distinguished Educators are selected from a pool of educators who demonstrate exemplary knowledge and performance in terms of school improvement strategies. Thirteen applicants were selected as the first Distinguished

Educators in Louisiana in 1999. At that time, there were 68 Distinguished

Educators in the state. These educators/change agents are placed in school sites to

ensure systematic increases in student academic achievement.

Using a proactive approach, the Kentucky State Department of Education

implemented the Highly Skilled Educators program to determine whether schools

with these specialized personnel would be able to provide assistance in the schools

in order to measure a significant increase in the schools performance scores. The

accountability classifications are somewhat different between the two states. Index

scores and school classifications are different in Kentucky, and guided self studies

are conducted by each school. These factors and others help determine if a school is

eligible for a Highly Skilled Educator (Legislative Research Commission/Kentucky

Department of Education, 2006).

The Kentucky Board of Education, as well as the Louisiana Board of

Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), provide specially trained teachers

(Distinguished Educators) to work with school districts and faculties at schools

which are deemed academically unacceptable. Distinguished Educators are not only

there as a direct extension of the State Department of Education, but are in schools

to effectively assist faculty, staff, parents, and students in increasing the academic

achievement of students and the level of effectiveness of teaching practices of

classroom teachers within these schools and districts across Louisiana (LDOE,

2009). Unlike Louisiana, the program of Kentucky began as a means to target

schools that exhibited a potential of becoming a school "In Need of Assistance."

Louisiana targets schools which have been deemed Academically Unacceptable for placement of a Distinguished Educator.

The Kentucky Department of Education (2006) reports that schools that received assistance from Highly Skilled Educators have generally performed no better than schools without one. Schools assisted by a Highly Skilled Educators financially supported by grant funding and a scholastic audit or review, and showed statistically significant improvements of up to 3.5 points in their accountability index scores (Kentucky Department of Education, 1994).

According to Giroux (1994), A form of education grounded in a notion of educational leadership does not begin with the quest for raising test scores, but with a moral and political vision of what it means to educate students to govern, lead a humane life, and address the social welfare of those less fortunate than themselves. "This notion of leadership that a dream to change the world rather than simply manage it surely gives credence to what true leadership is about" (Giroux, 1994, p. 278).

Assumptions of the Study

1. The trend data collected from each selected school site was collected accurately and appropriately.

2. The iLEAP data was valid and reliable.

3. The LEAP data was valid and reliable.

Limitations of the Study

1. Only schools that are identified as Academically Unacceptable schools were investigated.

2. The schools identified as Academically Unacceptable during the 2009 2010 school years were identified by the Louisiana Department of Education as schools that might not achieve their "Growth Targets." Therefore, this study was limited to specific group of schools in the state of Louisiana.

3. Participating schools in this study may or may not be representative of populations in school districts in other geographic regions, thus, limit the ability to generalize the findings.

Research Questions

This study examined the following research questions regarding the effectiveness of Distinguished Educators Academically Unacceptable schools within the state of Louisiana.

1. Is there a significant relationship between the level of school improvement in Academically Unacceptable schools and the assistance provided by the Distinguished Educator?

2. Is there a significant level of growth in scaled scores for English Language Arts and mathematics in schools which are assigned a Distinguished Educator and schools which have not been assigned a Distinguished Educator?

Null Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested in this study:

1. There is no statistically significant relationship between the level of
    school improvement in Academically Unacceptable schools and the
    assistance provided by the Distinguished Educator.

2. There is no significant level of growth in scaled scores for English
    Language Arts and mathematics in schools which are assigned a
    Distinguished Educator and schools who have not been assigned a
    Distinguished Educator.

Each hypotheses was tested at the $a = .05$ level of significance. Schools

that have not been assigned a Distinguished Educator were significantly equivalent

to those schools that have been assigned a Distinguished Educator, due to the

Academically Unacceptable label of all schools that were studied. In addition, to

ensure that the two groups were statistically equivalent, the iLEAP and LEAP

scaled scores were used as covariates. The single independent variable was the

Distinguished Educator placed at the randomly selected schools.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions were used:

Academically Unacceptable Schools: schools that have not made the

necessary academic improvements over several years as verified by state mandated

standardized tests.

Accountability: systems which expect all student subgroups, public schools, and Louisiana Education Agencies to reach proficiency by 20132014 (LDOE, 2010).

Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE)/State Department of Education (Louisiana): the division that directly regulate and offer support to the public and private school systems in Louisiana; policymaking body of the constitution with elected and appointed members who seek to provide leadership in continuous school improvement efforts for all stakeholders in Louisiana (LDOE, 2010).

Collaboration: to labor together (LDOE, 2009).

Data Driven Decision Making: the ongoing process of collecting, analyzing, and using numerous types of data effectively (LDOE, 2009).

Distinguished Educator: assigned, as available to Academically Unacceptable schools in School Improvement 3 in districts that have entered into a partnership with the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE, 2010).

Highly Skilled Educator: a district person who assists schools in School Improvement (LDOE, 2010).

Job Embedded Professional Development: day to day work of educators (study groups, coaching, job shadowing, on the job learning) at the school level that fosters professional learning communities with collaborative problem solving within and across disciplines and grade levels (LDOE, 2009).

School Climate: the quality and character of school life which include safety, relationships, teaching and learning, and the environment and organizational patterns (National School Climate Center, 2010).

School Culture: shared beliefs, customs, and behaviors (Small Schools Project, 2010).

School Performance Label: an official declaration of school performance in relation to the state's 10 year and 20 year goals (LDOE, 2010).

School Performance Score (SPS): an accountability system score given to each school in Louisiana based on standardized test performance standard (LDOE, 2010).

Stakeholders: the administration, faculty, staff, parents, community leaders, and students of a school (LDOE, 2010).

Standardized Test: an instrument which measures student achievement gains and losses; a test, administered according to standardized procedures, which assess a student's aptitude by comparison with one previously specified (LDOE, 2010).

Struggling Schools: schools with stagnant growth, schools in decline, and schools in Academically Unacceptable status (LDOE, 2010).

Subgroups: students who are either American Alaskan, Asian, African American students, Hispanic, White, Economically Disadvantaged students, Students with Disabilities, or Limited English Proficient Students (LDOE, 2010).

Trend Data: an evaluation of school performance data across several years; a report of documentation of tendencies or movement of scores in a particular direction (LDOE, 2010).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The following section is a presentation of literature related to external change

agents and the effects of Distinguished Educators on increasing student academic

achievement. This chapter is organized into five areas of focus: (a) accountability, (b)

school effectiveness, (c) the principal as the school leader, (d) external change agents

and school improvement, and (e) Distinguished Educators. Each of these topics is

further delineated for clarity.

Accountability

According to Finnigan & O'Day (2003), accountability is subject to

interpretation based on variables that should exist among student populations.

Stakeholders debate whether states and districts hold schools to absolute standards or

adjust the expectations to account for differences in family incomes. These topics draw

attention to the various elements of state accountability systems. Standardized

assessment measures are the primary sources for determining accountability scores

within the state of Louisiana (LDOE, 2008).

The amount of literature on accountability suggests the clear benefits for

individuals and organizations. To realize the benefits of accountability, a system must

establish goals. identify progress towards the goals. and determine how goals are measured to assess the success and failure of the system. One would have to know what the goals are, the progress towards the goals, and how the goals are measured for success and failure of the system.

According to Hoff, (2009), current data suggest an increase in the number of schools failing to meet their achievement goals. The results from each state show that the policies can skew the results. This was noted due to states setting challenging standards. Hoff also reports that South Carolina and Massachusetts are rated as having the most challenging standards in the United States. Due to the demands of No Child Left Behind legislation, many schools will fail to meet their achievement goals between now and the target date, thus causing many schools to fail (Hoff, 2009).

School vouchers and scholarships are redirected educational funds which allow families to select public or private schools of their choice and have all or part of the tuition paid. Many have come to the conclusion that government voucher programs are controversial, and they perpetuate a sense of dependence of government funding. In 1998, Wisconsin legislators expanded the voucher program to allow up to 15,000 children to attend any religious or private school (School Choices, 2011).

The use of vouchers for private and religious schools has had a significant impact on the accountability aspect of schooling (Wolf, et al., 2007). Florida instituted an A+ Plan which was a part of its state accountability system in 1999 (Goldhaber & Hannaway, 2004). This plan addresses students who receive a failing grade in two of any four years and continue to earn failing grades in a consecutive year are eligible to receive a voucher to attend another non-failing public or private school. The Supreme

Court's Zelman decision ruled that using vouchers for religious schooling was permissible. Public schools in Florida base student achievement on the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Tests (FCAT), which measures student achievement annually.

According to the first year of statistics on the A+ Plan in Florida, only two schools were deemed eligible to receive vouchers. Florida had many schools that already had one failing component, and one more would make their school eligible for voucher distribution. According to the Black Alliance for Educational Options (2011), school districts in south Louisiana began accepting applications for the school voucher program in March of 2010. The BAEO organization provided citizens informational packets to ensure that parents would have a better understanding of their school choices (BAEO, 2011)

Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal favored initiating a private school voucher program for New Orleans before he was elected Governor (Charpentier, 2008). The majority of the private schools are faith-based. The vouchers are offered to lower income families who have children in Kindergarten through the third grade. Many families choose not to enroll their children in the private schools using the vouchers after they are informed of the Catholic teachings in these private school settings in Louisiana.

According to Schrag (2011), over fifty bills have been presented in 36 states in favor of vouchers. Not all of these bills have passed, but Arizona, Florida, Ohio, Oregon, and Pennsylvania are among others who are providing funding for vouchers, tax credits, and other benefits. Indiana has offered a twist to this state voucher program.

and it is not only offered to low income families, but also to middle class families on a sliding scale.

School Choice and Supplemental Education Services (SES) are offered to students who attend schools who have not met the assigned growth target over several years in Louisiana (LDOE, 2011). Students are given the opportunity to transfer to a school, which is performing at a higher level than the school in which a student presently attends. Supplemental Educational Services provide students with additional academic support before school, after school, and during the summer.

Goldhaber & Hannaway (2004) also suggest that changes in Florida school test scores indicate that voucher-threatened schools gain more than some of the higher ranked schools. This gain pronounced more on the writing portion of the test than other sections. However, the embarrassment of being a school with an F rating may have affected the increased achievement of the identified schools. Increased pressure attached to the stigma of failure, additional resources, and personnel allocated to these specific schools for additional support are factors that are conducive to school improvement. The internal shifts of personnel may have resulted in inequitable distribution of resources and personnel. Longitudinal studies of schools in the Florida A+ Plan can prove or disprove various factors that assist in improving student achievement in the realm of accountability purposes.

Some researchers argue that effective performance management from local school boards is necessary for accountability in local school districts. School boards vote on specifics that guide and promote success in all schools within the district. These governing bodies may demand accountability of the school district

superintendent performance that targets terms of corrective actions for detailed

agreements, the status of progress toward identified objectives and strategic change

initiatives developed to address specific issues (Eadie. 2008).

Performance measures that are ineffectively implemented by local school

boards are corrected through various remedial and strategic methods. Individual school

accountability is directly affected by local board policy and administration, which may

be overlooked as a factor influencing student achievement. Legitimate concerns of all

stakeholders pertaining to accountability issues include school board decisions,

superintendent directives, and school voucher options. The mission of the school is

student success, limiting the focus to negative student success.

To succeed, students need both a rich learning experience and solid preparation

to meet required standards (Rettig, McCullough, Santos, & Watson, 2003). Application

of this concept indicates that accountability does not just pertain to schools, teachers,

administrators, or central office staff, but includes the family as well. Pacing guides and

unit planning may be used as a means of planning instructional time. Allowing the data

to drive instruction is vital to school improvement. Assessment data that are utilized

from formative assessment, to help with instructional planning can serve as an aid in

preparing for state mandated tests. This data can be disaggregated in grade-level

meetings as a means of collaboration, vertically and horizontally.

The No Child Left Behind Act defines parental involvement in education as the

participation of parents in regular and meaningful communication in academic learning

of their child (107th Congress, 2002). Assessing the engagement of parents may extend

beyond the school site and into the homes. The home parental involvement may extend

to school climate, parental pressure, school choice, magnet schools, and existing public schools. Parental involvement can also be observed through parental school monitoring which can affect the school climate and quality, and ultimate school performance.

The positive influence of a parent on student academic development and success often serves as a way to bridge the achievement gap. However, there are also barriers such as time and parents feeling unwelcomed at the school building. There must be ways for the school to help parents feel welcomed and appreciated. There are several ways schools can increase parental communication: (a) email, (b) bulletin boards, (c) voice mail systems, (d) newsletters, (e) web pages, and (f) school marquees. (Bouffard, 2006). Expectations for parental involvement may differ between families and income levels. Schools must acknowledge differences, build on strengths of all involved, and make parental involvement goals clear.

Linking families with the learning processes empowers parents to receive training specific to what children are doing in school and how parents can help has a powerful impact on the achievement. Communication with limited English proficiency must be communicated with a language in which they understand. This communication may involve home visits, the provision of transportation, and even child care, if that is what will enable parents to be involved in the school. Good parenting at home, including a stable environment, the sharing of information between the school and the home, and good citizenship, work to benefit the students. Schools must develop a school parent compact which serves to demonstrate a commitment on the parts of the school and the home. A critical measure of parental involvement has been linked to student performance. This extent to which parents communicate their academic

aspirations and goals to their children has been linked to increased student achievement (Chen, 2008).

In addition to academic support, parents make socially and economically based decisions that affect school performance. The geographic location of students affects school-level data that are used to identify school progress as it relates to accountability (Hoxby 2000). Recent research has shown that the achievement gap for boys and girls is narrowing, and in some instances girls are outperforming boys. Also, girls have been found to exert more effort at school, leading to better academic achievement (Ceballo, McLoyd, & Toyokawa, 2004).

Stakeholders other than parents directly influence school performance. The average teacher salary and average administrator salary are variables that are often correlated with student academic success (Lemke, Hoerandner, & McMahon, 2006). There is a correlation between job satisfaction and productivity. The degree of satisfaction may influence motivation and the quality of the classroom instruction for students (Bogler & Somech, 2004). When teachers know that their time and effort is appreciated by the administration, then it makes it more meaningful. Satisfied teachers are easier to retain (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

Another vested group of stakeholders in school performance is the students. Children who attend public schools have been taking standardized tests for many years before the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was established. However, the stress and pressure to do well on standardized tests have proven that these accountability measures have caused an urge for some to cheat. Parents buy and sell houses just to be in school districts with high standardized test scores.

Research conducted in the State of Illinois suggests that NCLB legislation requires that only 95% of students are required to take standardized tests (Lemke, Horander, & McMahon, 2006). There have been allegations that teachers participated in cheating on state assessments by providing questions or answers to students before the test or by altering student test forms (Jacob & Levitt, 2003). The Atlantic *Journal-Constitution* (2010), reports that there is evidence of principals, assistant principals, test coordinators, and others who have been suspected of cheating in efforts to raise student test scores.

Many educators and parents believe that accountability should be based on more than performance-based assessments alone (Chester, 2005). Other measures to be considered include classroom and school-based evidence of achievement, standardized test scores and regular observations by trained observers. The data would clarify the level of assistance required of local districts to make the changes that are needed to improve student achievement within the local school.

The North Dakota State Assessment Program is utilized to measure students in designated grades as a mean of monitoring overall student achievement levels. Students are assessed with a single unified, statewide assessment that measures the student performance levels in terms of the content and achievement standards used to measure Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). North Dakota State law requires that assessments are to be administered annually within each of the following grades: (a) grades three through five, (b) grades six through nine; and (c) grades ten through twelve. North Dakota has developed and administers assessments in grades four, eight, and twelve. The State of North Dakota makes its annual AYP determinations based solely on

student achievement data generated by the state assessment and on graduation and

attendance data (North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, 2008).

According to the *Rapid City Journal* (2011), the South Dakota graduation rate,

which has been below 60%, has had many schools which have performed in the bottom

5% for several years. To help begin the turnaround process, South Dakota education

officials have received a School Improvement Grant (SIG) to help with the efforts to

increase student achievement. A total of 12, 850 students have been deemed eligible to

benefit from (SIG) funds (Communities for Excellent Public Schools, 2010).

South Dakota teachers have used action plans to specifically record what is

needed to be done differently. Teachers have made initial success in utilizing and

implementing the turnaround model, which included focusing on instructional goals and

discussing student achievement which has led schools to increase scores on

standardized tests. These "quick wins" encouraged teachers to focus on the research for

guidance about their next steps (Galvin & Parsley, 2005, p. 4).

State achievement goals for reading and math are raised by increments every

three years until the goals reach 100 %, the expected proficiency for 2013-2014 school

year. The North Dakota Department of Education utilizes three years of achievement

data to be included into the school AYP determination for reliability purposes. The

school system participates in school improvement grants through the 21st Century

Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC), the only federal program dedicated to

afterschool, for afterschool programs that serve Title I students. The Child Care and

Development Fund (CCDF), which provides vouchers or subsidies for low income

parents to pay for child care, including pre-school, after school, and summer care for students ages 5-12 (North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, 2008).

In the State of Kentucky, school accountability is primarily assessed through the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS), which combines each school's academic and nonacademic performance into one accountability index score. Scores are based on a 140-point scale, and schools are working towards an index score of 100 by 2014 (KDE, 2008). Beginning with the school year 2005, Kentucky Department of Education officials used a portion of the annual Commonwealth School Improvement Fund (CSIF) grant to fund schools that were not classified as In Need of Assistance. These "Targeted Assistance" schools were identified by Kentucky Department of Education leaders as having the potential to become In Need of Assistance Schools (KDE, 2008).

Data that are generated by accountability are the key to enhancing professional knowledge in school settings about best practices. The improving school consistently evaluates and makes adjustments in the areas of comparative data, high standards, accountability, devolved responsibility, rewards, assistance, consequences, and best practices. As illustrated by Figure 1, total quality management can help schools to systematically bring about necessary change. Figure 1 was constructed based on information from the School Improvement and Accountability Framework (Department of Education and Training, 2008). A holistic approach can serve as a tool to provide vehicles for decision making and analysis. The improving school serves as the target for the theme of performance management. The collaboration and capacity theme

requires a strong school leader who is focused on developing capacity among many stakeholders within the community for school improvement.

The transformation and turnaround models are part of the market forces for the improvement efforts. All themes work together for the success of student and school improvement. Figure 1 serves as part of the operating procedure for successful schools. During each area of implementation of each theme, preventing recurrences of the root causes of low performance in schools can be addressed.

COLLABORATION AND CAPACITY	THE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK	MARKET FORCES
Leadership		Parental Choice
Collaboration between Parents and Districts		Pupil-led formula
Network		Open enrollment
Clusters		Greater transparency
Federations		Market entry and exit (closure of poor schools)
Centers of excellence		
Solving local problems		Opening up the supply side
Links to other services		Specialist Schools
		Academies
Networked learning communities		

Figure 1 The Place of Accountability in the Overall System

The standards movement contributes most dramatically to the stress experienced by educators of today, as teachers wrestle with state accountability systems (Boudett et al., 2005). Accountability is a difficult concept to grasp, in that it is inclusive of assessment, but not restricted to assessment alone. Other components of accountability include rewards, sanctions, reconstitution of schools, continuous improvement, schools in decline, as well as the personnel implementing and affecting accountability measures such as principals, students, and district level administrators.

All stakeholders must take the goals for improving public education seriously to increase the outcomes of student success (Bushaw & Gallup, 2008). Accountability policies provide a historically novel opportunity to advance goals of educational equity. Accountability policy comes across as fundamentally flawed as an equity producing initiative, lacking adequate consideration of power relations, democratic participation, and rich, diverse philosophies of education (Skrla & Scheurich, 2004). The authors also suggest that there is a growing consensus that turbulence is experienced as a result of change and policies within public schools. Deep rooted structures of administrative insights on implementation may not work well with bureaucratic and local school controls.

Advocates of high-standards educational reform have also suggested that accountability policies have veered away from the intended course and have provided models for more effective accountability systems (Resnick & Zurawsky, 2005). At the present time, public school accountability in the United States takes its form from the state-level accountability systems that are required by federal education legislation through a cultural shift in educational policy as demonstrated in Figure 2.

THE REQUIRED CULTURAL SHIFT		
Hit and miss		Universal high standards
Uniformity		Diversity
Provision		Choice
Producers		Customers/citizens
Inputs		Outcomes
Bureaucratic	➡	Devolved
Talk equity		Deliver equity
"Received wisdom"		Data and best practice
Regulation		Incentives
Haphazard development		Continuous development
Demarcation		Flexibility
Look up		Look outwards
COMFORTABLE		DEMANDING

Figure 2   The Required Cultural Shift in Accountability Systems

In an effort to improve schools, a cultural shift is needed. Accountability is holding people responsible for meeting standards and is the core of school reform. What gets measured gets done, sometimes at the expense of what is not measured. Districts should have accountability systems that measure achievement. The comfortable column included in Figure 2 is representative of practices found within many Academically Unacceptable schools. The arrow represents the direction that school districts find demanding, but also have found that the practices which are listed are effective in increasing the level of student achievement.

In order for districts to receive certain forms of financial aid, federal government mandates have been designed to and require districts to measure progress through the use of standardized testing schemes. The United States Department of Education requires states to adhere to interventions and sanctions if schools fail to meet the assigned adequate yearly progress. States utilize test results for: (a) student diagnosis

and placement. (b) student promotion, (c) high school graduation, (d) school and district performance accountability, and (e) program assessment (Goertz & Duffy, 2003).

Public agenda studies have repeatedly found that the public believes that standards and testing help students learn more (Johnson, 2003). The report by Johnson suggests that public school parents believe that standardized testing helps children learn more and that minimum test scores should be required for promotion. Americans continue to support annual testing of students in grades 3-8 with 66% in favor, as contrasted with 34% opposing this concept in the Phi Delta Kappan Gallup Poll (Bushaw& McNee, 2009). Survey respondents favor a single standardized national test rather than each state creating an assessment by the same margin.

Katz and Kahn (1966) suggest that an educational system is a social organization classified as an open system. This system of education is influenced by internal and external forces also described as change agents. Efforts at educational reform have failed because the design was loosely designed and incremental. Reform implementation ignored the process of integrating solutions into the complex interactive whole system and only remained within the boundaries of the current system (Benathy, 1991).

The enactment of charter school laws by individual states, beginning in 1991, expanded the standards-based approach in two ways: (a) performance agreements were developed between public agencies and, (b) charter schools were required to specify what results were to be achieved. This included rewards and sanctions of renewal or revoking of the charter depending on the successes. The process allowed families the option of choosing the school that a child would attend (Manno, 2004). While charters

have been in operation for more than a decade, this alternate form of education is beginning to become more prevalent in urban areas within the United States. Charter schools are open to anyone who wishes to attend, regardless of race, religion, and academic ability. Research supports the fact that charters can be thought of as "reinventing public education." (Manno, 2004, p. 39). The next section of this chapter will explore school effectiveness.

School Effectiveness

Title I funding is used to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach proficiency on academic standards (United States Department of Education, 2003b). After a school fails for two consecutive years, parents have the option of transferring students to a better-performing public school including charter schools within the district. After the third consecutive year of failing, parents of low-income students are given the option of using a share of federal funds from the public school to receive supplemental educational services from state-approved providers (Jennings, 2002).

School effectiveness and school improvement have different origins. School effectiveness is more directed to finding out what works in education and why. School improvement is practice and policy oriented and intended to change education in the desired direction. There has been a tendency to link school effectiveness to theory and practice. By doing so, educators use practical knowledge then move forward in theory and research. Shifts in educational policy in other countries have helped to move accountability to the forefront, and has given educators a mandate to provide students with the best possible education. Accountability also serves to provide the opportunity

for increased student achievement. School effectiveness and school improvement both are difficult requirements (Creemers & Reezig, 2005).

When working to improve schools, knowledge about implementation of classroom and school effectiveness theories are helpful in determining the level of success with student achievement. School effectiveness research and theory can provide knowledge on how to go about improving schools (Creemers & Reezigt, 1997). Ineffective schools are determined by standardized scores and by district and state department supervisors. School effectiveness warrants effective teaching and effective student outcomes. Much research is based on cognitive knowledge and skills. Time on task and school climate are other factors that may influence effectiveness in schools, just as values, and social skills are variables in the operation of effective schools. Creemers & Reezigt (2005) also contend that the Effective School Improvement (ESI) frameworks were initiated to determine the correlation between effectiveness and improvement in hopes of improving public education. Effective school improvement can lead to educational change that serves to improve student learning and increase the school site capacity for changing the teaching and learning process.

According to Reezigt and Creemers (2005), the Effective School Improvement Model (ESIM) consisted of two objectives: (a) the analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of theories that may be useful for effective school improvement and (b) the inventory, analysis, and evaluation of effective school improvement programs in different European countries. The project turned out to be too broad to complete, however the research was divided among teams from different countries which decided to reject the idea of a model for effective school improvement. Theories introduced by Reezigt

(2000) maintain that school effectiveness and school improvement traditions provide insights for organizational, curriculum, behavioral, and theories for organizational learning. The provision of appropriate resources, which may include human resources for struggling schools, is necessary. "In order to make school improvement effective, the resources made available by the educational context are very important. Without these, schools are likely to experience difficulties in their improvement efforts. Resources can be material, but there are also other resources (or support) that may be essential for effective school improvement" (Reezigt, 2000, p. 9). The evaluation of effective school improvement programs in the participating countries was analyzed to find factors that would promote or hinder effective school improvement in each specific country.

The main findings of the Effective School Improvement Model were divided into three levels: (a) context, (b) school, and (c) the classroom teacher. Information about the educational systems in each country was used to help distinguish the findings. Next, countries were paired up to analyze and rate the similarities and differences between each country. Each area was ranked as determined by the number of countries which mentioned them as being influential for effective school improvement. The absence of one of the three factors was seen as a hindrance. Factors that were seen as a positive means of promoting effective school improvement in one country was usually an overlap in the other countries.

According to Reezgit and Creemers (2005), the three factors that did not lead to similar judgments across all countries were: (a) the role of external change agents (seen as important in most countries, except in Spain); (b) the role of parents and the

community in improvement efforts seen as important in two countries, with the exception of Spain; and the complexity of the improvement efforts. While Spanish education officials found an overall innovation for improvement to be quite successful, their Netherlands counterparts evidenced a smaller amount of improvement programs with a clear and concise focus.

Sufficient resources to assist schools were also examined. Teachers voiced concerns about class size as it relates to teachers being motivated to teach. The Netherlands experimented with reduction in student to teacher ratios as a means of enhancing school improvement efforts. This study did propose that by improving the culture and processes, the overall school improvement outcomes would be evident. Three examples were given as possible improvement outcomes: (a) improved school quality, (b) change in the quality of teachers, and (c) positive student outcomes (Reezgit & Creemers, 2005).

The achievement of basic cognitive skills causes educators to broaden the traditional school and classroom effectiveness to increase student achievement. Such areas of educational effectiveness may include higher order thinking skills and problem solving skills. Some effectiveness research, which is mainly directed at operationally defined basic skills, involve innovative efforts in education and are deeply concerned with more conceptually related goals (Fullan, 1999). School improvement efforts have become more focused on effectiveness issues such as teaching, learning, and student outcomes. This change can be used to give ownership to teachers and students. Schools do not change if the people within the schools, particularly the teaching staff, do not change. In the final analysis, it is the action of the individuals that count.

Collaboration among educators can be very beneficial to all stakeholders. The expertise of each participant is important in the quest for school effectiveness and improvement. "Personal and group mastery feed on each other in learning organizations. Collaboration among educators across curricular areas have been found to be beneficial to the improvement in People need one another to learn and accomplish things" (Fullan, 1999, p. 17).

Cobb and McClain (2006), suggest that analyses that have been conducted on internal professional teaching learning communities have documented that the instructional practices of educators are influenced by institutional constraints, the formal and informal sources of assistance, and the materials that are used within the classroom. The research was concentrated on mathematical mastery for the norms of standardized high-stakes testing. The research consisted of qualitative data that were gathered from math activities, leadership meetings, interviews, monthly meetings, informal discussions and email exchange. During the study of the professional learning communities in the southwest, the two researchers worked in a district with seven schools with different configurations, all with high mobility rates. The school leaders spent a considerable amount of time and money implementing professional development in order to work effectively with the instructional materials.

Teachers were taught to teach by modeling and guiding students through the given activities. The whole-class discussions model of instruction varied by teacher. It was determined from teacher interviews, that if a class of students did not grasp a concept in mathematics, the teacher would inevitably resort to explaining the concept again. and complete another similar activity for evaluation purposes. Teachers

collaborated within their school and with teachers from neighboring schools to work with their colleagues to compare issues that came up for discussion related to student mastery of skills in mathematics classes (Cobb & McClain, 2006).

McClain (2003), collected data over a four-year period which concluded that some success was made in the area of creating and sustaining professional learning communities among the teachers at the sites studied. Teachers gained success in the teaching of mathematical concepts, as well as the understanding of how their students grasped the concepts and how mathematical reasoning skills of the students were nurtured. Teachers in part, accomplished this by analyzing student work samples. Within the professional teaching community, teachers were able to document growth not only in the teachers' mathematical understandings, but also in understanding students' reasoning as a resource on which teachers could capitalize to achieve the instructional agendas.

According to Cobb (2003), design experiments aid researchers in developing theories on what works and what does not work. Previously mentioned studies are examples of that. Experimenting with the teaching of mathematics serves to aid pre-service teachers, and is a great support for learning communities within schools in the development of instructional and organizational improvement. Longitudinal studies provide the necessary time to collect various data pieces and provide for reliable and trustworthy studies. These studies are beneficial for providing examples of problems that educators are faced with while teaching in classrooms. An on-going relationship is necessary between the teacher and the researcher. Researchers are commonly looking for ways to improve the situation that is studied. The specific questions of how a theory

works is at the core of research. This is sometimes a site of tension and struggle as people within a district pursue conflicting agendas. Conflicting visions can help gauge the extent to which visions of effectiveness can be realized in American classrooms (Cobb & Confrey, 2003).

The notion of networks of instructional practice partially explains ineffectiveness in large-scale educational reform efforts. Policy is, of course, a moving target, and the real long-term impact of accountability. There may be a need to shift resources; internal maneuvering may result in inequitable resource allocations. Social pressure to maintain standing can also be attached to school effectiveness and ineffectiveness (Cobb & McClain, 2006.

Schools within the United States fell from first to sixth place in 2006, according to the global competitiveness rankings of the World Economic forum (Amos, 2006). There is no doubt that numerical data provides a bottom line; test scores and other numbers give us a degree of confidence. Although numbers provide accurate information, data does not give us the whole truth about student performance, because numbers alone cannot account for the influences within the classroom setting.

Robelen (2005) suggested that New Orleans is a good example of the importance of including multiple, varied, and local sources of data to gain perspective about improving schools. Hurricane Katrina, although devastating to families in New Orleans, offered a chance for the building and re-organization of new and better schools. The storm caused the school system to bankrupt, but the school system was already experiencing academic woes, and was ranked as the lowest performing school district in Louisiana. Legislators utilize federal monies to provide opportunities for

rebuilding the system, a newer system, which has been urged to concentrate on academics.

According to Brookhart, Moss, & Long (2008), formative assessments contribute to student ownership, motivation, student achievement, and time on task. They also explain formative assessment, or assessments for learning, in a specific manner for all to consider, "The power of formative assessment comes from the addition of student-to-teacher communication. Each student shows the teacher all along the way where his or her understanding is deep, shallow, or stalled" (p. 52). In simplified terms, formative assessment is an evaluative tool that assess where students are in their learning, strategies used to help students learn, and teachers determining and adapting their teaching in a manner as to improve student achievement.

Moss (2008), also purports that he individual classroom teacher sets the tone in the classroom learning environment. Using formative assessments in the classroom, constructive criticism is expected and mistakes are should be owned and recognized as opportunities to learn more. Teachers see positive effects on student learning and feelings of competence. Also, there is a need for teacher training institutions that can serve to increase teacher knowledge and skill in formative assessment, which will work towards increasing student motivation to achieve at higher levels. In doing so, teachers can collaborate and brainstorm possible solutions to instructional practices that are not producing results in student achievement. As a result of the training, all stakeholders would be able to evaluate the level of student improvement or decline, and make small adjustments as needed in instructional practices. This can bring teachers and students together as teammates who are able to take responsibility for learning.

Great concern has been expressed about the underachievement that is dominant in school life. This concern brings results to the forefront of the range of school-based strategies that are used to raise academic standards and reduce the gender gap in academic performance. According to Warrington et al. (2005), school-based intervention strategies typically focus on the construction of a boy-friendly classroom as an effective means of achieving equitable success rates among genders.

Results from Warrington studies in Pittsburgh (Warrington, 2005), also suggest that the state test results indicate that the number of students whose teachers participated in the formative assessment initiative for classroom teachers decreased significantly in the number of student scores that ranged in the basic and below basic level. Teachers administer formative assessments on a daily basis sometimes without realizing it. These assessments afford teachers the opportunity to participate in the learning process of their students. These tests can provide customized reports that consist of test item banks. "Formative assessments allow teachers to empower students to assess on-going learning inside and outside of the classroom. Formative assessments also provide descriptive feedback and give guidance that helps students realize that self confidence and motivation are keys to academic success. Student ownership of learning has a greater impact than any other classroom-based practice" (Brookhart, Moss, & Long, p. 57).

According to Slee & Weiner (2001), effective schools movements have sought to establish that schools matter and that schools can make a difference. These two researchers began a discussion among several school effectiveness researchers and politicians on the subject of school effectiveness, ineffectiveness as it relates to social

inequalities, and inclusive education. There are cultural politics that were part of the group discussions reported in several papers that were debated from, which centered around race, gender, sexuality, disability, student geographical areas, curriculum offerings and assessments as it relates to the provisions for inclusive education (p. 93).

The study conducted by Edmonds (1979) yielded distinct differences between high-achieving, low achieving, and declining schools. Some of the characteristics of high performing schools include the following: (a) teachers believe all students can learn, (b) teachers have specific goals, (c) teachers are more task oriented, (d) teachers are not satisfied with the status quo, (e) the principal is a strong leader; he is supportive and visible, (f) teachers frequently monitor student achievement, and (g) teachers hold high expectations for their students.

The Washington School Research Center (2002) interviewed teachers and administrators in schools containing students who met and exceeded the state standards, significantly above the state average. Research was started by screening the elementary schools in the data base at the Washington School Research Center. The criteria included: (a) the percentage of students passing the fourth grade state assessment in Washington on the reading, math, and writing assessments, (b) the percent of students eligible for free/reduced lunch, and (c) the composite score that was generated from the average percent of students passing the three state assessments.

Three years of data were studied to determine which elementary schools earned a high composite passing rate on the fourth grade state test. After studying the data, the researchers found twenty-two schools which consistently met the required passing rate, in addition to the other necessary criteria. Next, three research teams were selected to

conduct interviews at each of the selected schools. District personnel, school leaders and teachers were interviewed at the district office location during a span of three months.

Researchers found four primary factors: " (a) a caring and collaborative environment, (b) strong leadership, (c) focused, intentional instruction, and (d) the use of assessment data to guide instruction. Another team found that in some of the schools, those that were interviewed cited their small school size, their district support, lack of teacher and student mobility, parental involvement, and professional development as important in school success" (Washington School Research Center, p. 20). Further studying brought the researchers to the conclusion that the findings for success in the elementary schools could be successfully utilized on the middle school level as well. Environments with high standards and good pedagogy, as it relates to curriculum and instruction, can successfully yield high performing schools (Washington School Research Center, 2002).

Demographics, insufficient resources, and ineffective school practices are a few of the reasons that many schools perform poorly. Many children live under highly stressful conditions that impede their learning. Focused work at closing the achievement gap is necessary. Research, observation, interviews, and opinion polls all have been conducted to help determine how to effectively educate African American students. Academically Unacceptable schools typically serve low-income children living in conditions that impede learning (Shannon & Bylsma, 2002). These two authors also suggest that in order to close the gap in education, African American students will have to accelerate their achievement at a much higher rate if white

students continue to improve at the same rate. It is difficult for disadvantaged students to catch up academically to their initially higher scoring peers by making the same progress as those particular peers. As long as the same level of improvement occurs, the gap will not close (Shannon & Bylsma, 2002).

The ever increasing focus on academic improvement and high academic standards and expectations, has brought the disparities among the races to the forefront as measured on state assessment tests. Shannon and Bylsma (2002), also suggest that even disaggregated test scores within subgroups cover up differences and gaps for individual students. The focus should not be on helping minority races educationally, but should be focused on helping all children learn.

A lack of resources is found in many Academically Unacceptable schools which employ twice as many inexperienced teachers, or those who teach out of their major field of study. The inequitable distribution of inexperienced teachers can be found in all grades, but are more pronounced in high schools. Classes in high-poverty schools are seventy-seven percent more likely to be assigned to an out-of-field teacher than classes in low-poverty schools, and one in four core academic subjects in all secondary schools is taught by a teacher lacking a college minor in their subject. Issues that lead to this phenomenon include a lack of time for teacher collaboration, complicated school schedules, and poor working conditions in large high schools (Jerald, 2002).

According to Glickman, Allen, and Lunsford (1992), schools that have a high implementation of instructional focus on data, reform in teaching and learning, and action research including, data collection in action, fair better than other schools. The

Distinguished Educators assigned by the Louisiana State Department of Education serve

to foster that theory. These educators are placed in schools that have a tendency to be

inclusive and involve faculty.

Another factor that may contribute to school effectiveness in struggling schools

is in-depth technical assistance. Technical experts are housed in schools on a daily

basis for a lengthy period of time to respond to the needs of the school. Also,

interventions that are specific to schools, such as class-size reduction, are being used to

help raise student achievement. The data collected for this study may force

accountability officials in Louisiana to use outside evaluators to yield positive results

for maximizing school effectiveness and school achievement. However, adequate

funding for these interventions may hinder this possibility.

There are variations in the efficiency of subgroups in education across the states.

Methods for identifying the contribution of a school to student performance can be

measured as subgroups are included in school labels. Rubenstein (2005) explored

characteristics of school efficiency and found that efficiency is sensitive to variables

that are held constant and that many districts are deemed efficient because of costs

involved and the use of high performance output from students.

Schwartz and Zabel (2005) developed a means of estimating school efficiency

by using school-level production functions that capture the process where inputs to

school are translated into outputs. This particular experiment used school-level data on

New York City elementary schools. This experiment and evaluation of different

specifications of education production functions (EPF's) addressed various challenges

in estimating the EPF's. The researchers discovered that school rankings were

somewhat similar, but significantly different from the rankings given by average test scores without controlling for differences in school inputs and student characteristics. It is likely, however, that schools vary in how efficiently they educate specific subgroups.

Zabel, Stiefel, and Schwartz (2005) analyzed discrepancies in school efficiency measures based on student level and school level (EFP's). These studies were based on aggregation from the student-level to school-level data, sample selection, and measurement error associated with test scores that affect estimates of school efficiency measures. One conclusion of this study was that biases caused by data aggregation, sample selection, and measurement error do not result in empirically meaningful changes in school efficiency measures. New York has begun collecting longitudinal data on students and schools in grades K-8.

Now considered a landmark report, *Turning Points* provided descriptions of the plight of American adolescents. These descriptions were supported with hard data that moved middle grades education to public agenda. The eight major recommendations of this report included the following: (a) creating small communities for learning, (b) teaching a core academic program, (c) ensuring success for all students, (d) staffing middle grade schools with teachers who are expert at teaching young adolescents, (e) improving academic performance through fostering the health and fitness of young adolescents, (f) re-engaging families in the education of young adolescents, and (g) connecting schools with their communities (Center for Collaborative Education, 2004).

School effectiveness can be prompted by using a systems approach. This formal procedure, consisting of analysis and design can help schools self-correct if systematically implemented. Figure 3 provides a visual representation of the systems

approach to school improvement as an adaptation of the systems approach to curriculum

development from the Robert Gordon University (1996).
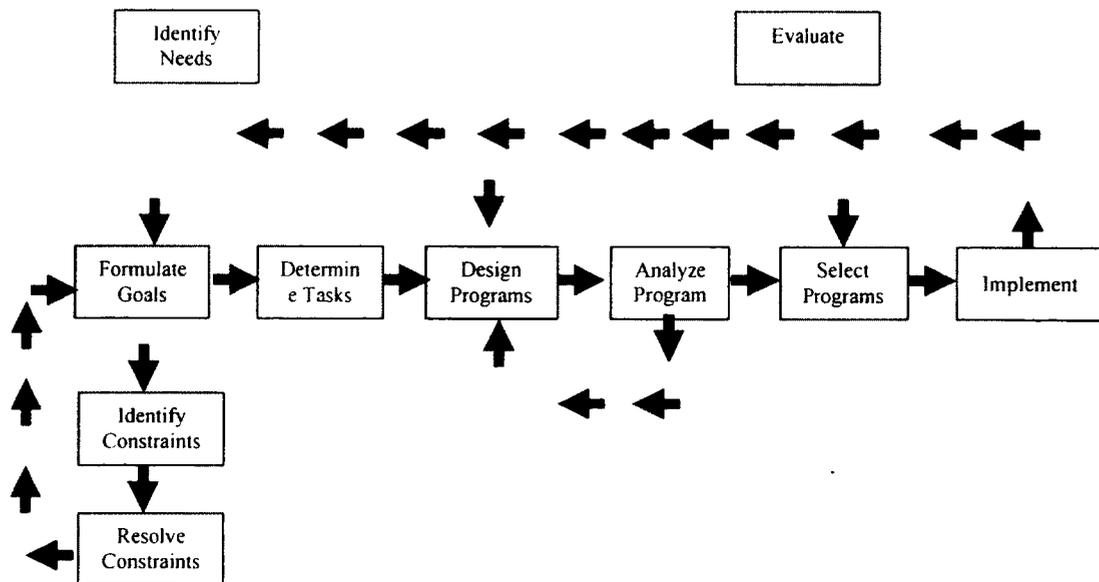
Figure 3 Systems Approach to Efficient School Improvement

Figure 3 represents a collection of parts that interact to function as a whole.

Each component impacts the system. Situations are understood by examining content,

relationships, and their interrelated parts. The systems approach is necessary for

ongoing and sustainable improvements in teaching and learning, and should be guided

by ethics, values and beliefs that are a part of the organization. The different elements

of the system interact, so that instruction can be facilitated, barriers to learning are

addressed, interventions are determined, and a continuous capacity is built in to

effectively meet accountability measures based on quality standards and indicators

which are to be evaluated (Robert Gordon University, 1996).

The following three sections serve to provide information on three concepts which constitute school improvement results, meaningful teamwork, and provide clear goals. Policy makers, educational consultants, and researchers may push schools to improve by giving suggestions of what and how to improve student academic achievement. However, care needs to be given, as to not overload the schools with innovations.

The Principal as the School Leader

Current principals are taking on the task of preparing teachers and students for increased achievement. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (Carbo, 2007), a low percentage of students perform at the proficient reading level. To combat this reading deficiency, Carbo (2007) suggests the following strategies: (a) change the negative perceptions-focus on the students' strengths in reading; (b) reduce stress; (c) reading programs should be easy and engaging that teach to the students' strengths; (d) use powerful modeling reading methods-modeling paired reading, choral reading, and listening to recorded books; and (e) use recordings-high interest low level books on recordings that are between two and four minutes long.

Principals, who recognize and mandate a focus that supports reading instruction, work to aid comprehension and enjoyment that will impact school success by increasing student achievement. Carbo (2007) also purports that student achievement, motivation, and test scores will improve with a love for reading. Having a community focus on improving achievement can be transformed by the principal as the school leader when the teachers perceive the school as having productive working relations with the community and the administrators (Mulford & Silins, 2003).

Student attendance has been correlated to student achievement by numerous studies. According to Christie (2008), the Louisiana legislature has taken on truancy by requiring schools to notify the parent in writing if a child has three unexcused absences, which includes checking out of school early. Principals are required to conduct a parent conference, and the parent is responsible for providing in writing that he/she has been notified. Absenteeism plays a role in school performance scores, as well as having a direct effect on student achievement.

Barth (2006) asserts that quality professional relationships among adults within a school are critical. Positive professional relationships among staff produce more effective teaching and learning. External assistance can facilitate school renewal, but effective leadership at the school site is essential. Another suggestion offered by Glickman (1992) is for school principals to be involved outside of the school in learning activities such as peer coaching with other principals, working with other administrators to improve professional development for principals, as well as, researching the latest practices as reported in professional literature.

It may also be helpful for principals to help assist teachers with the overload of change that may be seen by some as unreasonable. This could possibly be accomplished by moving towards school-based decision-making and by working with the ideas that are opposite of what has been the norm within the school. As school leaders guide the stakeholders through the path of improvement, and honest self-assessment may cause anxiety as it relates to accountability initiatives such as NCLB. As educators work towards transforming schools, critiquing performance is a necessary component of improvement. "Contrast is an important prompt for critical self-reflection.

Going outside the frame beyond one's normal traditions is a great source of learning and improvement" (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991 p. 97).

Du Quesnay (2003) suggested to a reporter in London that the essential task of an educational leader is building confidence and a sense of value to the school. She also believes that the key to successful school management is to distribute responsibility among staff. These principals spend time with the teachers and students within the school site and looks for ways to make better experiences for both. After working with others to design a peer assessment tool for teachers, the instrument was used in conjunction with a leadership incentive grant for pre-service teachers and for teachers who were presently working in secondary schools, to prepare them for leadership roles.

In an effort to facilitate strong leadership qualities as a part of the study, DuQuesnay provided training sessions, role playing exercises, study units, and a series of modules. The modules included such topics as teacher disciplinary meetings and parent conferences. The instrument assisted with determining the conclusion that quality leadership is showing improvement in schools. It was also determined that successful schools share leadership responsibilities among all stakeholders.

The element of effective leadership requires preparation. Effective leadership practices are lacking in many Academically Unacceptable schools. Leadership training that will teach leaders how to create transition teams and develop entry plans when beginning new assignments in new schools is crucial. These strategies help principals to establish performance standards for themselves, the faculty, and other organizational members in the site-based learning community. Transparent accountability systems help with

credibility between stakeholders. Principals should make identified goals and visions

known, collect data, and effectively communicate this information with all stakeholders.

Teaching leaders how to navigate the political landscape is found in school

systems across Louisiana may be a major factor in the decisions that are made at every

level. Courageous principals and other school leaders can best learn how to work

together to implement the preparations of leading a Academically Unacceptable school

with real-world tasks embedded in professional training to initiate this process (National

Institute for School Leadership, 2011).

Witziers, Bosker, & Kruger (2003), performed a quantitative analysis to

examine the extent to which principals or head-teachers affect student outcomes. This

research indicates that less than 1% of the variation in student achievement is associated

with differences in educational leadership. Further conclusions suggest the existence of

heavy limitations to the direct effects approach of linking leadership with student

achievement. Marzano, et al., (2004) show the existence of contradictory evidence,

which show marginal or negative correlation between educational leadership and

student achievement. The recent and comprehensive review of teacher leadership

literature locates few empirical studies of teacher leadership effects on students. The

researchers analyzed questions related to determining how leadership affects student

improvement efforts.

Goal-setting was suggested as being an important factor for leaders, as it relates

to student academic success. The overall impact of leaders on student achievement was

just one variable that can be linked to student outcomes. However, the analysis

conducted by each of the researchers provided data to support that the setting of goals

by the leader, family values, an effective classroom teacher, and linking resources in a strategic manner had the greatest impact on student achievement. This was due in part to the focused attention on persistent, on-going efforts from all stakeholders with a purpose.

Davies and Ellison (2003) suggest that the school principal has a large discretionary space over strategies that are used. This belief purports that leaders who have freedom of action may get better results than leaders who strictly follow strategies planned at a higher level of authority. Short-term planning and target setting improves standards as the authors also suggest. However, short-term planning is not sufficient for the long-term development of the school. Strategic planning is the key. A strategic analysis of the school is needed to determine a course of action for improvement. After an analysis is completed, a strategic action plan should be considered. This plan should provide information on where the school is, and where it wants to go, and how it should get there, and the ability to become successful in doing so. The authors support a framework for thinking through the future perspectives of a given school.

Teacher and principal leadership are only indirectly related to student outcomes. Student academic success has been linked to the home environment where parents are working more, and higher student achievement is linked to higher social economic status. Some leaders favor strict control and do not allow teachers to collaborate in decisions that are made in regards to increasing academic achievement. Further conclusions that were addressed were centered upon the fact that collective teacher efficacy is the important intervening variable between leadership and teacher work which directly effect student outcomes. Simply stated, when teachers have a good

professional relationship with the principal, and are allowed to participate in some level

of decision-making, they tend to be more supportive, and willing to take on more

leadership roles which can be important for school improvement efforts Mulford &

Silins, 2003).

According to Ross and Gray (2006), leadership contributes to organizational

learning, which in turn influences what happens inside the classroom as related to

teaching and learning. Figure 4 represents a visual for the effect that the leadership role

has on student academic success. Principals and other stakeholders have a broad

influence over school and student success. The focus is on teaching and learning, which

is a collaboration of values, vision, and a leader that supports commitment and

community. This figure serves as a guide as to how school leaders can work to improve

student achievement and teacher effectiveness.
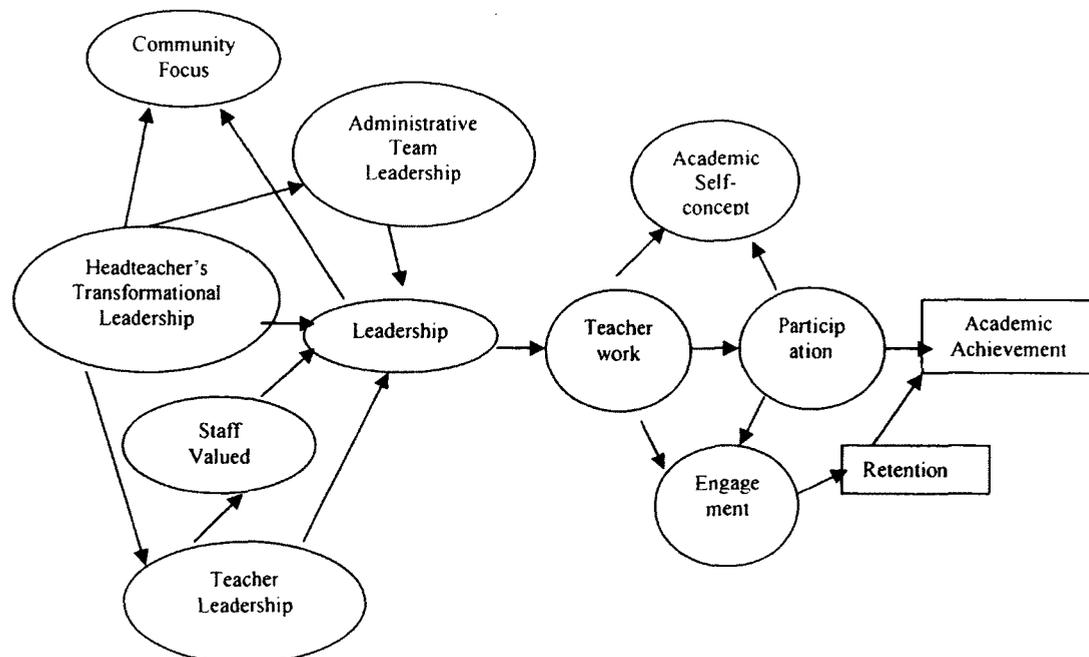
Figure 4 Leadership Effect on Student Achievement

Teddlie & Stringfield (2000) conducted a longitudinal study in Louisiana on school effectiveness which spanned the years 1980 to 1992. When a comparison was made between effective and ineffective schools, effective schools possessed students who spent more time on task, teachers who constantly exposed students to new material, teachers who used independent practice in the classroom, positive reinforcement, a school environment which was safe and orderly, and the display of student work.

Public opinion remains staunchly behind higher, more challenging standards. More than 50% of parents polled by Public Agenda indicated beliefs that higher standards would strengthen students' academic performance (Johnson & Duffett, 1999). This belief leads to an examination of definitions of high and low expectations. Achieving high standards is the essence of accountability. To measure how well students and schools are in attaining the goals as set forth by the district and the state in Louisiana, the assessment systems are constantly being refined to correlate in alignment with the Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum, which is the guide of existing standards for the state.

Louisiana education leaders implemented a new assessment program, the new form of the Louisiana Education Assessment Program 21 tests, as a part of the new accountability system. Tests were developed through three-way collaboration between committees of teachers, a commercial testing vendor, and the Department of Education staff. The initial development of the assessment was completed by Advanced Systems (now renamed Measured Progress). Test questions were reviewed by committees of

Louisiana teachers with the assistance of a bias committee (Consortium for Policy

Research in Education, May, 2000).

Field tests were given in the spring of 1998, and the implementation process

began in the spring of 1999. By the spring of 2002, the LEAP 21 test was fully

implemented in grades 4, 8, and at the secondary level in the subject areas of English,

mathematics, science, and social studies. This was inclusive of Louisiana's new

criterion-referenced testing (CRT) program and the CRT for high school students,

which is called the Graduate Exit Examination (CPRE, 2000). Louisiana schools are

given a performance label based upon the school performance score. Performance

labels are divided into categories. Table 3 provides a visual of the labels as it is related

to scores.

The annual standardized test scores serve as a measure of how well schools and

their students are meeting their growth targets. Performance Labels are currently

divided into five categories. Table 3 represents the labels by letter grade for Louisiana

schools. Growth targets are assigned to schools on a yearly basis depending on the

success or failure on a school meeting the assigned growth target. Schools are

mandated to achieve the goal of 120.0 by 2014. The maximum amount for a growth

target given to schools in Louisiana is 10.0 points, the minimum amount of growth is 2.0

points.

Table 3

Louisiana School Performance Labels

Performance Labels	SPS Ranges
A	120.0 and above
B	105.0-119.9
C	90.0-104.9
D	75.0-89.9
F	0-74.9
Five Stars	140.0 and above
Four Stars	120.0-139.9
Three Stars	100.0-119.9
Two Stars	80.0-99.9
One Star	60.0-79.9
Exemplary Academic Growth	A school that makes it Growth Target, where all subgroups grow at least two points, and which is not in School Improvement (SI).
Recognized Academic Growth	A school that makes its Growth Target.
Minimal Academic Growth	A school that is improving (at least 0.1 points) but not meeting its Growth Target.
No Growth	A school with a change in SPS of 0 – 2.5 points.
School in Decline	A school with a declining SPS (more than -2.5 points)

External Change Agents and School Improvement

Supplemental Educational Services (SES) are additional academic instruction

provided outside the regular school day to increase the academic achievement of

students in Academically Unacceptable schools (United States Department of

Education, 2003a). These externally state approved providers may include nonprofit,

for-profit, faith- based organizations, charter schools, and other in-district schools that

are Academically Acceptable. The instructional delivery methods includes: one-on-

one tutoring, small group instruction, and internet-based learning.

In previous years, Louisiana has used in-house District Assistance Teams to

work to analyze the specific needs of Academically Unacceptable schools. Their

recommendations suggested pull-out programs for students who were not performing in

high-poverty schools. Teams of district personnel impacting local schools signal the

beginning of external change agents in the public school systems of Louisiana (LDOE,

2011).

Empirical studies in the area of Effective School Improvement (ESI) have

been used to analyze the relationship between school effectiveness and school

improvement. According to Scheerens and Demuse (2005), four strands of theories

represent the principles of effective school improvement: (a) curriculum theory, which

is seen as an off-spring of the rational planning model, (b) micro-economic theory and

public choice theory; which emphasizes incentives and consumer-controlled

accountability, (c) cybernetics and theories on learning organizations, and (d) theories

on self-regulation and self-organization.

A review of the research on district improvement with an eye toward the role of external assistance reveals an interesting pattern. Most research either focuses on the district role in instructional improvement in schools, barely mentioning the contribution of external assistance in these efforts, or emphasizes the improvement efforts through the lens of the external provider, minimizing the district role. Only in a few current cases are we starting to see research that explores the partnerships and relationships between districts and external support providers (Supovitz, 2008, p. 464).

Edison Schools, Incorporated is one of the largest education management organizations that has been contracted to manage public schools, including charter schools. Edison educational officials approach is comprehensive, addressing resources, assistance to schools, and work under the accountability systems in which each specific contracted school district operates (Marsh & Hamilton, 2008). Edison officials operate on the basis of supporting and scaling up teaching and learning, as well as the vision of providing world class educational systems. In many instances, Edison officials provide a wide range of contexts and support staff that are not located in the geographical areas of the schools through the use of the "virtual district" (Marsh & Hamilton, 2008).

Chubb (2004) conducted research in the later years of 1990, detailing information about the emergence of the Edison Company. Chubb served as a founding partner of the Edison schools. He had an interest in the successes and failures of the company have led further studies that have been conducted alone and in conjunction with other researchers. This research suggests that Edison officials began its program by spending three years developing a comprehensive school design. The author

describes those first few years in perspectives related to increased achievement in public and charter schools. Manuals were provided to schools, just as in business, which provided insight into areas that could promote school or business success.

The improvements within Edison schools were accomplished by utilizing the best theories from both education and business sectors, as it is related to curriculum, budgets, calendars, teaching methods, assessment, staff development, and management. Resources such as take home computers which allow for more learning, student and parent interaction, extended school days, and a longer school year all are integral components of the Edison schooling. Parents support longer hours which free them from extra money for after school care.

Tongneri and Anderson (2003) investigated traits of five different high-poverty districts that had shown improvement in student achievement. All of the districts that were studied used many of the same strategies to foster improved results. These strategies as reported by Tongneri and Anderson (2003) include the following: (a) the courage to acknowledge poor performance and the will to seek solutions; (b) a vision that focused on student learning and guided instructional improvement; (c) a system-wide approach to improve instruction, including curricula and instructional supports; (d) data-based decision making; (e) new approaches to professional development; (f) redefined leadership roles; and (g) a commitment to sustaining reform over the long haul.

Creating and maintaining high-performing urban schools has been an area of concern in public education. Brown University officials conducted a study on specific ways in which communities could work towards creating high performance urban

schools, as well as, develop support systems that aid in sustaining high performance in urban schools. Community leaders from several areas of business and non-profit organizations studied aspects from the areas of capacity building for teaching and learning, developing family and community, and the organization and management of schools (Kronley & Handley, 2003). It was suggested that there are different levels in the hierarchy that are active participants in developing and sustaining reform.

Kronley and Handley (2003), worked to determine which types of external change agents would be considered the best for promoting sustainable reform. A decision was made to work with external change agents that were willing to work with district personnel collaboratively. Four groups were selected: (a) The Busara Group, (b) The Center for Leadership in School Reform, (c) The Institute for Research and Reform in Education, and (d) The Public Education Foundation of Chattanooga. Each organization included in this study supported the district's focus on change and reform, and worked collaboratively with school and district officials. Each organization possessed specialties in areas such as contracts, budgets, human resources, capacity building, and school reconfiguration.

The task force determined that cooperation between external change agents and internal agents have a positive impact on building capacity and sustaining reform. Every district that was studied continued to have problems with racial discrimination and its effects on student performance, the availability of quality teachers, administrator attitudes, and the poor condition of the facilities. The researchers determined a lack of equity in schools within the district. The researchers suggested outside funding agencies support is needed to strengthen the capacity for systemic reform.

Researchers have studied partnerships between the Institutes for Learning (IFL), and the urban districts during the period of 2002-2004 (Marsh, et al., 2005). These studies were conducted at the University of Pittsburgh. The IFL worked with the development of instructional leadership, school-based coaching, curriculum specification, and data use. This comparative case study design was on-going for two years using focus groups with teachers, surveys of principals and teachers, analysis of IFL documents and student achievement data. The IFL was determined to have a positive effect on the culture, norms, and beliefs about instruction.

The Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) studied a four-year partnership between the First Things First (FTF) reform model and the Kansas City, Kansas school district. The FTF was considered a theory of change (Quint,& Bloom, 2005). The FTF reform suggested small professional learning communities in which students stay over multiple years. This was a family advocacy-centered approach where the teachers met with students to monitor academic, social, and emotional progress, along with implementing a standards-based instructional improvement effort. This program also phased in school feeder patterns, the delivery of intensive professional development, and the reassignment of district level curriculum specialists and school improvement facilitators. Some of the early successes were stakeholder awareness and knowledge of the reform, a commitment to implement the reform and a readiness for implementation of critical FTF features (Supovitz, 2008).

Policy makers generally view closing schools as a last resort. More positive state and district action is preferred. Holdzkman, (2001) recommended technical assistance to the Academically Unacceptable schools to provide intensive, focused

assistance to the schools that need this type of support the most. These programs can include targeting the schools with the most need, thoroughly auditing the school needs and bringing in specialty trained principals, teachers, and curriculum specialists to act as facilitators for change. Holdzkman also noted that the aforementioned interventions have sometimes boosted the Academically Unacceptable schools into the highest-performing category.

Federal, state, and local systems of government are somewhat contradictory in the methods utilized to satisfy state and federal mandates while trying to keep districts happy. When districts use authority to articulate and support a common academic vision, school leaders can align efforts. The Learning First Alliance Study, *Beyond Islands of Excellence*. (Tognieri & Anderson, 2003), examined the instructional practices and student achievement in five school districts across the country. Preliminary data highlighted high student test scores, and low-socioeconomic families.

The study revealed a rise in poverty, all districts experienced high mobility with significant changes in ethnic groups, and an increase in students in each district. All districts demonstrated some academic improvement as it relates to standardized test scores in at least one area. The data also provided information to support findings of students in higher grades above elementary school had lower scores. Districts which had been in the implementation of school reform for more years, made better improvement gains than those in which reform was recently implemented. There are school districts that have wonderful administrators and teachers which strive to promote high expectations for learning. Every system seems to have islands of excellence. Successful organizations utilize action plans that can be adopted by other schools and

districts which have a history of academic failure. "Improved districts set their courses and stayed with them for years" (Tognieri & Angerson, 2003, p. 8). The challenge rests with district staff to determine how they can make every school a school of excellence.

Resources that have been allocated can make a difference in supporting student achievement. Pan, Rudo, and Smith-Hansen (2003), conducted a study to investigate the differences in spending and allocation of staff in schools in relation to the levels of student achievement. In other words, data were used to compare the allocation of resources between high performing schools vs. low performing schools. Districts were ranked within states from a three year average of standardized testing results.

By examining spending patterns in four states, Pan, Rudo and Smith-Hansen (2003), found a positive correlation between resources and student success. This correlation was the highest when the resources were directed towards core instructional areas over general administration of funds. Each higher performing district spent a greater amount of funds on instruction than the lower performing districts. A common factor in each of the four states was that less money was spent on general administration. Intelligent allocation of funds yielded significant academic returns.

Education leaders have produced content and performance standards in mathematics, language arts, social studies, science, the arts, and foreign languages (The Education Trust and Council of Chief State School Officer, 1999). The state mandated a balance by providing open-ended test formats as to perpetuate student original responses on some parts of the test. Testing experts in Kentucky, the state after which Louisiana has modeled the Distinguished Educator program, and one of the states considered to be a leader in education accountability, disagree with the reliability of

such type of questions, and have chosen to reintroduce multiple-choice questions in standardized testing (Whitford & Metcalf-Turner, 1999).

Barrett and Pratt (2000) suggest that crises overwhelm school organizations and the stakeholders may tend to respond in firm authority. In some cases, crises may be energized due to internal and external agents in the organization. This was the case in the beginnings of the comprehensive education reform in 1990, when Kentucky provided external support for Academically Unacceptable schools within the state. The root causes of low achievement were explored, and a needs assessment that helped to prescribe a remedy was collaborated within a group involving stakeholders at each Academically Unacceptable school. The specific needs of each school lead to tailored professional development. Teachers were given the opportunity to learn and implement new strategies, work with consultants provided by the state, and re-design the curriculum to meet the needs of individual students. This support provided opportunities for teachers to plan, organize, assess, and monitor within the organizational structure of the school implementation procedures and follow-up.

Researchers have not done as much work on Academically Unacceptable or ineffective schools; they have been more concerned with what works in successful schools. Land & Jarman (1992), define growth as the capacity to continuously make more extensive and increasingly complex connections inside the growing organism and with the varied outside environments. Assessing growth is challenging because of the various background experiences of the educators and other stakeholders who help make the decisions at these school sites. Differences in opinions can work to the advantage of the people involved in the shared decision-making processes. Change can possibly

work when connecting with the different and dissimilar rather than building on similarities (Land & Jarman, 1992).

Creating cultures of high expectations and continuous improvement for students prepares young people for challenging studies at higher levels in the educational realm. According to the 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) eighth-grade assessment, 29% of students scored below Basic in reading; 32% scored Basic in mathematics. These students are not prepared for challenging and rigorous high school studies (NAEP, 2005).

Partnerships in districts and through state agencies are needed to potentially provide the coherence, coordination, and persistence essential to teacher and school development. Strong partnerships will not happen by accident, good will, or establishing ad hoc projects. These alliances require new structures, new activities, and a re-thinking of the internal processes of each institution as well as inter-institutional workings. In order to be successful, external change agents must be used for complementary insights and information. External change agents are constantly on the lookout for people and information that will help achieve the identified mission (Schrage, 1990).

It has been stated that implementing the same unsuccessful practices over and over, will not produce positive results. The present circumstances must be evaluated to determine which actions are warranted to promote success. What is needed for success varies within districts. "Success in the past does not guarantee success in the future especially when circumstances change and success requires something new" (Christensen et al.. 2005). All children deserve the best education and that may mean

that the business of education will not be business as usual. It may mean wiping the slate clean and starting over from the beginning to reach desired results.

The Distinguished Educator Program

The Louisiana Distinguished Educator Program was been designed as a strategy to provide administrators and staff of academically unacceptable schools with new and innovative approaches to effective school reform. Distinguished Educators have been placed in academically unacceptable schools for six consecutive years. Distinguished Educator selection and placement is determined by officials at the Louisiana State Department of Education based on individual school needs for external assistance.

The criterion to become a Distinguished Educator Program in Louisiana consists of the following: (a) Louisiana Type A/Level III Teaching Certificate, a master's degree, or National Board Certification; (b) minimum of five years experience in a supervisory position; (c) adult training; (d) classroom experience; (e) worked within one of these areas within the last three years; and (f) extensive knowledge and skills in curriculum, instruction, assessment, leadership, and school improvement. In addition, there are are six steps involved in the selection process of Distinguished Educators: (a) application, references, and written questions; (b) written response; (c) interview, portfolio presentation, and video submission; (d) site visit to applicant's worksite; (e) skills assessment; and (f) final recommendation (LDOE, 2007).

According to Bottoms, Fry, and O'Neil (2004), quality school leadership in every school is needed to obtain and maintain progress. The role of the principal has moved beyond school manager to instructional leader. The expectations of a school principal include building manager, instructional leader, community and public

relations guru, fundraiser, and visionary (Thompson & Legler, 2003). Rigorous preparation programs for principals to lead instruction in their school sites have been emphasized by Browne-Ferrigno (2003) in a study that evaluated the growth of aspiring principals. Role conceptualization, role identity, socialization, and purposeful engagement were four major themes found in the growth process of aspiring principals. These roles did change before, during, and after participating in principal preparation programs.

Today, the key role of the principal is a change agent who is able to take his school to higher instructional levels. Principals who involve teachers in the change process enable the school organization to focus on the knowledge and skills that are available through his instructional team of teachers and support staff (Marks & Printy, 2003). Accurate diagnosis of school conditions is a critical element of effective school leadership (Portin et al., 2003).

Distinguished Educators work as diagnosticians as well as in a collaborative capacity within school systems. Principals and Distinguished Educators must be willing to utilize their personal skills as well to focus on problem finding, problem solving, and collaboration with stakeholders. "Principals play a central role in school change and they directly influence school culture, which affects the change process" (Marks & Printy, 2003, p. 372). A large number of external change agents have been placed in schools to assist the principal in building school capacity and knowledge for improvement.

Fordham (2003) suggests that there is a need for both pre-service and in-service preparation programs to address these fundamental challenges that are found in all

schools to varying degrees. It is further suggested that principal preparation for

Academically Unacceptable schools should involve a degree of customization.

Decisions of structure are intended to increase the learning environment.

When teacher retention is at a low, the principal may face attrition rates that

jeopardize student achievement and curriculum continuity (Watkins, 2005). The

process of attracting, retaining, and developing teachers becomes a focus for principals

as instructional leaders. Principals are faced with providing environments that

encourage teachers to set standards that will promote increased student achievement.

Teachers desire to feel a part of the school culture and their positive contributions to the

learning community sets the standard for increased achievement (Wong, 2003).

Principals must work with their staff to ensure a community of teachers which

share common goals and practice shared decision-making. This community must value

new teacher perspectives as well as the views of experienced teachers. "After new

teachers are hired, and placed, new teachers need to become acquainted with the way

their new school does things" (Carver, 2003; Feiman-Nemser, 2003). Teacher

participation and collaboration are recommendations for effective school improvement.

This collaboration may serve to enhance job satisfaction and promote a strong

commitment to the profession. When mentors serve as collaborative coaches and

support new teachers, they assist in providing a deeper understanding of pedagogy.

Mentors should match their coaching strategies to the specific needs of the new

teachers. "Mentoring novice teachers is commonly accepted as an effective method of

initiating and retaining novice teachers to the profession" (Portner, 2003, p. 3).

Mentoring and coaching new teachers is often based on the level of knowledge and

understanding of the mentee. Specific attention to the professional related problems that the new teacher is facing will help to move them in the right direction. The mentor-coach who works with new teachers must value feedback that improves teaching practices, and must be careful to provide practices that strengthen trust (Johnson, 2002).

The National College For School Leadership (2001) reports that there are Seven Strong Claims that enable those in leadership roles to improve instruction: (a) school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning; (b) almost all successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices; (c) the ways in which leaders apply these basic leadership practices-not the practices themselves-demonstrate responsiveness to, rather than dictation by, the contexts in which they work; (d) school leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions; (e) school leadership has a greater influence on schools and students when it is widely distributed; (f) some patterns of distribution are more effective than others; and (g) a small handful of personal traits explains a high proportion of variation in leadership effectiveness. It has been suggested that an accurate diagnosis of school conditions is a critical element of effective school leadership (Portin, & Schnider, 2003).

Student-centered focus refers to the collective efforts of the school staff to focus on students as individual learners, which may require some special accommodations, learning strategies, and modifications to meet individualized needs and learning styles. In order to keep the focus on students, schools must: (a) actively monitor student progress, (b) provide frequent formal and informal feedback to students

and parents, and (c) establish interventions that involve parents and students, before

during, and after school. Students and parents must be involved in the entire process.

External change agents can interject new ideas which become the catalyst for change

that leads the school community toward heightened academic achievement (Portin,

2003).

Currently, the Louisiana Distinguished Educator Program is providing the

Distinguished Educators with training from the School Turnaround Group (STG), a

subsidiary of Mass Insight Education. This group is a non-profit organization that

works to turnaround Academically Unacceptable schools. The (STG) received a grant

from the Gates Foundation to research strategies to implement a turnaround program

(Mass Insight Education, 2011).

The Distinguished Educators in the State of Louisiana will begin training in the

summer, 2011. These educators will be trained in dramatic intervention techniques to

assist Academically Unacceptable schools in an effective implementation of the school

transformation model. Previous training for Distinguished Educators in Louisiana has

consisted of a plethora of initiatives that promote best practices in schools.

Summary

There is agreement in the literature regarding the achievement gap and

Academically Unacceptable schools. A positive relationship exists between family

income and student achievement. Much of the negative influence on student

achievement is attributed to socio-economic variables within families. School

improvement efforts require systemic change. if we are to leave no child behind.

Several researchers have concluded that the effects of external change agents have a positive effect on districts which struggle with failing schools. In some instances specialized training has been utilized to help schools process specific obstacles related to their situations, and determine which interventions are necessary for improvement. On a larger scale, there is very little evidence that specific strategic training sessions are conducted for external change agents in the State of Louisiana.

External change agents often provide significant support according to goals that are set in collaboration with school learning communities. This fosters an approach which all stakeholders work together thorough planning, action, reflection, and by making he necessary adjustments as they are needed to improve schools.

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, has prompted results-oriented educators to look for external solutions to help with developing solutions for increasing student achievement. In some districts, the State Department of Education has partnered voluntary or involuntarily with external change agents. External change agents were used in the past in the areas of business, industry, and science when problems occurred in the organization. External change agents have come into educational realm within the past twenty years (Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center, 2010).

These agents are seen by some as initiators of change. They are considered experts in their field and can provide schools and districts with proven research-based instructional practices which can be integrated into a school organization. An effective change agent must have the ability to communicate effectively with people from diverse backgrounds. Communication is necessary for collaboratively developing plans for change. This collaboration is essential for the successful development of the vision.

There is very little literature in regards to the most effective means of accurately measuring the positive or negative impact that external change agents have on school reform. However, student academic success is measured by the standardized test scores. As school turnaround programs across the country are beginning to evolve, an expansion of these programs will better serve to address the needs of many school districts in the areas of: (a) leadership, (b) success in teaching and learning in the core areas, (c) and intelligent use of resources. It will take all stakeholders within a school community to enforce and embrace school reform with fidelity (Chadwick, Moats, & Craig, 2004).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

The Louisiana Distinguished Educator (DE) Program was designed to assist

schools in strengthening curriculum, instruction and assessment practices. One main

thrust of the Distinguished Educator program is to creatively and assertively assist

Academically Unacceptable schools in the state in meeting their growth targets. As

outlined by Louisiana's public and district accountability systems, school performance

is measured by norm-referenced test scores, criterion-referenced test scores, attendance

rates, and dropout rates (LDOE, 2010). Schools in the State of Louisiana receive

numerical scores which are known as School Performance Scores (SPS). The SPS for

Kindergarten through fifth grade is based on 10% of the attendance index and 90% of

the assessment index. Scores for schools using Kindergarten through eighth grade

configuration schools are based on 5% of the attendance index, 5% of the dropout

index, and 90% of the assessment index which focuses on student academic gain. The

ninth through twelfth configuration school setting scores are based on a graduation

index of 30% and an assessment index of 70%.

No documented, published research project exists to date that examines the

effectiveness of Distinguished Educators in Louisiana. This study provided quantitative

data as it relates to increasing student performance in selected Academically

Unacceptable schools with an assigned DE. The research investigated individual

school trend data to determine if the school performance scores are impacted through the school assistance received from the DE in each of the qualifying schools.

Research Design

An *ex post facto* design was utilized to test all hypotheses. Thorkildsen (2005) defines an *ex post facto* research design as one designed "after data have been collected" (p. 10). Examining the test scores over a three-year period was beneficial as to trace the statistical significance of a Distinguished Educator being placed at each school site, as well as determining whether or not the scaled scores for English Language Arts and mathematics improve at the end of each three year time frame. The *ex post facto* design assisted the researcher with establishing whether or not there was a cause and effect factor of being assigned a Distinguished Educator in each of the school sites as well.

A pre-post test design was used for exploring the variables that may possibly contribute to the symptoms of Academically Unacceptable schools. This design aided the researcher in evaluating the effectiveness of the Distinguished Educator as it relates to the schools that were randomly selected. Statistical analysis was used to determine if the Distinguished Educator had a significant effect on the school performance scores of the selected schools. The pre-post test design was beneficial in this study as to assist with determining the overall effectiveness of the Distinguished Educator at the selected sites.

According to the Louisiana Department of Education officials (LDOE, 2008), the first released baseline for Louisiana School Performance Scores were given in 1999. At that time, the state average School Performance score was 69.9, with a goal of 100. Data were collected from 1188 schools; 1058 were Kindergarten through eighth grade sites. and 130 combination schools: (Kindergarten through eighth grade and ninth

through twelfth grade). Currently, state officials have identified 44 schools as

Academically Unacceptable (LDOE, 2011). As a result, these schools have been

assigned Distinguished Educators.

Population, Sample, and School Sites

For the purpose of this study, a total of 139 schools with third and fifth-grades

were investigated during the 2008-2010 school sessions, and 149 schools with fourth

grade were investigated during the 2008-2010 school sessions. A random selection of

schools within the north, south, east, and west geographical areas of Louisiana were

identified for investigative purposes. A table of random numbers was utilized to select

individual school sites.

Data Collection

The student achievement data and School Performance Scores were collected

from the schools in the sample. These data were studied by each year end test score data

and end of year school improvement score. The data were obtained through a request to

Scott Norton, Assistant Superintendent of the Louisiana Department of Education

(APPENDIX A). These data were compiled into a data spreadsheet. To secure

anonymity, an arbitrary confidential code number was pre assigned to each school site

from the sample. All identifiers were kept confidential by the investigator. The data that

were collected were stored in a secure location and destroyed upon conclusion of the

investigation. The independent variable was the placement of the Distinguished Educator

at the school site, and the dependent variables were the test scores from 2008-2010

school sessions and School Performance Scores.

As trend data and test scores are aggregated. a baseline score is provided and a

Growth Target emerges for each particular school. The school and district accountability measurement tool provides each school site with a list of strengths and weaknesses in which the Distinguished Educator. Central Office support, and school level support systems can work to implement practices that are aimed toward improving student academic achievement.

Instrumentation

The *i*LEAP and LEAP standardized tests were utilized. Criterion and norm-referenced testing data were collected. The *i*LEAP is an integrated LEAP because it combines a norm referenced test which compares student test scores to the scores of other students across the United States. Also, the *i*LEAP is a criterion-referenced test, which measures what students know as it relates to the standards in the state of Louisiana. The LEAP is a criterion referenced test. Researchers report that criterion-referenced tests give a more accurate measure for student academic achievement (McMillan, 2004). Students are assessed and measured based on the attainment level of the set criteria. The individual schools test scores provide a measurement of how well each school does in comparison with all groups in the study. The individual schools test scores will also provide measurement of how well the school did in comparison to a criterion score. The standardized test scores, trend data, and school performance scores were examined to provide the primary data for this study.

Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was utilized to input test and analyze data collected. The alpha level was set at .05. To test the Null Hypothesis 1, a 2 X 3 Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) test was conducted

to investigate whether a significant difference exists between the levels of school improvement in Academically Unacceptable schools which have been assigned a Distinguished Educator. Independent variable categories were schools with a Distinguished Educator. Each of the randomly selected schools were measured as it relates to school performance scores during 2008-2010.

To test the Null Hypotheses 2, a 2 X 3 MANOVA test was conducted to determine whether a significant group difference exists in ELA and mathematics scores in Academically Unacceptable schools, which has been assigned a Distinguished Educator during 2008-2010 cohort years. The dependent variables were ELA and mathematics scores. The independent variable was the Distinguished Educator for Null Hypotheses 1 and Null Hypotheses 2. The data were obtained from the Louisiana Department of Education. Each null hypotheses was tested at the $a = .05$ level of significance. The researcher collected trend and test data from the Louisianan Department of Education officials during the dates of October 24, 2011 through November 21, 2011.

Null Hypotheses

In this study, the following null hypotheses was tested:

H_{01}: There is no statistically significant relationship between the levels of school improvement in Academically Unacceptable schools which have been provided the assistance of a Distinguished Educator, with schools who are not in School Improvement, who do not have a Distinguished Educator.

H_{02}: There is no significant level of growth in scaled scores for English/Language Arts and Mathematics in schools which are assigned a Distinguished Educator.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the level of academic success of schools with assigned Distinguished Educators as determined by the Louisiana Accountability Protocol. This study focused on whether or not the placement of a Distinguished Educator made a significant difference in raising student achievement in the included Academically Unacceptable schools in Louisiana. An anticipated outcome of the study was to determine if the presence of a Distinguished Educator on the campus of an Academically Unacceptable school increased test scores of the school. An additional outcome of the study was to guide future Distinguished Educator placement, if any, at the state level based on the reported increased academic success of the Academically Unacceptable schools in Louisiana.

The rationale for this study was based on the premise that students in Academically Unacceptable schools can succeed academically with the appropriate assistance targeting not only students, but teachers and administrators, as well. The Distinguished Educator Program was designed to assist Academically Unacceptable schools in meeting their growth targets. As outlined by Louisiana public and district accountability systems, school performance is measured by norm referenced test scores, criterion referenced test scores, attendance rates, and dropout rates (LDOE, 2008). Passing or failing these tests comprises a majority of the school performance scores in schools.

Distinguished Educators (APPENDIX B) are assigned to schools to help with establishing a team to accomplish goals as set by the school improvement plan. These educators work with schools to determine strengths and weaknesses as related to school

test data that drive instruction. Faculty and staff members are provided assistance with implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI), assessments, literacy strategies, best practices, lesson planning, prepare and teach model lessons, construct practice tests, and offer suggestions which serve to improve classroom management procedures.

The Distinguished Educator prepares a Monthly Monitoring Reports that is reviewed by the principal, the instructional team at each site, and the Distinguished Educator. This collaborative team works to develop activities and supports to meet the needs of specific teachers throughout the school in order to improve student success. This is a continuous cycle as to work towards improving achievement on an ongoing basis. A copy of the monthly report is forwarded to the district superintendent for review. The Monthly report serves as verification as to what was done at the assigned schools. (LDOE, 2011)

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The results of the statistical analysis of the data are contained within this chapter. An *ex post facto* design was utilized in this study. The standardized test scores for grades three, four, and five were used after the fact; retroactively as the data for this study. The test score and student performance data are not variables that could be manipulated; thus, the independent variable, the Distinguished Educator, could be observed after the event. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of Distinguished Educators on academic gain of Louisiana Academically Unacceptable schools. Moreover, this study examined whether the English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics scaled scores, as well as, School Performance Scores (SPS) were significant in school which had been assigned a Distinguished Educator. Data were organized by grade and year with scaled scores and school performance scores for analyzing purposes. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize data collected from the sample population. The findings to each of the two research questions are discussed in this chapter. Academically Unacceptable schools will be discussed as schools which are deemed Unacceptable by the Louisiana Department of Education. Academically Unacceptable schools in the state of Louisiana are schools with a School Performance score of sixty or below.

Procedures

The researcher collected the following raw scores:

- Spring, 2008-Spring 2010, *Integrated* Louisiana Educational Assessment

  Program (*i*LEAP) ELA and mathematics scaled scores for grades three and

  five statewide

- Spring, 2008-2010, Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP)

  ELA and mathematics scaled scores for grade four

- School Performance Scores for the years 2008-2010, from randomly

  selected schools within the state of Louisiana

- The scores collected were entered into the Statistical Package for the Social

  Sciences (SPSS) Version 19.0 for Windows.

The first research question was established to determine whether

presence of a Distinguished Educator, which was placed at Academically

Unacceptable schools in Louisiana, made a significant difference in the school

performance score of the schools included in this study. The second research

question was established to determine whether there was a statistically

significant relationship with the placement of a Distinguished Educator in

Academically Unacceptable schools in Louisiana, as it relates to scaled scores in

ELA and mathematics. The independent variable was the Distinguished

Educator, and the dependent variables were the ELA and mathematics scaled

scores from the *i*LEAP and LEAP standardized tests, as well as the school

performance scores assigned to the schools. The results of the data analyses

were organized and guided by the two research questions.

FINDINGS

This study consisted of 139 schools with third-grade data, 149 schools

with fourth- grade data, and 139 schools for fifth grade data. Some schools did

not have complete records, so a listwise deletion was performed.

Grade Three

Research Question 1: Is there a significant relationship between the

level of school improvement in Academically Unacceptable schools and the

assistance provided by the Distinguished Educator?

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between the

levels of school improvement in Academically Unacceptable schools and the

assistance provided by the Distinguished Educator.

Research Question 2: Is there a significant level of growth in scaled

scores for English Language Arts and mathematics in schools which are

assigned a Distinguished Educator and schools who are not in Academically

Unacceptable status?

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no significant level of growth in scaled

scores for English Language Arts and mathematics in schools which are

assigned a Distinguished Educator and schools who are not in Academically

Unacceptable status?

To determine the relationship between Distinguished Educators and

third-grade *i*LEAP scaled scores for ELA, mathematics and school performance

scores were analyzed. Table 4 includes means scores and standard deviation

scores, and displays the descriptive statistics by Distinguished Educator

assignment. Table 5 displays descriptive statistics by year of mean scores and standard

scores by year. In reviewing Table 5, there is a decrease in mean scores, starting with

63 of of 100 year one, 59 out of 100, and then 62 out of 100 the third year. Mean

scores give the percent correct, or the average of the test scores of all respondents

taking the test.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for Third Grade by DE Assignment

DE Assignment		Average iLEAP ELA Scale Score	Average iLEAP Mathematics Scale Score	School Performance Score
DE Not Assigned	Mean	252.75	259.94	63.099
	N	102	102	102
	Std. Deviation	26.706	18.697	11.6835
DE Assigned	Mean	250.76	257.24	59.131
	N	37	37	35
	Std. Deviation	22.566	16.940	8.2491
Total	Mean	252.22	259.22	62.085
	N	139	139	137
	Std. Deviation	25.605	18.224	11.0183

The researcher performed a 2 X 3 factorial multivariate analysis of variance

(MANOVA) where there were two levels of Distinguished Educator assignment and

three years analyzed on the school average iLEAP ELA, iLEAP Mathematics, and SPS

variables. No effect achieved statistical significance (DE by year: $F(6, 258) = 1.387, p$

$= .220$; DE: $F(3, 129) = .680, p = .566$; and year: $F(6, 258) = 1.461, p = .192$). Table 6

shows the final summary table for the factorial MANOVA.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for Third Grade by Year

Year		Average iLEAP ELA Scale Score	Average iLEAP Mathematics Scale Score	School Performance Score
2008	Mean	250.95	254.21	61.547
	N	62	62	60
	Std. Deviation	24.936	16.798	11.9689
2009	Mean	253.41	264.10	62.280
	N	51	51	51
	Std. Deviation	21.909	15.072	9.4753
2010	Mean	252.92	261.62	62.946
	N	26	26	26
	Std. Deviation	33.681	23.953	11.8844
Total	Mean	252.22	259.22	62.085
	N	139	139	137
	Std. Deviation	25.605	18.224	11.0183

Table 6

Third Grade Multivariate Analysis of Variance Summary

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Intercept	Wilks' Lambda	.012	3687.882[a]	3.000	129.00	.000*
DE	Wilks' Lambda	.984	.680[a]	3.000	129.00	.566
YEAR	Wilks' Lambda	.935	1.461[a]	6.000	258.00	.192
DE YEAR	Wilks' Lambda	.938	1.387[a]	6.000	258.00	.220

a. Exact statistic

* Significance

Because no significant effects were observed. it was concluded that

Distinguished Educator assignment, regardless of year, had no effect on the schools

global scores on the three variables. Furthermore, Distinguished Educator assignment

was based on a schools under-performing status, and may be a factor in the under

performing schools closing the school-wide achievement gap. Therefore, the null

hypothesis was accepted. There was no way to differentiate the performance of the

students.

Grade Four

Research Question 1: Is there a significant relationship between the level of

school improvement in Academically Unacceptable schools and the assistance provided

by the Distinguished Educator?

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between the levels of

school improvement in Academically Unacceptable schools and the assistance provided

by the Distinguished Educator.

Research Question 2: Is there a significant level of growth in scaled scores for

English Language Arts and Mathematics in schools which are assigned a

Distinguished Educator and schools who are not in Academically Unacceptable status?

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no significant level of growth in scaled scores for

English Language Arts and Mathematics in schools which are assigned a Distinguished

Educator and schools who are not in Academically Unacceptable status?

To determine the relationship between Distinguished Educators and fourth-

grade LEAP scaled scores for ELA, mathematics, and School Performance Scores. a

descriptive statistics analysis was generated. Because not all schools had complete

records, a listwise deletion was performed. Table 7 includes mean scores and

standard deviation scores, and displays the displays the descriptive statistics by

Distinguished Educator assignment. Table 8 displays descriptive statistics by

year of mean scores and standard scores by year. In reviewing Table 8, the

scores are the same for 2008-2009, however there is a slight increase in 2010 in

mean scores.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for Third Grade by DE Assignment

DE Assignment		Average iLEAP ELA Scale Score	Average iLEAP Mathematics Scale Score	School Performance Score
DE Not Assigned	Mean	287.97	298.34	62.800
	N	103	103	103
	Std. Deviation	23.689	16.435	10.9662
DE Assigned	Mean	275.80	290.98	59.763
	N	46	46	43
	Std. Deviation	24.924	12.986	13.3712
Total	Mean	284.21	296.07	61.905
	N	149	149	146
	Std. Deviation	24.646	15.782	11.7606

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics for Fourth Grade by Year

Year		Average *i*LEAP ELA Scale Score	Average *i*LEAP Mathematics Scale Score	School Performance Score
2008	Mean	287.63	297.68	61.370
	N	63	63	61
	Std. Deviation	16.061	13.180	11.8370
2009	Mean	287.28	293.02	61.275
	N	53	53	52
	Std. Deviation	20.473	18.527	11.6561
2010	Mean	272.76	297.88	63.888
	N	33	33	33
	Std. Deviation	38.138	15.288	11.9259
Total	Mean	284.21	296.07	61.905
	N	149	149	146
	Std. Deviation	24.646	15.782	11.7606

A 2 X 3 factorial multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed where there were two levels of DE assignment and three years analyzed on the school average LEAP ELA, LEAP Mathematics, and SPS variables. Although the interaction effect was not significant ($F(6, 276) = 0.811, p = .562$), both main effects achieved statistical significance (DE: $F(3, 138) = 3.559, p = .016, \eta^2_{partial} = .072$; and year: $F(6, 276) = 3.089, p = .006, \eta^2_{partial} = .063$). Table 9 shows the final summary table for the factorial MANOVA.

Table 9

Fourth Grade Multivariate Analysis of Variance Summary

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Intercept	Wilks' Lambda	.003	13337.073[a]	3.000	138.000	.997
DE	Wilks' Lambda	.928	3.559[a]	3.000	138.000	.016
YEAR	Wilks' Lambda	.878	3.089[a]	6.000	276.000	.006
DE YEAR	Wilks' Lambda	.966	.811	6.000	276.000	.562

a.   Exact statistic

A univariate Scheffé post hoc analysis for the year variable was performed. Average LEAP ELA scale scores were significantly different between 2010 and both 2009 ($p = .027$; 95% CI [-27.58, -1.33]) and 2008 ($p = .020$; 95% CI [-27.39, -1.91]) with 2010 showing lower LEAP ELA scale scores. The researcher then conducted independent samples t-tests with Bonferroni adjustments ($\alpha = \cdot{^{05}/_3} \cong .016$) on all dependent variables, using DE assignment as a grouping variable. Average LEAP ELA scale scores were significantly different between Distinguished Educator Assignment groups, $t(147) = 2.850, p = .005$. Average LEAP mathematics scale scores were also significantly different between DE Assignment groups, $t(147) = 2.685, p = .008$, however, there was no significant difference among groups on the SPS variable. Schools that were assigned Distinguished Educators outperformed schools without a DE Assignment in both significant cases. Therefore, the researcher concluded that

there is an interaction between LEAP ELA, and LEAP mathematics and the SPS by year. The researcher accepts the hypothesis that there is a significant difference in the Distinguished Educator schools and non-Distinguished Educator schools, but the null hypothesis is accepted as it relates to the school performance scores.

Grade Five

Research Question 1: Is there a significant relationship between the level of school improvement in Academically Unacceptable schools and the assistance provided by the Distinguished Educator?

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between the levels of school improvement in Academically Unacceptable schools and the assistance provided by the Distinguished Educator.

Research Question 2: Is there a significant level of growth in scaled scores for English Language Arts and Mathematics in schools which are assigned a Distinguished Educator and schools who are not in Academically Unacceptable status?

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no significant level of growth in scaled scores for English Language Arts and Mathematics in schools which are assigned a Distinguished Educator and schools who are not in Academically Unacceptable status?

To determine the relationship between Distinguished Educators and fifth grade *i*LEAP scaled scores for ELA, mathematics, and school performance scores. an analysis was conducted. Because not all schools had

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complete records, a listwise deletion was performed. Table 10 includes mean scores

and standard deviation scores, and displays the descriptive statistics by Distinguished

Educator assignment. Table 11 displays descriptive statistics by year for mean scores

and standard scores. In reviewing Table 11, there is virtually no change in school

performance scores over the three-year period identified.

Table 10

Descriptive Statistics for Fifth Grade by DE Assignment

DE Assignment		Average iLEAP ELA Scale Score	Average iLEAP Mathematics Scale Score	School Performance Score
DE Not Assigned	Mean	266.03	266.36	62.357576
	N	102	102	99
	Std. Deviation	22.528	13.770	12.4407993
DE Assigned	Mean	263.76	256.95	59.594595
	N	37	37	37
	Std. Deviation	15.294	22.038	9.9173794
Total	Mean	265.42	263.86	61.605882
	N	139	139	136
	Std. Deviation	20.820	16.820	11.8365959

Table 11

Descriptive Statistics for Fifth Grade by Year

Year		Average iLEAP ELA Scale Score	Average iLEAP Mathematics Scale Score	School Performance Score
2008	Mean	263.85	297.68	61.370
	N	61	61	58
	Std. Deviation	24.139	18.205	12.1342715
2009	Mean	265.63	264.04	61.247059
	N	51	51	51
	Std. Deviation	16.475	16.163	11.7703586
2010	Mean	268.59	269.44	62.800000
	N	27	27	27
	Std. Deviation	20.438	13.631	11.6783495
Total	Mean	265.42	263.86	61.605882
	N	139	139	136
	Std. Deviation	20.820	16.820	11.8365959

A 2 X 3 factorial multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed where there were two levels of DE assignment and three years analyzed on the school average iLEAP ELA, iLEAP Mathematics, and SPS variables. No effects achieved statistical significance (DE by year: $F(6, 256)$ = 1.883, p = .084; DE: $F(3, 128)$ = .439, p = .725; and year: $F(6, 256)$ = 2.036, p = .061). Table 12 shows the final summary table for the factorial MANOVA. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted. There was no way to differentiate the performance of the students.

Table 12

Fifth Grade Multivariate Analysis of Variance Summary Table

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Intercept	Wilks' Lambda	.008	5596.043[a]	3.000	128.000	.000
DE	Wilks' Lambda	.990	.439[a]	3.000	128.000	.725
YEAR	Wilks' Lambda	.911	2.036[a]	6.000	256.000	.061
DE YEAR	Wilks' Lambda	.917	1.883[a]	6.000	256.000	.084

a. Exact statistic

Because no significant effects were observed, the researcher concluded that

Distinguished Educator assignment, regardless of year, had no effect on the global scores

of the school on any of the three variables. Furthermore, DE assignment was based on a

schools under-performing status, and may be a factor in the under-performing schools

closing the school-wide achievement gap. The null hypothesis was accepted.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS,
AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was designed to examine the effect of Distinguished Educators on

academic gain of Louisiana Academically Unacceptable schools. The researcher

hypothesized that there would be significance, as it relates to scaled scores in ELA and

mathematics and school performance scores, in schools that are assigned a

Distinguished Educator. The data were generated from the testing bank of the

Louisiana Department of Education. This chapter provides discussion of the results,

conclusions, limitations and implications, of the data collected in relation to the

following research questions that framed this study:

1. Is there a significant relationship between the level of school improvement in

   Academically Unacceptable schools and the assistance provided by the

   Distinguished Educator?

2. Is there a significant level of growth in scaled scores for English/Language Arts

   and Mathematics in schools which are assigned a Distinguished Educator and

   schools who are not in Academically Unacceptable status?

Summary

The researcher performed 2 X 3 MANOVAs to investigate the effects of

Distinguished Educator assignment and year (i.e., cohort) on average school scores on

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the iLEAP ELA, iLEAP mathematics, and School Performance Score for third and fifth

grades, In addition to LEAP scores for ELA and mathematics, and School Performance

Scores for the fourth grade, the results of the analyses indicated that there was neither

an interaction nor a main effect of either dependent variable (Distinguished Educator

assignment and year) on the dependent variables in grades three and five. Therefore.

the researcher concluded that there was no appreciable difference between cohorts or

Distinguished Educator assignment in grades three and five on any of the measures. In

essence, schools with a Distinguished Educator assignment and no Distinguished

Educator assignment performed equally well on the iLEAP tests and School

Performance Scores, regardless of the year.

The analysis of fourth grade revealed significant Distinguished Educator

assignment and year, or cohort, effects. The subsequent post hoc analysis revealed

schools with DE assignments outperformed the other schools on the LEAP ELA and

Mathematics assessments across years by roughly half of a standard deviation in both

LEAP assessments. In addition, average fourth-grade LEAP ELA scores were between 1

and 28 points lower in 2010 than those recorded in 2008 or 2009. The analyses detected

no impact beyond chance of Distinguished Educator assignment or year on the School

Performance Scores for any of the three analyses.

Conclusions

This study utilized the *ex post facto* correlation analysis design by examining

iLEAP, LEAP and School Performance Scores of Louisiana Academically Unacceptable

schools for the school sessions 2008-2010. This design allowed the researcher to infer

connections and correlations between the variables of English Language Arts and mathematics subject areas. The standardized score data were utilized in this study.

As shown in this study, Distinguished Educators did not pose a significant effect, regardless of year during the 2008-2010 school sessions. Distinguished Educators were placed in schools that were performing at the lowest level of low-performing schools. Data suggest that this factor were not beneficial to all Academically Unacceptable schools in the state. Based on the analysis of the results referred to earlier in this chapter, the amount of gain was not significant.

Increased positive collaboration within schools, between struggling schools, and between struggling schools and the state, may prove to provide insight as to how to continue to work towards increasing the number of high achieving schools in the state of Louisiana. Another reality is that many of these schools are in poor areas of Louisiana and have many variables that contribute to student underachievement. Struggling readers continue to contribute to the lack success in many schools. One of the goals of the educators in Louisiana is to ensure that all students are proficient in reading by the end of third grade (LDOE, 2010). In an effort for Louisiana education officials to make this goal a reality, proper assistance will be needed on the school level.

Monetary funding and human resource cuts have all been a part of the budget restraints in Louisiana school systems and districts. Limitations on specialty area interventionists and staff members across the board have caused added stressors to the schools who so need extra supports to improve. Administrators and all educators should be aware of the influences that they possess, as it relates to student achievement of the students within their schools.

Recommendations for Further Research

The results of this study provided evidence that there is not a significant relationship in student scaled scores or school performance scores when a Distinguished Educator is placed at a Academically Unacceptable school in Louisiana. To ensure the effectiveness of Distinguished Educator placement, as well as, stationery school personnel teams, all stakeholders should receive continuous, intensive professional development in instructional delivery, assessing the data that drives the instruction, and school improvement efforts that are based on individual school needs assessments.

The following recommendations for further research are offered based on the results of this study and the review of literature:

1. Further research should extend to specifically identify individual Distinguished Educators who have three or more years in the position. The Distinguished Educators should be assigned to the same school for a three year period to provide consistency in service to schools.

2. If a qualitative component was added to this study, principal and teacher perceptions of the Distinguished Educator program could be analyzed and the data could be collected in the form of a questionnaire.

3. Further investigations should examine the years of experience of the school leader in the schools that are assigned a Distinguished Educator, to analyze possible correlations of school leader experience and the presence of a Distinguished Educator as it relates to school performance.

4. The current study was limited to students in elementary school settings. Additional research which includes students from elementary, middle, and

secondary schools in Louisiana could be undertaken to test the findings of Distinguished Educator effectiveness at all grade levels in the Louisiana school system.

As this approach to school improvement is still prominent in the state of Louisiana, it is my hope that future researchers will add to this research body and conduct additional research as to the effectiveness of the Distinguished Educator concept.

APPENDIX A

PERMISSION TO RECEIVE TEST DATA

PERMISSION TO RECEIVE TEST SCORES AND TREND DATA

6814 Santa Monica Drive

Shreveport, LA 71119

September 12, 2011

Scott Norton, Assistant Superintendent

Louisiana Department of Education

Division of School and District Performance

1201 North 3rd Street

Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Mr. Norton:

My name is Ruby C. Scroggins. I am a doctoral candidate at Louisiana Tech University. I am currently working on my dissertation proposal. The current title of my study is *The Effect of Distinguished Educators on Academic Gain of Low Performing Schools in Louisiana.*

I would like to investigate the test scores of low performing schools who are assigned a Distinguished Educator, as well as low performing schools who are not assigned a Distinguished Educator. In order to conduct this study, I am requesting trend data and test scores from 50 schools across the state within the past 3 years. My institution will not allow me to identify any schools in my dissertation; however, I am also requesting that the sites be identified. This will allow me to look up school performance scores in order to compare the growth of the identified schools for this study. Additionally, I would also need any reliability or validity information that is available.

Thank you so much for your assistance.

Sincerely
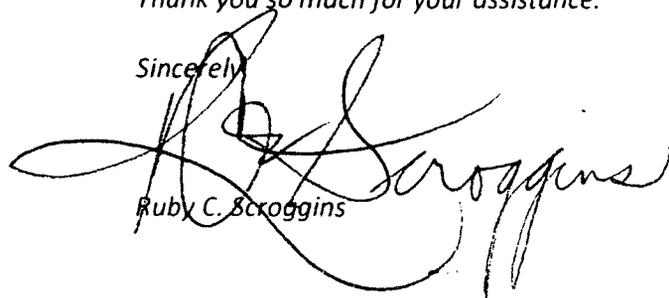
Ruby C. Scroggins

APPENDIX B

JOB DESCRIPTION FOR DISTINGUISHED EDUCATOR

Office of Student and School Performance

Distinguished Educator Program

> Mission of the Distinguished Educator Program:
>
> Provide on-site technical assistance to districts and schools so that low performing schools may reach and surpass their Growth Targets.

Goals:

- Build capacity of district and school level leadership (including teacher leaders) to sustain growth in student achievement.
- Teach and utilize data analysis and interpretation to facilitate data-driven decision making for school improvement.
- Build relationships with the school community, and encourage collaboration and team effort.
- Assist the administration in establishing a positive school culture of high expectations for all.
- Assist the administration in creating a plan of support for students who are not meeting academic success.
- Promote a school-wide professional development plan to include initial, follow-up and job-embedded activities.
- Strengthen curriculum, instructional, and assessment practices.
- Assist the School Improvement Team with writing and implementing the School Improvement Plan.
- Assist the school in encouraging involvement and ownership of all stakeholders to strengthen collective responsibility.

Responsibilities

The individual serving as a Distinguished Educator shall share his/her skills and expertise with districts and schools that are striving to improve student achievement. This includes providing comprehensive on-site assistance to bring about positive educational change in low achieving schools.

Distinguished Educators may perform (but are not limited to) the following duties:

- Model effective instructional leadership strategies
- Assist district and school personnel in improving student achievement as measured by state assessments
- Instruct district/school staff in collecting, analyzing, and interpreting school data reports
- Instruct district/school staff in the most effective use of its resources
- Facilitate the development and implementation of a school curriculum that aligns with Grade-Level Expectations (GLEs) and Louisiana's Comprehensive Curriculum
- Monitor, assess and provide follow-up for teaching and learning in the classroom
- Facilitate the implementation of a Response-to-Intervention model to address struggling students
- Facilitate the implementation of the school-wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support model
- Promote and support professional learning communities among the school staff
- Improve communications and involvement among and between students, staff, parents, and the community
- Network and share information with district personnel, Regional Service Center staff, Louisiana Department of Education staff, and other Distinguished Educators
- Attend school improvement team meetings and parent/community involvement meetings at the assigned school
- Make recommendations to principal, local superintendent and school board to improve student achievement

Distinguished Educator Program Framework

A. Placement of the Distinguished Educator

1. Placement of the Distinguished Educator is made after the Department has prepared and released School Performance Scores.
2. Placement of a Distinguished Educator in a school is determined by:
   a. SPS of the school
   b. number of years the school has been underperforming
   c. geographic equity of distribution of Distinguished Educators
   d. LEA agreement to enter into the Distinguished Educator Memorandum of Understanding with the LDOE.
3. Additionally,
   a. The DE will not be placed in the LEA from which the DE is on a leave of absence. (It is critical the DE be viewed as an external consultant)
   b. In placing the DE, the needs of the Department takes priority. The DE may be moved in accordance with the needs of the Department and the schools it serves.
   c. The DE will be placed within his/her home region (RESC) if possible.
   d. The DE will be placed as near his/her home region if the home region is not possible.
   e. The Distinguished Educator Program is a service program of the entire state. The DE may expect to be displaced from home during the DE tenure.

B. The Process of work with schools and districts to assist low-performing schools

1. Take Stock- Using Data to identify needs and create a vision
2. Focus on the Solution- Creating Conditions and Planning Change (Ready)
3. Take Collective Action and Build Capacity (Fire)
4. Monitor and Adjust- Implementing change (Aim)

5. Maintain Momentum- Sustaining change

Maintain Momentum | Take Stock | Focus on the Solution | Talke Collective Action
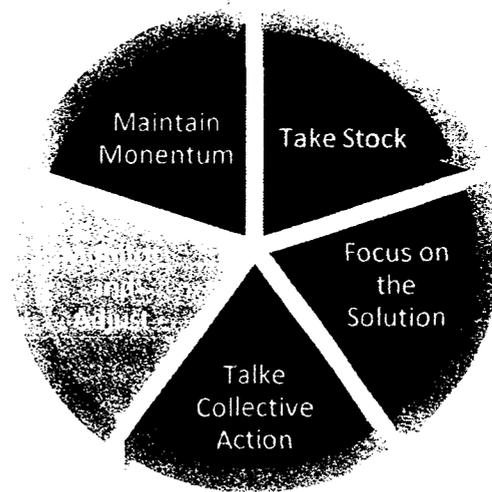
C. Steps in the Process of assisting low-performing schools

1. **Take Stock.** This includes helping the school examine the structures, processes, and attitudes that are in place for school improvement and use data to assess strengths, prioritize needs, and establish goals. These may be done formally, informally, or with the use of outside consultants. Taking stock would include the following:

    a. Establish a leadership team to accomplish school improvement goals
    b. Assess the readiness to change- determine the extent of the shared sense of urgency or recognition to change and how to address this.
    c. Identify the real needs of the school. Using quantitative and qualitative data, identify the strengths, prioritize the needs, and establish the goals for improvement. Thoughtful analysis involves digging deep.
    d. Creating a vision for success.

2. **Focus on the right solution.** Having the right focus is the key to success.

    a. Assist the school in using research to identify solutions, and identifying specific improvement strategies. Use the data of the school to focus on only one or two strategies for improvement at a time.
    b. Be proactive. Anticipate implications of change and the resistance to change, but always keep student learning the focus.
    c. Assist in developing a system to monitor progress.

3. **Take Collective Action and Build Capacity.** This occurs on two levels:

    a. Leadership monitors that the people in the school take action on the plan.
    b. Leadership ensures that the actions have impact on the current practices and student learning. Help is provided for those faculty and staff having difficulty with implementation. The DE will provide assistance to the

principal, central office staff, leadership team, and individual teacher in capacity building efforts in areas that include:

    i. Data analysis
    ii. RtI
    iii. PBS
    iv. Formative Assessment
    v. LCC/Literacy Strategies
    vi. Assessments
    vii. Best Strategies
    viii. Instructional Practices
    ix. Classroom Management
    x. Use of state resources

c. Leadership is responsible for implementation of the school improvement plan. Every stakeholder must know what, how, why, and when an action is to take place.

4. **Monitor and Adjust.** Data sources are used to tell if actions are working and how well.
   a. Because implementation is the key, monitoring progress is essential.
   b. Data that will be used for monitoring include:
      i. Lesson plans
      ii. Observations and walk through data
      iii. Formative assessment
      iv. **RtI benchmark and progress monitoring data**
      v. **PBS**
      vi. EAGLE
      vii. Interval Practice tests
      viii. Other GLE mastery tests
   c. DE data collection.
      i. The DE will meet weekly with the principal to discuss data, the action plan, progress and needs.
      ii. The DE will prepare a Monthly Report based on evidence in the school, which will be presented to the principal. Together the DE and principal will draft activities to address the needs of the school based on the evidence collected and discussed. SEE Appendix 1.
      iii. The DE Monthly Report will be presented to the DE District Liaison and the DE office for review.
      iv. The DE Monthly Report will be sent to RSD-LA for schools that are on MOU/MA (Memorandum of Understanding/ Management Agreement) with the RSD.
   d. Progress of the School is monitored through the Progress Monitoring Report, a tracking system of the monthly rating of the DE Monthly Report. SEE Appendix 2.

5. **Maintain Momentum.**
   a. The leadership team identifies strategies to stay the course.
      i. The leadership team will meet monthly to review the School Improvement Plan, make adjustment to the implementation of activities, and to discuss needs of the school and action necessary.
   b. Cycle back and identify new opportunities for improvement based on data.

D. **Removal of the Distinguished Educator from the School**
   1. The Distinguished Educator shall be removed from the school under the following conditions when the school is on a BESE MOU/MA:
      a. When the school exits AUS status and the school chooses to be released from the MOU/MA

    b. When the district chooses to opt out of the services of the DE offered for the school

    c. When the school shows LIMITED or NO growth in the RSD Progress Monitoring after one (1) school year of monitoring. The lack of responsiveness to the DE reports, RSD reports, Quarterly Monitoring reports and visits, RSD visits, and other RSD supports, resulting in limited or no growth, as determined by the RSD administration.

2. The Distinguished Educator shall be removed from the school under the following conditions when the school is Not on a BESE MOU/MA:

    a. When the school exits AUS status

    b. When the district chooses to opt out of the services of the DE offered for the school

    c. When the school shows LIMITED or NO growth in the monthly ratings of the activities of the SIP as shown in the Progress Monitoring of the DE Monthly Reports. This shall be determined after six (6) months of monitoring a school.

3. In the event that a Distinguished Educator is removed from a school, he/she shall be placed into another school eligible for services in accordance with Section A of the Distinguished Educator Framework.

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(Currently as Notice of Intent)

Title 28
EDUCATION
Part LXXXIII. Bulletin 111--The Louisiana School, District, and State Accountability System

Chapter 50. Distinguished Educator Program

§5001. Definition of a Distinguished Educator

A. The Distinguished Educator Program is part of the school and district accountability program established pursuant to R.S. 17:10.1.

1. Distinguished Educators shall provide technical assistance in low performing schools determined to be in need of corrective action or otherwise in need of technical assistance pursuant to the school and district accountability program.

2. Distinguished Educators will be provided to low performing schools by the LDOE, as available.

3. Placement of a Distinguished Educator in a school is determined by:

   a. SPS of the school

   b. number of years the school has been underperforming

   c. geographic equity of distribution of Distinguished Educators

   d. LEA agreement to enter into the Distinguished Educator Memorandum of Understanding with the LDOE.

4. Distinguished Educators may be provided to a school for which BESE has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU/MA) with a school district.

5. The LDOE will enter into Memorandum of Understanding (as required by R.S. 17:10.1) with the LEA for the services of a Distinguished Educator.

6. The Distinguished Educator will have access to student, school, and district records as is necessary to facilitate the school improvement process at the assigned school.

7. Distinguished Educators are hired as temporary unclassified employees of the Louisiana Department of Education for the term of service. The terms, conditions, benefits, compensation, and all other employment issues regarding the Distinguished Educator are to be determined by the Department of Education.

§5003. Role of the Distinguished Educator

A. The Distinguished Educator will communicate regularly, both verbally and in writing with both the school principal and the district superintendent or designee (liaison) to facilitate the school improvement process at the assigned school.

B. To facilitate school improvement, the Distinguished Educator will:

1. Model effective instructional and leadership strategies.

2. Analyze school data with staff and help the staff utilize the data for school improvement planning and program implementation.

3. Deliver professional development to school staff.

4. Promote and support professional learning communities among the school staff.

5. Monitor, assess and assist teaching and learning in the classroom.

6. Mentor and coach individual teachers over a significant period of time to improve academic outcomes with students.

7. Facilitate the implementation of a school curriculum that aligns with the Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) and Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum.

8. Assist school staff in improving student achievement as measured by formative and summative assessments.

9. Assist the principal and central office to examine how school funds are expended and make suggestions on how to better utilize these funds to align with the SIP and focus on student achievement.

10. Make recommendations to the local superintendent and school board on behalf of the school.

11. Promote improved communications and involvement among and between students, staff, parents, and the community.

12. Participate in school improvement activities and parent/community involvement meetings at an assigned school.

13. The Distinguished Educator shall submit a written monthly report of school improvement implementation or non-implementation, and recommendations to the Louisiana Department of Education and the district superintendent or designee (liaison). The Distinguished Educator Monthly Reports are available for BESE review for all schools or for any specific school, on request.

14. The Distinguished Educator serves in an advisory capacity to the school principal and staff as well as the district staff.

VITA

Ruby Cassandra Coleman Scroggins was born on May 1, 1962, in Shreveport, Louisiana, to Lee Aaron, and Elizabeth Davis Coleman. She attended Caddo Parish Schools for all of her formative educational years. After graduating from Booker T. Washington High School in Shreveport, she enrolled in Louisiana Tech University where she pursued a degree in Special Education.

Ruby began her teaching career at Queensborough Elementary in Shreveport, Louisiana, as a special education teacher. Ten years later, she was assigned to the Interim Alternative Educational Setting (IAES) as a teacher/liaison for special needs students at the Special Education Center. After three years, Ruby became a school guidance counselor in 2000, and worked in that capacity for many years before moving to the position of Assistant Principal of Instruction on the middle school level.

Ruby has presented at numerous national, state, and regional conventions on such issues as: Single Gender Classroom, Black Boys in Urban Schools, Differentiated Instruction, and Classroom Management. In the fall of 2006, Ruby began her pursuit of a doctorate in Educational Leadership through the Louisiana Education Consortium.

Currently, Ruby is serving as principal of Mrs. Eddie Jones West Shreveport Elementary School in Shreveport, Louisiana. She is married to Jerome Scroggins, a real estate broker, in Shreveport, Louisiana. Jerome and Ruby are the proud parents of Jeromey and James.

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