The Impact of a State Assistance Team on One Low-Performing High School: Implications for Instructional Leadership

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ABSTRACT
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The Impact of a State Assistance Team on One Low-Performing High School:
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(Under the direction of Dr. Linda C. Tillman)

The requirements of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and making Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) have created accountability for the schools in a way that is new for many schools. High schools that do not make AYP or in some cases meet the state standards are labeled as low-performing and must improve or face some type of sanctions. In order to turn around the low-performing schools, states have created interventions. North Carolina utilizes technical assistance teams to improve low-performing schools.

This study investigated the impact of a state assistance team on one high school labeled low-performing in North Carolina. The researcher utilized Ronald Edmonds and Lawrence Lezotte's Seven Correlates of Effective Schools to categorize areas that needed to improve at the low-performing high school. State assistance teams are familiar with the correlates and target those areas when assisting schools write school improvement plans and implementing strategies for overall school improvement. The researcher also investigated the impact the team had on student achievement and pedagogical practice.

This study utilized a mixed methods approach to collect data. Teachers completed a survey that asked about the team's impact in the areas identified by the correlates. Ten teachers and one principal were then interviewed about the impact of team on pedagogical practices, student achievement, and the areas identified by the correlates. The researcher analyzed the data and compared the survey data with the interview data.

This study found the impact of the team on pedagogical practice was moderate and the impact on student achievement was less than moderate. The impact on the areas identified by the correlates varied from each correlate. The lowest impact came in the area of Positive Home School Relations. The highest impact was in the area of Leadership and Student Time on Task. The principal felt their leadership was improved with working in a positive manner with the assistance team. The findings of this study generated a list of strategies and suggestions that were the most effective in assisting teachers improve their pedagogical practices. These strategies may be utilized to improve instruction at schools that are similar to the research site.

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INTRODUCTION

Through paradigm shifts in pedagogical practices, education has evolved over the last century. For example, the way teachers approach teaching and deliver information has changed from the one room schoolhouse with the lone teacher to the teacher being able to conduct a class from another part of the world, via the internet. While educational approaches have changed, the purpose of education essentially remains the same. David Labaree (1997) discusses three different purposes of education. They are (a) democratic equality; (b) social efficiency; and (c) social mobility. Democratic equality can be described as schools preparing citizens to participate in a democratic society. When schools concentrate on training workers, the purpose of school can be classified as social efficiency. Schools that train individuals to compete for social positions are engaging in social mobility. While those purposes of education are different, schools ultimately try to achieve all three. The purposes, however, are not easily measured and the stakeholders, mainly taxpayers, have called for more measurable goals.

While the purposes of education may be debated, the expectation that schools must be held more accountable for student achievement has ascended to the forefront of public attention. In the early 1980's when a *Nation at Risk* was published, public perception of education began to shift from trust in schools to more accountability. State governments as

well as the federal government began to become more involved in educational issues: the curriculum, pedagogical practices, and standardized tests. Some states like North Carolina began to develop and implement accountability models to hold schools accountable for meeting a set of academic standards.

In 1995 the North Carolina State Board of Education released the ABC's of Public Education, eventually becoming the Excellent Schools Act. The purpose of the ABC's program was and is to "ensure that all students are learning and showing continuous improvement" (NCDPI, 1999, p. 3). The A is for accountability. Each school is responsible for making sure each student shows growth on state tests that are given at the end of the year in grades three through eight in reading and math, and in the following subject areas at the high school level: Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, U.S. History, Civics and Economics, Biology, Physical Science, Physics, Chemistry, English I, and English II. The B is for basics. Schools must focus on reading, writing, and mathematics. When students have a strong understanding of the basics, success is almost certain in other areas. The C is for control. Under the ABC plan, schools must follow the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and administer the state tests. Administrators and teachers have the responsibility of preparing students to meet the goals established by the ABC's of North Carolina.

Under state law, North Carolina schools have been held accountable for standardized test scores for almost ten years. It was not until the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 that the federal government began to hold schools that were receiving federal monies accountable for students' performance on standardized tests, specifically Title I schools. While states are allowed to determine which schools must meet the NCLB requirement, some

states like North Carolina, have mandated that all schools meet the requirements of NCLB as well as the state's own standards.

The North Carolina State Board of Education has mandated that every public school meet Annual Yearly Progress and show growth according to the Excellent Schools Act (1997). Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) can be met when a certain percentage of students score proficient levels on the standardized test given by the state, the End-of-Grade and End-of-Course tests in North Carolina. The target percentage that schools must meet has risen every two years since the passage of NCLB in an effort to reach the goal of 100% of students being on grade level or proficient by the end of the 2013/2014 school year (Mintrop, 2004a). The Excellent Schools Act holds individual schools accountable for student achievement on the state End-of-Grade and End-of-Course tests (Farris, 1999). To meet the expected growth according to the Excellent Schools Act, schools must show a higher percentage of proficient students on the EOGs and EOCs according to the formula created by the Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI, 2001). For example, a student's score on the eighth grade reading EOC has an impact on what that student should score on the Biology EOC in high school to be considered proficient in Biology (NCDPI, 2001). In North Carolina the litmus test for success is the standardized tests created by the state.

As a part of North Carolina's ABC plan, teachers can earn monies for meeting and exceeding the goals set by the state on the EOGs and EOCs. The monetary reward serves as a motivator for teachers and administrators to improve student achievement on the tests (Mintrop, 2004b). Schools that do not meet state goals on the EOGs and EOCs are labeled low-performing. The purpose of the low-performing label is to put pressure on schools to improve student achievement. The State Board defines a school as low performing when the

school has less than 50% of the students at or above grade level. General Statute 115c.105-37a defines a low-performing school as "a school that has received a state-mandated assistance team and has been designated by the State Board as low-performing for at least two of three consecutive years" (Brinson, 2004, p. 18). No Child Left Behind mandates that states have a plan in place to assist the schools that are labeled low-performing. North Carolina enacted legislation in 1996 that required state assistance teams to work with low-performing schools. Elementary and middle schools were assigned teams beginning in 1997, and high schools were assigned assistance teams in 1999. The legislation, which mandates the assignment of the teams, requires the teams to (1) review and investigate all facets of school operations and student performance; (2) evaluate all school personal at least twice a year; (3) collaborate with central office, school staff, and boards of education to alleviate problems and improve student performance; (4) make recommendations as the school develops a school improvement plan; (5) review school progress; and (6) make reports to State Board (NCDPI, 2001).

Once the results from the EOGs and EOCs are reported, the schools that have been labeled low-performing for two of three consecutive years are assigned state assistance teams. Teams remain in the schools for the entire school year working closely with teachers and administration to improve student achievement (NCDPI, 2001). According to the Operational Guidelines of Assistance Teams (2005),

> Mandated teams assigned to a school work closely with the school and central office personnel to provide consistent, on-site technical support. This includes assisting designated schools in
>
> - Improving the academic performance of all students, with a focus on students at Levels I and II;
> - building capacity in the school;
> - providing on-going professional development;
> - conducting a needs assessment; and

- developing a plan of work to address the school's needs during the remainder of the year and the subsequent year. (p. 6)

Schools in North Carolina operate under the ABC's of North Carolina and the mandates of No Child Left Behind. Assistance teams are North Carolina's strategy for improving schools that are not meeting the expected growth according to the ABC's and also not meeting Annual Yearly Progress according to NCLB. Turning around schools, particularly high schools, labeled as low-performing has become a major educational issue in North Carolina. Judge Howard Manning is the North Carolina Superior Court judge who was selected to implement the North Carolina Supreme Court's funding equity decision involving the Leandro case in low-performing schools in North Carolina. The Leandro case was a law suit filed by five low wealth and six urban districts in North Carolina. North Carolina and the State Board of Education were named as the defendants because the low wealth districts believed the state did not provide adequate funding to the districts to provide a quality education. The North Carolina Supreme Court ruled in 1997 that the state constitution guarantees every child of this state an opportunity to receive a sound basic education in the public schools (Leandro v North Carolina). After many appeals the Court reaffirmed the landmark ruling in 2004 and empowered trial judges to implement the Court's decision. In a letter to the North Carolina State School Superintendent dated March 3, 2006, Judge Manning wrote,

> This letter is to put you on notice that in the event the 2005-2006 ABC's performance composite for any of the 44 priority high schools is at 55%, or below, and that particular high schools performance composite scores for the previous four (4) years are also at 55%, or below, then in such an event that high school will not be allowed to open in the fall of 2006. (p. 16)

Judge Manning goes on to discuss how targeted schools must have new management in place and a plan approved by the State Board of Education in order to remain operational beyond

the 2006 school year. Judge Manning's letter indicates that North Carolina is one of many states where there is growing concern about the ineffectiveness of high schools.

Purpose of Study

North Carolina has utilized technical assistance teams to turn around low-performing schools for almost ten years. North Carolina's teams are designed around Lawrence Lezotte's and Ronald Edmonds seven correlates of effective schools. The teams use the seven correlates to frame the school improvement plan for low-performing schools. However, there is very little research that suggests what impact the work of state assistance teams has had on low-performing schools. The purpose of this research was to investigate the impact of a state assistance team on one low-performing high school in North Carolina.

Major Research Question

The major research question for this study is: How did the work of a state assistance team impact the areas as identified by the Seven Correlates of Effective Schools, teacher pedagogical practices, and student achievement at one low-performing high school?

Research Questions

1. In what ways did the work of the state assistance team embody the seven correlates of effective schools?
2. In what ways did the work of the state assistance team impact pedagogical practice?
3. In what ways did the work of the state assistance team impact student achievement?

Definition of Terms

ABCs of North Carolina: Officially the Effective Schools Act. A plan to reorganize public education in North Carolina; the A stands for accountability. The B is for the basics of the ABCs. The basics of reading, writing, and mathematics are measured in the state assessments and are the indicators in the accountability model. The C of the ABCs is for local control and means local school districts have the flexibility to make decisions that was formerly made at the state level.

Achievement Levels: Four levels of performance on the EOGs and EOCs.

(1) Level I – Students performing at this level do not have sufficient mastery of knowledge and skills in the subject.

(2) Level II – Students performing at this level demonstrate inconsistent mastery of knowledge and skills in the tested area.

(3) Level III – Students performing at this level consistently demonstrate mastery of grade level subject area.

(4) Level IV – Students performing at this level consistently perform in a superior manner clearly beyond that required to be proficient.

Annual Yearly Progress: The achievement level set by the state standards and NCLB that all students must reach per year.

Assistance Teams: Teams of three to five educators assigned by the North Carolina State Board of Education to work with individual schools designated as low-performing to help implement school improvement plans to further student achievement. Teachers and administrators throughout the state may apply to serve on an assistance team. The overriding

role of the assistance teams is to help schools improve student achievement. The teams identify deficiencies and assist with goal setting.

End-of-Course Test: North Carolina law requires high schools to administer end-of-course tests in Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, English I, English II, Biology, Chemistry, Physical Science, Physics, United States History, and Civics and Economics. Students and schools must achieve the expected growth in a subject which is determined by a mathematical calculation completed by the North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction.

End-of-Grade Tests: Multiple choice tests that measure the achievement of curricular objectives described in the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. EOGs are administered to all students in grades three through eight in reading and math within the final three weeks of school.

Exemplary Growth Gains: A benchmark set annually to measure a school's progress in improving students' academic achievement at or above the statewide average growth. The standard is also used in conjunction with the performance standard to identify schools that qualify for recognition and assistance.

Expected Growth Gains Composite: The amount of growth that a school is reasonably expected to make over an academic year. This growth is different for every school and is based on (1) the school's previous performance; (2) statewide average growth; and (3) a statistical adjustment, which is needed whenever test scores of students from one year to the next are compared.

Instructional Leadership: Relates to how principals improve teaching and learning.

Intervention: An extraneous feature or circumstance. The State Assistance Teams are the North Carolina State Board of Education's intervention assigned to schools that fail to meet

minimum growth standards, and are further identified as low-performing. Intervention may involve a more directive approach from the team, including recommendations to dismiss or demote personnel in order to help improve student performance.

Low-Performing Schools: Criteria for identifying a school as low-performing are (a) 50% or more of the students tested are not performing at grade level or making level III or IV on the EOCs or EOGs; (b) the school's growth rate is below its expected rate so that the school has declined over a three year period; or (c) the school has not made AYP for two consecutive years.

No Child Left Behind Act 2001 (NCLB): The federal mandate that all schools receiving Title I funds meet certain criteria. States have to develop an accountability model to measure student performance and all students have to be at or above grade level by the year 2014.

North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS): Standard curriculum for schools in North Carolina; a framework of goals and objectives, which outlines the content that should be covered for each subject at each grade level.

Performance Standard (Composite): The percent of students in a school at or above grade level. The performance standard is used in conjunction with the growth standard to identify schools that qualify for recognition and assistance. Schools with more than half of their students performing below grade level and whose growth is lower than the expected growth will be targeted for intervention.

School Improvement: A systematic sustained effort aimed at change in learning conditions and other related internal conditions in one or more schools with the ultimate aim of accomplishing educational goals more effectively.

School Improvement Plan: The written school-level plan that includes strategies for improving student performance taking into account the annual performance goals for the school set by the State Board of Education, how and when improvements will be implemented, use of state funds, requests for waivers, etc. Each school improvement plan must be in effect for no more than three years but may be amended as often as necessary or appropriate.

Summary

North Carolina has utilized an accountability model since 1997. The fact that the federal government has placed mandates on states to measure student achievement and have a plan in place to assist schools that are not meeting state standards places more pressure on school leaders. High schools in particular have become the focus of political debate and school reform. Teachers and instructional leaders will continue to be measured based on student performance. Therefore, the goal of all schools is to become effective and achieve expected academic goals. This study was an investigation of one school's effort to raise student achievement and improve teacher pedagogical practices with the help of a mandated state assistance team.

The next chapter will review literature related to a historical look at accountability, low-performing schools, and state assistance teams.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Education has evolved in many ways in the last century. In the early part of the 20th century schools were charged with educating citizens to meet the needs of a growing nation. The responsibility for producing the skilled laborers fell on public schools. The responsibility to cultivate productive citizens for the betterment of society has not changed, but what shapes the process has changed tremendously, especially over the last twenty-five years. Additionally, schools are now being held more accountable to its stakeholders.

The accountability movement has moved rapidly through the educational arena and schools are expected to produce students ready for work and or ready for college that score high on standardized tests. These accountability measures have created an educational environment where some schools will not meet the standards set by state or federal governments. Schools that do not meet these standards are labeled as low-performing.

The following review of the literature begins with a historical discussion of the evolution of accountability in education followed by a discussion of factors that lead to schools being labeled low-performing. The next part of the literature review focuses on initiatives that states and school districts are implementing to turn around low-performing schools, particularly the use of technical assistance teams.

Historical Perspective of the Accountability Movement

In the last decade, education has been influenced or directed more by state and federal government than local school districts. Local boards of education had more control over schooling prior to the 1990's (Conley, 2003; Mintrop, 2004). Teachers were able to teach according to loose guidelines and student test results were available, but rarely used to make decisions about teaching and learning (Mintrop, 2004; Meyer & Rowan, 1978). School districts were very autonomous and initiated their own strategies to improve student achievement in failing or low-performing schools. Local school districts have lost some of this control, especially with mandates to turn low-performing schools around. This shift in control resulted from: (a) a trend of shifting financial responsibilities from Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to state funding in an attempt to equalize funding; and (b) assessment based accountability (Conley, 2003; Goertz, 2001; Mintrop, 2004). The Leandro case in North Carolina is an example of funding inequities. Providing more monies to the less wealthy school districts may be crucial to providing a sound basic education as defined by the court in Leandro. The North Carolina ABC plan is an example of assessment accountability. Under the ABC plan, students and schools are held accountable for student performance on standardized tests.

The origin of accountability and more scrutiny on public schools can be traced back to the 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk,* issued by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. The report contained the following statement that gave the charge to states to raise standards and develop accountability systems:

> If an unfriendly power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war. As it stands, we have allowed this to happen to ourselves. We have squandered the gains in achievement made in the wake of the Sputnik

> challenge. Moreover, we have dismantled essential support systems which have helped make those gains possible. We have, in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament. (p. 384)

The report propelled public education into the national spotlight. For the first time, the President of the United States raised education to the level of presidential discourse and politics (Owens, 2004).

Following the *Nation at Risk* report came other reports, such as *Making the Grade* (Twentieth Century Task Force on Federal Educational Policy, 1983) and *Action for Excellence* (Education Commission of the States, 1983) which documented the declining status of public education. The survey results from the *Making the Grade* report revealed the general public viewed declining test scores, poor teacher training and preparation, and recurring problems with student discipline with growing concern. The *Action for Excellence* (1983) report revealed the need for statewide standards, school improvement plans, and new accreditation standards. These reports gave many suggestions and solutions to the problems faced by many public schools. From calling for higher teacher pay and better training to extending the school day and time, the reform movement had began (Owens, 2004). The reports included other suggestions such as more rigorous graduation requirements and holding teachers to higher standards (Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas, 2000). The reports did not suggest any new ideas or golden fixes for education, but the school year was extended in a number of states to the national average of 180 school days (Owens, 2004).

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

While the federal legislatures have passed several acts that have affected education, none have impacted schooling as much as the passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. When NCLB was passed, some news reporters described it as “the broadest

rewriting of federal education policy in decades" (Milbank, 2002, p. A3). The then Secretary of Education, Rod Paige stated, "The No Child Left Behind law dramatically reshapes the federal role in education" (2002, p. 713). According to Owens (2004), "The No Child Left Behind Act was—in the history of the Republic until that time—the boldest venture on the part of the federal government to redirect the schooling of children throughout the land" (p. 112).

In actuality, NCLB is a revision of The Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA) Act of 1965 (McDonnell, 2005). McDonnell notes the following regarding federal acts:

> At their most generic level, major federal education policies such as Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) are designed to motivate states and local school districts to pay greater attention to particular groups of students and to increase the types and levels of services provided them. (p. 20)

No Child Left Behind is an important step in educational reform and places a great deal of pressure on states to meet certain goals on high stakes standardized testing.

Requirements of NCLB

NCLB requires states to meet several mandates to continue to receive Title I federal funds. While some states require all schools to meet the NCLB demands and participate in the accountability process, the law actually applies only to Title I schools (Tillman, 2006). Tillman notes that, "For example, the state of Texas identified less than 200 schools as Title I schools while Virginia labeled almost 500 schools as Title I schools. Texas applies NCLB to only 197 schools, but Virginia includes all of its public schools" (p. 3).

NCLB requires states to develop accountability systems by creating standards, regular testing of students, and increasing a level of proficiency from 2001 performance levels (Mintrop & Trujillo, 2005). Schools must achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP), which is

the achievement levels set by the states and NCLB that all students must reach by the year 2014.

The inclusion of all students is a key component of the No Child Left Behind Act. Student test results are not just assessed as individuals but also in categories called subgroups. These subgroups are: "English language learners, special education students, economically disadvantaged students, and students from the major racial and ethnic groups" (Tillman, 2006, p. 3). The subgroups must meet AYP goals or the school is subject to sanctions (Mintrop & Trujillo, 2005; Tillman, 2006). Goertz (2005) notes, "The NCLB Act expands testing in reading and mathematics significantly…to every student, annually, in Grades 3 through 8, and once in high school" (p. 74). The requirement to create some type of assessment based on the standards to measure achievement is the most significant aspect of the NCLB Act.

While NCLB gives some form of standardization for defining low-performance with adequate yearly progress, the measure of performance and determining the level of a low-performing school, and the interventions to raise low performances remains in the control of the individual states (Mintrop & Trujillo, 2005). States develop accountability targets using standardized tests, and schools not meeting particular target goals are labeled as low-performing (Lashway, 2004). For example, in North Carolina schools are designated as low performing because they fail to make expected growth and have less than 50% of their students scoring proficient (NCDPI, 2005). North Carolina uses a set of standardized tests in grades three through twelve as the assessment tools. The tests were developed and approved with the School-Based Management and Accountability Act of 1995 (NCDPI, 2005).

Given this flexibility to determine what criterion establishes low-performing schools, there is room for large discrepancies in the number of low-performing schools from state to state (Mintrop & Trujillo, 2005). For example, California has high testing standards and many challenging demographic areas that result in many more schools being labeled low-performing as compared to states such as Texas, Kentucky, and North Carolina. Texas and Kentucky do not report any schools low-performing unless the schools receive Title I funding. North Carolina requires all schools to meet AYP and reports schools as low-performing if they do not meet expected growth and have less than 50% of the students proficient on the End-of-Grade tests and End-of-Course tests (Mintrop & Trujillo, 2005).

The NCLB Act requires that all states have policies and procedures in place to help low-performing schools meet the goals set by NCLB (Christie, 2003; Goertz, 2005). NCLB exerts pressure and/or sanctions on schools that are and continue to perform below standards. Some states also use pressure and sanctions along with monetary rewards for schools that meet the mandated goals. For example, North Carolina pays teachers a bonus in schools that meet expected growth and pay a higher bonus for high growth. Despite evidence of pressures, sanctions, and monetary rewards, very little is known about how schools deal with or react to these pressures and sanctions (Brady, 2003; Hess, 2003; Malen et al., 2002; Mintrop, 2004; O'Day & Bitter, 2003).

Mintrop (2004) studied 11 schools in Kentucky and Maryland that had been labeled low-performing. The purpose of the study was to determine whether teachers were motivated and improved their pedagogical practices when threatened with sanctions and pressures because of low test scores. While the results were mixed, data showed teachers were more

likely not to be motivated by being labeled low-performing or the threat of more severe sanctions. Mintrop concluded:

> The low-performance label and the negative publicity that accompanied it came as a shock to some teachers, especially those with more seniority, but in time teachers distanced themselves from the system's verdict and reinterpreted it. The threat of the more severe sanctions tended to be discarded as not credible, and the label came to symbolize the school's neediness rather than educators' performance deficits. (p. 146)

Findings from the study based on interviews with teachers, lead teachers, and administrators at the low performing schools, showed that after time passed teachers reassured themselves of their teaching ability and found external reasons for the low test scores. According to Mintrop, the teachers did not agree with the label and did not view the pressure as positive or motivating. The next section of the literature review discusses challenges that some schools face in meeting targeted goals of NCLB.

Challenges to Meeting Annual Yearly Progress

Since the era of high stakes testing has begun, more and more emphasis has been placed on closing the achievement gap between minority and non-minority students and raising student achievement at low-performing schools. Tillman, (2006) notes, "A major purpose of the No Child Left Behind Act is the elimination of disparities in academic performance, largely based on race and SES" (p. 3). The creation of the NCLB accountability system created a label, low-performing schools, and states and school systems are charged with improving the academic performance of students in these schools.

There are many reasons that schools do not reach their targeted goals and are labeled as low-performing. Lashway (2004) identified three prominent reasons that cause schools to be placed in this category. He first discusses demographics of low-performing schools. According to Lashway, most low-performing schools serve a large number of children in

poverty that live in conditions that do not foster learning. Many low-income families in America are also members of a racial minority and they may face additional barriers to high achievement, like culturally biased tests (English, 2002; Lashway, 2004; Shannon & Bylsma, 2002).

Other researchers support Lashway's argument about the barriers faced by students in low-performing schools. For example, English (2002) discusses the use of standardized tests in "On the Intractability of the Achievement Gap in Urban Schools and the Discursive Practice of Continuing Racial Discrimination," and makes four major points:

1. From their inception, standardized tests have consistently demonstrated that the children of the poor perform less well than their more affluent counterparts. Wealth consistently makes a difference in better test scores.
2. Especially in the United States, where there is no national curriculum, the assumption of fairness rests on an assertion in which there is a surrogate national curriculum called "the content domain" and is the basis by which test scores are assumed to form a "bell curve."
3. Although conceding that poverty carries a statistically significant impact on test performance, test advocates often explain away its effects through "coded racism" based on eugenic arguments that have been scientifically rejected.
4. School-controlled variables are not very powerful in improving test performance because the statistically significant variables are demographic rather than educational. (pp. 299-300)

As noted earlier, low-performing schools usually serve a large population of poor minority students. Even while educators know standardized tests may be biased, schools must still reach certain goals on tests to avoid being labeled as low-performing and receive sanctions.

Lashway's (2004) second reason that schools do not perform up to expectation is insufficient resources. In some cases, low-performing schools in low-income areas do not receive the funding they need to meet the children's needs. Low-performing schools that serve high poverty areas usually receive less local money than schools in low poverty areas (Lashway, 2004; Orlofsky, 2002). In many school districts schools are funded by property

taxes. In high poverty areas the tax base is usually low; therefore, the local monies are not as available as in a school district with a higher tax base (King, Swanson, & Sweetland, 2003). One study that supports Lashway's argument was conducted by Odden, Monk, Nakib, and Picus (1995) which investigated the distribution of new federal resources over a five year period, the researchers found, "that the funds had been distributed unfairly and used ineffectively and that the public education system needed to be strategically linked to improving student achievement" (as cited in King et al., 2003, p. 352).

When looking at school financing, one can see how inequalities could happen in an educational system such as the United States of America. The school system in the United States, in all states but Hawaii, is broken up into smaller school districts. The decentralization of the American public school system has its strengths and weaknesses (King et al., 2003). Local areas do have more control over how money is spent and can focus on the individual needs of the district. However, as discussed earlier high poverty areas may not be able to raise as much local money as their low poverty counter parts.

Resources do not just mean money, however. One vital resource that schools cannot exist without are teachers. Access to qualified teachers has been inequitable between schools in high poverty areas and schools that do not serve a high population of students in poverty. Teachers in high poverty, low-performing schools are more likely to be less experienced and more likely to be teaching outside their specialty area (Jerald, 2002; Lashway, 2004).

Lashway (2004) argues that ineffective school practices is a third reason schools are low-performing. Some of the practices include poor leadership, poor professional development, misaligned curriculum, and meager instructional strategies. Low-performing schools are also at a disadvantage because of their undesirable reputations. The best teachers

and administrators usually do not want to work long in an unattractive type of environment (Lashway, 2003; Mintrop & Trujillo, 2005). Therefore, high turnover creates turmoil and instability at already unstable schools.

As stated earlier, since the passage of NCLB, states are required to provide some type of technical assistance to low-performing schools or districts that do not make AYP for two consecutive years. According to Goertz (2005), "NCLB spells out a set of action that states and districts must take with Title I schools identified for improvement and may take with non-Title I schools that are similarly designated" (p. 83). The responsibility of supporting low-performing schools should be split between the district and the state. The majority of states do have some type of technical assistance in place, but with budget cuts and staff shortages at the state levels, states have a reason to be nervous about meeting the requirements (Christie, 2003). Given the flexibility in the bill, states have adopted different methods of providing technical assistance to low performing schools. In the next section several initiatives used by school districts to improve low-performing schools are discussed.

School Improvement Initiatives

Several strategies that have been used to improve schools include reconstitution, contracting with educational management organizations, district takeovers, and intervention teams. Strategies for improving low-performing schools are similar or the same in many states. These strategies have seen some success, but the results are inconclusive (Brady, 2003; Mintrop & Trujillo, 2005).

Reconstitution

Reconstituting a school consists of replacing most if not all the staff, including teachers and administrators (Mintrop & Trujillo, 2005). Reformers have referred to

reconstitution as closing down a school and reopening it with all new leadership, teachers, and staff. Reconstituted schools in California, particularly in San Francisco, stayed or reappeared on the state's low-performing school list after one or two years (Mintrop & Trujillo, 2005). One school in San Francisco was slated to receive corrective action because the reconstitution did not raise student achievement (Mintrop & Trujillo, 2005). The reconstitution of schools in Maryland led to more problems in some of the schools and damaged the schools' reputations in the public perception; however, a few schools did improve (Malen, Croninger, Muncey, & Jones, 2002). In Chicago replacement teachers were not as qualified or any more effective than the staff that was replaced, particularly in math and science. Reconstituting also caused the morale in some schools to be low in the Chicago schools (Hess, 2003).

Educational Management Organizations (EMOs)

Low-performing schools are sometimes turned over to private companies or organizations, known as Educational Management Organizations, to conduct the everyday activities of the school. Philadelphia had a number of schools that were turned over to EMOs, and during the 2003 school year, "One fourth of all district schools were taken over, with 46 managed by different external management organizations and 21 by the district's newly created Office of Restructured Schools" (Mintrop & Trujillo, 2005, p. 8). The EMOs and the Office of Restructured Schools offered different strategies, methods of involvement, and interventions. While the results varied, the schools had somewhat better results under the Office of Restructured Schools than the EMOs (Mintrop & Trujillo, 2005; Useem, 2005).

District Takeovers

The strategy of district takeovers has also yielded mixed results. The primary reason that states have taken over whole school districts has been due to financial management issues (Garland, 2003). Correcting financial problems is one area where states have had some success when taking over districts. According to Mintrop and Trujillo (2005), "When the state stepped into Chicago Public Schools in 2002, an anticipated $4 billion deficit was eliminated" (p. 9). Academic improvement has been achieved in a small number of takeover cases. In cities such as, Logan County, West Virginia, Compton, California, and Chicago, Illinois there have been some very positive results after takeovers, after multiple years of interventions (Garland, 2003).

In 1996 the Chancellor of New York City Schools took over 58 elementary and middle schools that had been on New York's low-performing schools list for several years. This takeover was not initiated by the state, but since the Chancellor oversees as many schools as some state superintendents, the attempt to turn these low-performing schools around is very similar to a state take over of a small district (Pheniz, Siegel, Zaltsman, & Fruchter, 2005). According to Pheniz et al., the takeover was not because of financial problems in the district; rather the Chancellor's District attempted to restructure, redesign and improve instruction in individual schools. When the Chancellor's District initiative was started, it went against the grain of educational reform of the time. Educational reform of the early to mid 1990's was about site-base management and bottom-up reform. According to Pheniz et al., in the New York takeover "A prescribed instructional program, a mandated daily schedule and a required curriculum were imposed throughout the district." (p. 6). The

Chancellor's District did turn most of the failing schools around, and several schools were closed. This case is an example of a district takeover and district wide reform.

Intervention Teams

Intervention teams or assistance teams have the responsibilities of evaluating, intervening, and helping with implementations of effective school strategies at schools that have been labeled as low-performing (Mintrop & Trujillo, 2005; NCDPI, 2005). The results of teams in California have not been successful because they were met with resistance and contempt (Posnick-Goodwin, 2003). This however was not the case in North Carolina (Mintrop & Trujillo, 2005). Team members in North Carolina were recruited from current experienced, proven educators. In California the teams were third-party providers. Additionally, teams in North Carolina were in the schools almost every school day for the entire school year, and teams in California were only in the schools a specified number of days throughout the year (Mintrop & Trujillo, 2005; NCDPI, 2005). One reason that teams in North Carolina may be documented as being more acceptable is the fact that North Carolina teachers do not have collective bargaining rights and the teachers in California do have bargaining rights. The teachers union in California raised many concerns about the teams (Mintrop & Trujillo, 2005).

The actions of states that have used intervention teams have produced mixed results. There have been some cases where low-performing schools improved due to the interventions from the state. However, there have also been cases where schools have not improved test scores even with the assistance of a team. For example, out of the fourteen high schools in Brinson's (2004) study of low-performing high schools in North Carolina with a technical assistance team, four of the schools did not meet the targeted goals even

while a state assistance team was present for the entire school year. In the next section North Carolina's accountability model and state assistance teams are discussed.

North Carolina's ABC's of Education

Even before the passage of NCLB, the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) of 1994 required states meet some of the same requirements set forth in No Child Left Behind. Goertz (2005) states:

> That law required states to establish challenging content and performance standards, implement assessments that measure students' performance against these standards, hold schools and school systems accountable for the achievement of all students, and take other steps to promote programmatic flexibility and to foster instructional and curricular reform. (p. 73)

North Carolina was a forerunner in the accountability movement. Goertz notes that, "Only 22 states had single accountability systems in place by 2000-2001" (p. 76). One of the states with a single accountability program is North Carolina. After the passing of IASA, the North Carolina General Assembly charged the State Board of Education with developing a restructuring plan for public education. Through an in-depth study conducted by the State Board, the New ABCs of Public Education was outlined in May of 1995. In 1997 the General Assembly of North Carolina passed Senate Bill 272, and it became the Excellent Schools Act. When the General Assembly accepted the State Board's School-Based Management and Accountability program, the State Board of Education also developed the ABCs of Public Education. The School-Based Management and Accountability Program is the statewide school-based accountability program for public schools in North Carolina, which holds administrators and teachers accountable for increasing every student's academic performance (School-Based Management and Accountability Procedures Manuel, 2001).

The purpose of North Carolina's ABCs and NCLB are similar. Few changes were required in the North Carolina accountability program after the passage of NCLB. As noted from North Carolina's Department of Public Instruction, "Improving student achievement is the goal of both the ABCs of Public Education, launched in 1995 in North Carolina, and the No Child Left Behind Act. Several key parts of the new Act are well-aligned with North Carolina's ABCs" (NCDPI, 2003, p. 2).

With North Carolina's ABCs, students are tested in grades 3-8 at the end of each school year. The tests are in reading and math and appropriately referred to as End-of-Grade tests (EOGs). Students in high school take End-of-Course tests (EOCs) in specific areas—Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, English I, English II, Civics and Economics, U. S. History, Physical Science, Biology, Chemistry, and Physics. The End-of-Grade and the End-of-Course tests are used to measure a school's performance. The EOGs are used to determine a school's growth in the ABCs and meeting Adequate Yearly Progress according to NCLB for elementary and middle schools. The formula for high schools, which uses EOCs, is more complex then elementary schools which uses EOGs. All the EOC subject areas are used to measure the school's success according to the ABCs accountability model. However, only certain EOC tests are used to assess meeting AYP (NCDPI, 2005). The ABCs accountability model was started before NCLB was passed and continues to serve its purpose.

Before NCLB mandated that states provide technical assistance to low-performing schools, North Carolina had implemented a state assistance program for schools that were not meeting the goals of the ABCs. The next section provides a discussion of state assistance teams in North Carolina.

North Carolina's Technical Assistance Team Concept

As stated earlier, since the passage of NCLB states are required to provide technical assistance to low-performing schools. The strategies implemented must be founded in scientifically based research principles as stipulated in NCLB (Christie, 2003). The majority of states do have technical assistance in place, but with budget cuts and staff shortages at the state levels, states are uncertain about meeting the requirements (Christie, 2003). Given the flexibility in the law, states have adopted different methods of providing technical assistance to low performing schools. North Carolina has developed two intervention methods.

Local Education Agency Assistance Program (LEAAP)

North Carolina passed House Bill 797 in 2003 which concentrates on the state's obligation to assist schools not meeting AYP (Christie, 2003). North Carolina has two methods of providing technical assistance to low-performing schools. A more recent model of technical assistance that North Carolina has adopted is the district level assistance, the Local Education Agency Assistance Program (LEAAP). According to the Curriculum and School Reform Services at the Department of Public Instruction (2005):

> LEAAP is designed to provide varying degrees of support, guidance and services to LEAs. The level of services is determined by LEA performance in the ABCs of Public Education and/or NCLB. The primary aims are to improve student academic performance and to build internal capacity in the central office and school leadership for positive change and continual growth. Services and assistance provided to LEAs by DPI will be extended and reinforced by (a) encouraging and promoting the partnering of LEAs to share best practices, programs and strategies (b) clustering LEAs located in close proximity that have similar needs and demographics and (c) calling upon partners such as the Center of School Leadership Development. The number of districts served will depend on the availability of resources and will be offered in the order that request are received. (p. 8)

The LEAAP emphasizes meeting AYP, thus first priority is given to the schools in the corrective action year of NCLB. Resources will determine how many districts receive the

assistance, and the available resources will determine which or how many schools get direct assistance teams.

According to House Bill 797 the State Board of Education will (1) identify schools that successfully made Adequate Yearly Progress; (2) study the instructional, administrative, and fiscal practices and polices employed by these schools; and (3) create assistance models for each subgroup of students, based on the practices and policies used in these successful schools (Christie, 2003, p. 262).

The second type of technical assistance that North Carolina provides to low-performing schools is state assistance teams that work in targeted schools. In the next section the state assistance teams and their development is reviewed in depth.

North Carolina State Assistance Teams

Senate Bill 1139 passed in 1995 and House Bill 797 passed in 2003 both call for the state to identify and assist schools that are not meeting ABC goals and AYP. It is General Statute 115C-105.30 that gives the roles, responsibilities, and duties of state assistance teams. The general statute assigns assistance teams to low-performing schools, and provides priority attention to schools with declining performance. "The legislation directs the State Board of Education to establish assistance teams consisting of currently practicing teachers and staff, representative of institutions of higher education, school administrators, and others…[it] considers appropriate" (Operational Guidelines for Assistance Teams, R2005, p. I1).

Assistance teams are assigned to a school and work closely with the school and central office personnel to provide consistent, on site support. Schools are assisted in the following areas according to the Guidelines:

- Improving the academic performance of all students, with a focus on students at Levels I and II;

- building capacity in the school;
- providing on-going professional development;
- conducting a needs assessment; and
- developing a plan of work to address the school's needs during the remainder of the year and the subsequent year. (2005, p. I1)

In addition to those responsibilities in the general statute, the State Board of Education mandated the following for assistance teams:

- Review and investigate all facets of school operations and assist in developing recommendations.
- Evaluate at least semiannually the certified personnel assigned to the school and make findings and recommendations concerning their performance.
- Collaborate with school staffs, central offices and local boards of education in the design, implementation and monitoring of a plan that, if fully implemented, can reasonably be expected to alleviate problems and improve student performance at that school.
- Make recommendations as the school develops and implements this plan.
- Review the school's progress.
- Report, as appropriate, to the local board of education, the superintendent, the school principal, and the State Board of Education on the school's progress. (Guidelines, 2005, p. I2)

The assistance teams are provided four weeks of training the summer prior to the start of the school year they will enter a school. The purpose of the training is to give the team members as many tools as possible for them to share with the schools to which they are assigned and ensure the team members understand their mission because they will be at the assigned school for one school year (Guidelines, 2005). According to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction website (2006), some of the topics covered in the training are:

- The ABCs Law (SB 1139).
- The school improvement planning process and developing an improvement plan.
- Conducting a comprehensive needs assessment.
- Effective school correlates and "excellence without excuses."
- Team-building, mission, and code of conduct.

- Staff Development.
- Mentoring.
- Accountability and the testing program.
- Brain Research (http://www.ncpublicschools.org/assistanceteams/training/)

The training is intense and prepares team members to work on-site with the teachers and administrators at low-performing schools.

The assistance team meets with the principal and a central office representative prior to arriving at school. The team discusses the role they will take at the school and begin a positive working relationship with the principal at the initial meeting. The relationship between the team and the principal determines how much the team and the principal will work together. The guidelines are unclear as to how the team should build this relationship and the role the principal plays.

The Seven Correlates of Effective Schools

State assistance teams were formed and are designed around the research of Ronald Edmonds and Lawrence Lezotte. From their research emerged the seven correlates of effective schools (Brinson, 2004; Lezotte, 2001). The effective schools research began as a response to the *Equal Educational Opportunity Survey,* a report by James Coleman (1966). The report surmised that family background was the major determinant of student achievement (Coleman, 1966; Lezotte, 2001; Raham, 2001). The effective school movement supports "that all children can learn and that the school controls the factors necessary to assure student mastery of the core curriculum" (Lezotte, 2001, p. 1). Edmonds (1982) states, "while schools may be primarily responsible for whether or not students function adequately in school, the family is probably critical in determining whether or not students flourish in

school (p. 8). It was in Edmonds (1982) paper, "Programs of School Improvement: An Overview," that the correlates of effective schools appeared. Through decades of research, researchers like Edmonds and Lezotte found schools achieving high academic standards in high-poverty areas. The researchers found common characteristics and these characteristics became the seven correlates of effective schools (Lezotte, 2001). In "Revolutionary and Evolutionary: The Effective Schools Movement," Lezotte (2001) described the seven correlates of effective schools. Effective schools studied by Lezotte and Ronald Edmonds evidenced all seven correlates as leading organizational and contextual indicators. "In other words, the extent to which the Correlates are in place in a school has a dramatic, positive effect on student achievement" (Lezotte, 2001, p, 1). Lezotte gives the following descriptions of the correlates:

1. **Instructional Leadership.** In the effective school, the principal acts as an instructional leader and effectively and persistently communicates the mission of the school to staff, parents, and students.
2. **Clear and Focused Mission.** In the effective school, there is a clearly articulated mission of the school through which the staff shares an understanding of and a commitment to the school's goals, priorities, assessment procedures, and accountability.
3. **Safe and Orderly Environment.** In the effective school we say there is an orderly, purposeful, business-like atmosphere, which is free from the threat of physical harm. The school climate is not oppressive and is conducive to teaching and learning.
4. **Climate of High Expectations.** In the effective school, there is a climate of high expectations in which the staff believes and demonstrates that all students can obtain mastery of the school's essential curriculum. They also believe that they, the staff, have the capability to help all students obtain that mastery.
5. **Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress.** In the effective school, pupil progress over the essential objectives are measured frequently, monitored frequently, and the results of those assessments are used to improve the individual student behaviors and performances, as well as to improve the curriculum as a whole.
6. **Positive Home-School Relations**. In the effective school, parents understand and support the basic mission of the school and are given opportunities to play important roles in helping the school to achieve its mission.

7. **Opportunity to Learn and Student Time on Task**. In the effective school, teachers allocate a significant amount of classroom time to instruction in the essential curricular areas. For a high percentage of this time, students are actively engaged in whole-class or large group, teacher-directed, planned learning activity. (p. 4)

Assistance teams in North Carolina use the correlates to frame the interventions and assist low-performing schools they are serving. The correlates provide a basis or starting point for the teams to improve instruction in the schools (Brinson, 2004).

Limitations of Correlates

The effective schools movement was first introduced in the early 1980's. There have been numerous descriptive studies finding schools that should have been ineffective, but were effective and the correlates were present. However, there are also studies that show the correlates may not be present in every effective school.

Landis (1986) conducted a study of effective and ineffective middle schools in Pennsylvania. In his study he used descriptors, similar to the correlates, to find any differences between the schools. Landis found no significant difference between principals of effective schools and ineffective schools. In another study conducted by Wegner (1989), it was found that there was little correlation between the effective school characteristics and student achievement in high socio-economic status schools. However, in the schools studied by Wegner, there was a correlation in lower socio-economic schools.

While these studies do show that the seven correlates may not be in every effective school, the correlates are present in the majority of effective low socio-economic schools. The effective school movement began to help those high poverty schools. The state assistance teams in North Carolina assist all low-performing schools, but most of these

schools are low socioeconomic schools. Therefore, the seven correlates of effective schools provide a good framework for the teams.

Studies of North Carolina Assistance Teams

While there have been studies conducted on school reform and the effects of school reform on the school (Brady, 2003, Mintrop, 2004; Mintrop & Trujillo, 2005), there is a shortage of studies documenting the efforts of individual states to turn around low-performing schools. While every state has put into place some type of technical assistance, North Carolina's state assistance teams offer some of the most involved interventions and efforts to improve low-performing schools in the nation (Mintrop, 2004). Three studies which were conducted about North Carolina's state assistance teams are notable.

Farris (1999) conducted a study of two middle schools in North Carolina that had assistance teams during the 1997/1998 school year. The study was a retrospective analysis, and Farris conducted a case study of the two schools the year after the state assistance team was present at the school. The schools were in the same school district and the principal at each school was interviewed as well as the assistant superintendent assigned to work with the assistance teams. Focus groups of teachers were interviewed at each school. Mid-year and end-of-the-year reports produced by the state assistance teams for the State Board of Education were reviewed and analyzed. "The researcher used a multi-method technique called "triangulation" to collect data for the study" (Farris, 1999, p. 69). The two schools had student enrollment of 310 and 469 respectively with both schools having more than 75% of students on free or reduced lunch. Both schools served a very high minority population.

Farris's three questions analyzed (a) how the state assistance teams implemented change in the schools; (b) what interventions the state assistance teams used with regards to

administrator leadership, staff development, and curriculum alignment; and (c) what patterns used by the teams had the most positive effects on change in the schools. The teams implemented change by taking the role of the principal. Farris notes, "Major findings of this case study indicated that the State Assistance Teams performed many of the duties ordinarily assumed by the principal (p. 82).

The results of the study revealed that in the area of leadership "suspension of principals, restructuring the instructional day, improving communication, physical improvements, and implementation of the School Improvement Team" (p. iii) were addressed by the teams. The process of removing the principal was very stressful on the teachers and created a feeling of mistrust between the teachers and the assistance teams in both schools. The state assistance team worked with the new principals of both schools to restructure the school day "to give students every opportunity to gain the skills they needed for the End-of-Grade tests" (Farris, 1999, p. 86).

The team worked with the principals to establish procedures and routines to improve communication within the schools. The team suggested use of a monthly calendar and a weekly newsletter for teachers from the principal to improve internal communication. The teams recommended the schools improve the physical appearance of the schools to help with student and teacher morale. Utilizing a school improvement plan according to the North Carolina Board of Education's guidelines was the biggest suggestion regarding school improvement teams. The teams were involved in staff development regarding curriculum alignment, which focused on math and reading. The teachers had to manage feelings of resentment toward the teams and with the humiliation, "before recognizing that the Teams were there to assist with improvement of student performance" (p. 111).

Since the Farris study was conducted in 1998, one year after the first state assistance teams entered the schools, there has been no comparative data to determine if teams were successful in changing the perceptions of the teachers and staff at the schools. The study was an initial starting point for developing ideas and strategies that future teams could omit or implement when working with low-performing schools. This study answered some of the questions about a new strategy to improve student achievement in low-performing North Carolina schools, as well as information about teams and some of their success and failures.

Turner (2002) conducted a study of three low-performing urban schools in North Carolina. The study was conducted the year after the assistance team left the schools. Turner surveyed teachers about their perceptions of the effectiveness of the state assistance team. The three schools were in the same school district—an elementary school, a middle school, and a high school. Turner was concerned with the schools' ability to sustain growth after the assistance teams left. According to Turner, "There is a growing concern over the ability of schools to sustain their academic growth gains after state intervention" (p. 12). The study describes the demographics of the teachers that completed the surveys in an effort to show how much teaching experience teachers had at their schools. Turner states, "This data enabled the researcher to create a composite picture of the personnel participating in the study" (p. 47). Of the 211 teachers surveyed, 145 teachers responded to the surveys. Of the respondents 69.7% were female and 30.3% were male. The majority of the teachers, 71.7%, had from one to five years of experience.

The instrument used was a two part survey with the first part consisting "of 30 items designed to measure the factors of school effectiveness after state intervention and the perception of the state assistance team effectiveness by instructional personnel" (p. 46).

Turner (2002) reported that "the majority of respondents felt that intervention improved teacher and principal performance (61%)" (2002, p. 55). However, 53% of the respondents felt the interventions by the state teams did not make a difference or affect student achievement. Findings indicated that the majority of the respondents felt the growth gains achieved during the year the team was present could be sustained. The data also indicated that teachers perceived that expectations of students were higher in the classroom due to the presence of the assistance team. With respect to principal and teacher effectiveness, 71% of the respondents felt there was improvement because of the interventions. The findings were different among the levels of school. There was a significant difference between middle school and high school respondents with respect to the question of whether the interventions of the state assistance teams improved the quality of instructional leadership.

While Turner (2002) found that a majority of the teachers at the low-performing schools in his study believed the state assistance teams had a positive impact, there were still some unanswered questions which are discussed later in this chapter. The next study looks at some strategies implemented by state assistance teams in North Carolina.

Brinson (2004) conducted a study of twelve high schools in North Carolina that had assistance teams during the 2001/2002 school year. The purpose of the study was to determine any similarities between the work of assistance teams and the strategies implemented to improve low-performing schools. Brinson also searched for similarities in the perceptions of the school staffs about the functions and behaviors of the assistance teams and teachers' own functions and behaviors. This descriptive study also used mid-year and end-of-the-year reports provided by the teams to the State Board of Education as well as

surveys distributed by the Department of Public Instruction to the staffs of the 12 high schools who had been assigned an assistance team during the 2001/2002 school year.

The twelve high schools in Brinson's study had a wide range of students on free or reduced lunch—from 34% to 100% among the schools. The schools also served a high number of minority students. The size of the schools ranged from 242 students to 1,241 students. Of the 12 schools, 8 made enough growth on the EOCs to be removed from the low-performing category at the end of the school year. The results of the strategies or services used by the assistance teams were categorized into Lezzotte's seven correlates of effective schools. Brinson listed the many different strategies or services used by the teams under one of the correlates. For example, Brinson (2004) states, "Thirteen different services were provided in correlate one. Services ranged from developing master schedules for proper placement of students and teachers to more effective utilization of assistant principals" (p. 63).

Teachers at the schools responded to surveys that were developed by the Division of School Improvement in North Carolina's Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI). Brinson (2004) notes the purpose of the survey was to "allow the staffs at the schools receiving technical assistance the opportunity to express their perceptions of the functions and behaviors of the technical assistance teams" (p. 55). The teachers were given the opportunities to give their perceptions of their own functions and behaviors in the survey. The perceptions of the school staffs with respect to the assistance teams were mostly positive, and the staffs perceived themselves as cooperative. Brinson described the teachers' perceptions stating, "the teams were professional and willing to assist the school in improving student performance. The staffs perceived themselves as hard-working and willing

to cooperate with the teams" (Brinson, p. 118). The surveys provided some insight into teacher perception of the strategies implemented by the state assistance teams; however the review of the year end reports revealed the specific strategies.

Brinson (2004) used the state assistance teams' year end reports to identify the services delivered by state assistance teams to the school. The services provided by the state assistance teams reflected the Seven Correlates of Effective Schools in the year end reports. Brinson categorized the services under the seven correlates. For a service to be categorized into one of the correlates "2 schools had to have the services provided as identified by the team" (p. 59). The schools were broken into two cohorts. Cohort one achieved adequate growth at the end of the 2001/2002 school year; cohort two did not make adequate growth in the same year. Cohort one received fifty-nine services, while cohort two received 24 services. Brinson notes that, "In five of the seven correlates, the schools in Cohort 1 received more services per school than the schools in Cohort 2" (p. 60). Some of the services were (a) helping the principal communicate the vision of the school; (b) increasing the visibility of the school administration; (c) providing staff development on teaming; (d) providing strategies for improving student/teacher attendance; (e) facilitating departmental team building activities; (f) analyzing test data; and (g) increasing the number of positive parent contacts. The majority of the services provided by teams dealt with academic planning for individual teachers, short and long-term planning for the school, and administrative leadership.

Farris's (1999) study utilized year end reports as well as interviews and focus groups of teachers and administrators to investigate the impact of the assistance teams as change agents and how the strategies used by the teams impacted the schools. Turner (2002) used a

two part survey that described the demographics of the participants and attempted to measure the perception of effectiveness of the strategies used by the state assistance teams by instructional personnel. Brinson (2004) categorized the strategies used by the teams to help improve low-performing schools, and gave an in-depth look at the areas most often serviced by the teams using year end reports and a survey developed by NCDPI. All three studies provide insight into some of the strategies used by the teams to improve low-performing schools in North Carolina. The studies provided some insight into the school improvement process; however, some questions were unanswered and create new ideas for further research. One question that lends itself to an informative study is, how did the work of a state assistance team impact the areas as identified by the Seven Correlates of Effective Schools, teacher pedagogical practice, and student achievement at one low-performing high school.

Conceptual Framework for the Study

This study was predicated on the assumptions that improving low-performing schools was a priority of educational leaders and improving student achievement will have an impact on the local, state, and global community. Based on these two assumptions, one goal of this study was to provide information for educational leaders about how to further improve pedagogical practices and student achievement at any school.

The North Carolina State assistance teams are trained based on Lezotte's (2001) Seven Correlates of Effective Schools. The correlates are the framework from which the teams work to improve the school to which they are assigned. The team bases its interventions on improving schools on the correlates. The seven correlates form the conceptual framework for this study.

Figure 1 shows three circles around the seven correlates. The correlates can be observed in almost every effective school, and are based on research conducted by Ron Edmonds and Larry Lezotte. The seven correlates are (1) Instructional leadership; (2) Clear and focused mission; (3) Safe and orderly environment; (4) Climate of high expectations; (5) Frequent monitoring of student progress; (6) Positive home-school relations; and (7) Opportunity to learn and student time on task. The existence of the correlates in a school has a positive impact on student learning and achievement. North Carolina's technical assistance teams attempt to model, share, and embed the correlates into low-performing schools.

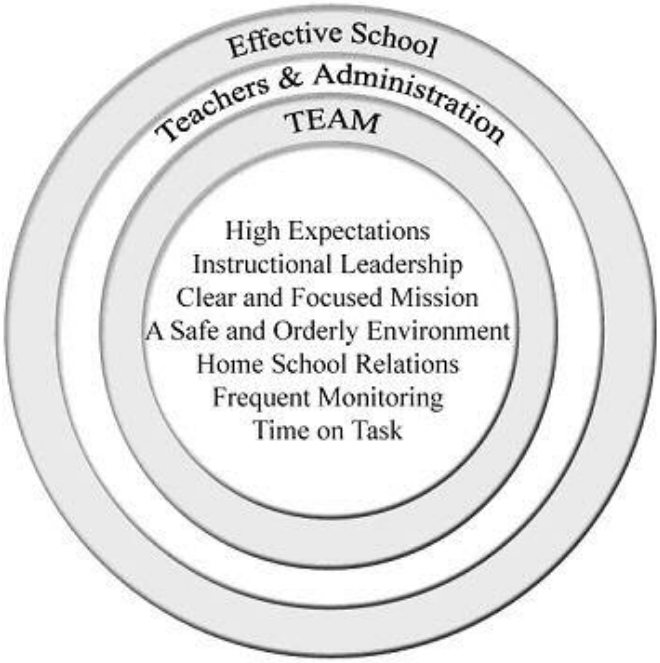

Figure 1. ***Conceptual Framework***

In Figure 1 the *correlates* are the center and the circle is read from the inside out. The first circle around the correlates represents the *team*. Where the teams are effective, they have an understanding of the correlates and the importance of the correlates in an effective school. Part of the team's job is to spread the knowledge of the correlates to the school *administration* and *teachers*. The second circle represents the teachers and administrators.

While the team does have the responsibility of modeling and sharing the correlates, they strive to assist the teachers and administrators in changing the school from a low-performing school to an effective school by improving areas that are covered by the correlates. If the team succeeds in embedding the seven correlates in the school before their departure, the administration, teachers, and students recognize the characteristics of an effective school and know what needs to be done to make the school effective. This study utilized the seven correlates when investigating teacher and the principal's perceptions about the impact of a state assistance team on student achievement and pedagogical practices.

Summary

The literature discussed in this chapter deals with a very broad topic, accountability and the evolution of high stakes testing. As the literature moves from federal mandates to state mandates, some of the causes of low-performing schools are discussed. The literature shifts in focus from No Child Left Behind to how states are dealing with the high stakes testing, and raising student achievement in schools that have been consistently low-performing. The discussion then concentrates on one state's intervention strategy to raise test scores and improve schools that do not meet the state requirements or the requirements of No Child Left Behind. Three studies discussed in the review focused on the work of state assistance teams in North Carolina. However, several unanswered questions with respect to the effectiveness of state assistance teams and their relationship to student achievement and pedagogical practices remain.

The stigma of being labeled a low-performing school may create a feeling of apprehension with teachers, but the arrival of a state assistance team can create more apprehension (Farris, 1999). For teams to have some success and improve the schools' test

scores, teachers must be willing to work with the state assistance team (Brinson, 2004; Farris, 1999; Turner, 2002). There is evidence that schools that are assigned a state assistance team can be successful.

Farris' (1999) study was conducted after the first assistance teams left the schools; thus perceptions of teachers in the study about low-performing schools and state assistance teams has likely changed with the passage of NCLB and stricter guidelines for state testing. Turner's (2002) study investigated teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the strategies implemented by the state assistance teams. Brinson (2004) used Lezotte's seven correlates of effective schools to categorize the strategies utilized by the state assistance teams. The teams used different strategies and future teams may utilize those interventions to help improve low-performing schools, but the correlates can be used as a framework for future studies. These studies revealed pertinent information for educational leaders to utilize in all schools. However, in the areas of student achievement and pedagogical practices research still needs to be conducted.

The seven correlates require that the Learning for All mission be bought into and truly believed by every stakeholder. Schools can and do make a difference in a child's learning and what he/she can achieve. Effective schools share the characteristics that are present in schools that are accomplishing the goals mandated by federal and state lawmakers. Schools that are labeled as low-performing must adopt and utilize the thinking of effective schools. State assistance teams in North Carolina enter a school attempting to model and improve the areas labeled as the Seven Correlates of Effective Schools. For a low-performing school to truly change paths to the one of an effective school, Lezotte's seven correlates can

be useful in the every day decision making process of the principal, teachers, students, and parents of the school.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction

Though state assistance teams have been used every year in low-performing schools in North Carolina since the 1997-1998 school year, few studies have investigated their impact on pedagogical practices and student achievement in low-performing schools. Farris (1999) conducted a retrospective case study of two assistance teams in low-performing middle schools that investigated the role of state assistance teams as change agents in the schools. In another study, Turner (2002) investigated the effectiveness of assistance teams based on teacher perception in a select number of urban schools in North Carolina. The study also investigated the effectiveness of the strategies used by the assistance teams while present at the school. Brinson (2004) investigated state assistance teams in fourteen high schools in North Carolina and their impact on End-of-Course scores, teacher perceptions of the teams, and the services the teams provided to the schools. Turner and Brinson used surveys as the primary method of data collection. Farris utilized interviews with administrators and teachers as her primary data collection method. While these three studies investigate state assistance teams using different methodologies and research questions, they do not go in to depth about the impact state assistance teams have on pedagogical practices or student achievement. This study attempted to reveal what impact a state assistance team had on the areas identified as

the Seven Correlates of Effective Schools, pedagogical practices and student achievement in one low-performing high school in North Carolina.

Purpose of Study

Across the country there is growing concern about the ineffectiveness of high schools in graduating students in four years, preparing students for careers for the 21st century, and performance on standardized test. The concern is so great in North Carolina that Judge Howard Manning who presided over the implementation of the court's decision in the *Leandro v. North Carolina* case, wrote a letter to the State Board of Education demanding that the lowest performing high schools raise student achievement or risk being closed.

North Carolina has utilized technical assistance teams in assisting low-performing schools for almost ten years. North Carolina's teams are designed around Lawrence Lezotte's and Ronald Edmonds Seven Correlates of Effective schools. The teams use the seven correlates to frame the school improvement plan for improving a low-performing school. However, since the passage of NCLB there has been very little research that suggests what impact state assistance teams have had on low-performing schools. The purpose of this research was to investigate the impact of a state assistance team on one low-performing high school in North Carolina.

Conceptual Framework

North Carolina State assistance teams are designed around Lezotte's (2001) Seven Correlates of Effective Schools. The correlates are the framework in which the teams work and attempt to improve the school to which they are assigned, and the team bases the interventions used in a school on the correlates. This study utilized the seven correlates as a conceptual framework.

Figure 1 (see p. 39) shows three circles around the seven correlates. The correlates can be observed in almost every effective school. Lezotte's (2001) seven correlates are:

1. **Instructional Leadership.** In the effective school, the principal acts as an instructional leader.
2. **Clear and Focused Mission.** In the effective school, there is a clearly articulated mission of the school.
3. **Safe and Orderly Environment.** In the effective school we say there is an orderly, purposeful, business-like atmosphere.
4. **Climate of High Expectations.** In the effective school, there is a climate of high expectations.
5. **Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress.** In the effective school, pupil progress over the essential objectives are measured frequently, monitored frequently, and the results of those assessments are used to improve the individual student behaviors and performances.
6. **Positive Home-School Relations**. In the effective school, parents understand and support the basic mission of the school.
7. **Opportunity to Learn and Student Time on Task**. In the effective school, teachers allocate a significant amount of classroom time to instruction.

According to Lezotte, the existence of the correlates in a school has a positive impact on student learning and achievement. North Carolina's technical assistance teams attempt to model, share, and embed the correlates into the culture of the low-performing schools.

In Figure 1 on page 39 the *correlates* are the center and the circle is read from inside out. The first circle around the correlates represents the *team*. Where the teams are effective,

they have an understanding of the correlates and the importance of the existence of the correlates in an effective school. Part of the team's job is to spread the knowledge of the correlates to the school *administration* and *teachers*. The second circle represents the teachers and administrators. While the team does have the responsibility of modeling strategies that reflect the correlates, they strive to assist the teachers and administrators in changing the school from a low-performing school to an effective school by improving areas that are covered by the correlates. If the team succeeds in embedding the seven correlates in the school before their departure, the administration, teachers, and students recognize the characteristics of an effective school and know what needs to be done to make the school effective. This study utilized the seven correlates when investigating teacher perceptions about the impact of a state assistance team on student achievement and pedagogical practices.

Major Research Question

The major research question for this study is: How did the work of a state assistance team impact the areas as identified by the Seven Correlates of Effective Schools, teacher pedagogical practices, and student achievement at one low-performing high school?

Research Questions

1. In what ways did the work of the state assistance team embody the seven correlates?
2. In what ways did the work of the state assistance team impact student achievement?
3. In what ways did the work of the state assistance team impact pedagogical practices of teachers?

Rationale for Mixed Methods Approach

Creswell, (2005) defines mixed methods research design as, "a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and "mixing" both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study to understand a research problem. This study used a triangulation mixed methods design. Creswell says, "The purpose of a triangulation mixed methods design is to simultaneously collect both quantitative and qualitative data, merge, the data, and use the results to understand a research problem" (p. 314). Using a mixed methods approach allows the qualitative methods to offset the weaknesses of the quantitative methods and the quantitative methods to offset the weaknesses of the qualitative methods (Creswell, 2005). For example, results from a survey that are calculated quantitatively may balance some of the weaknesses of qualitative documents, or in-depth interviews may add strength to the survey results. This study utilized a survey of the teachers that were present while the state assistance team was at the school. The survey results were used to guide the in-depth interviews of teachers and be compared to the documents reviewed by the researcher.

A case study is "an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g., an activity, event, process, or individuals) based on extensive data collection" (Creswell, 2005, p. 439). Merriam, (1998) notes "By concentrating on a single phenomenon or entity (the case), the researcher aims to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon" (p. 29). The state assistance team and the seven correlates' relationship with teacher pedagogical practices and student achievement is likely a complex phenomenon occurring in a set of many factors. With this complexity a case study approach appears to be reasonable. According to Yin (2003), "The case study is the method of choice when the phenomenon under study is not readily distinguishable from its context" (p. 4). By utilizing a

case study method the researcher hoped the relationship between the state assistance team and the seven correlates of effective schools and teacher pedagogical practices and student achievement within a school could be explained and better understood.

Farris (1999) conducted an in-depth case study comparing two low-performing middle schools. In her study she utilized in-depth interviewing to study state assistance teams as change agents. She conducted focus groups with teachers at the schools and conducted interviews with the principal and a central office staff person that worked with the state assistance team. Farris found that in one school the teachers' perceptions of the state assistance team were not positive and teachers felt the improved test scores were a result of their efforts in the classrooms every day. One teacher stated, "it wasn't necessarily the State Assistance team that made our students' scores go up. It was the teacher that was in the classroom everyday with the students" (p. 102). In the other school studied by Farris the perceptions of the teachers were more positive about the work of the state assistance team. A teacher from the second school stated, "the State Assistance Team made the students see how important the EOG was. They helped put the accountability on the students" (p. 103). Farris's methods allowed her to answer questions about how teachers felt about having a State Assistance team at their school and how the leadership was affected by the presence of the team.

Farris's (1999) methods provided rich data that benefited teachers and future assistance teams. The focus groups and in-depth interviews utilized by Farris also provided a practical model for this study to answer the research questions. This study not only utilized in-depth interviews, but used a survey to add to the data to answer the research questions. While Farris investigated how teachers felt about the state assistance and how the team

affected the leadership, this study used some of the same methods to investigate the impact of a state assistance team on one school. The teachers' perceptions are important, but how teachers changed their pedagogical practices to improve student achievement while the team observed, mentored, and made suggestions revealed data that will be beneficial for future educators and assistance team members attempting to improve low-performing schools.

Role of Researcher

The researcher was an assistant principal at the research site during the 2005/2006 school year while the state assistance team was present. Creswell (2005) states, "To truly learn about a situation, you can become involved in activities at the research site. This offers excellent opportunities to see experiences from the views of the participants" (p. 211). The researcher would be considered a participant observer because of his position and because of his position as an assistant principal at the research site; a relationship existed between the researcher and the participants. However, the researcher developed positive, professional, trusting relationships with most of the teachers at the research site. The researcher was observed and evaluated by the state assistance team in a manner similar to the teachers. The state assistance team did observe and work more directly with the teachers, but the assistant principal was also affected by the team's reports, suggestions, and influence.

The experience of both being observed and critiqued by the state assistance team built on established relationships between the researcher and the teachers. The researcher empathized with the teachers' feelings about the team coming into the school and critiquing every detail of the school. However, the study's focus was on the state assistance team not the teachers participating in the proposed study. The research was conducted after the state assistance team had completed its work, which allowed the participants to reflect about the

entire experience with the state assistance team and the impact the team had on their pedagogical practices in the classroom or the principal's leadership decisions. Because the assistance team is no longer at the school, participants were able to speak openly and honestly about the assistance team. The researcher worked to build trust with participants to get the in-depth data.

The researcher gave the participants the opportunity to read and make any corrections or clarifications to the transcripts of the interviews. Reciprocity was one way to ensure the data was not biased.

The Researcher

The researcher had eight years of experience as an educator in North Carolina public schools at the beginning of the 2005/2006 school year. The 2005/2006 school year was the researcher's first year at the research site. He had been an assistant principal for five years prior at one high school and one middle school. The previous schools the researcher worked at were very different demographically than the research site. The researcher brought those experiences to the research.

The researcher's past educational experiences created a lens through which he perceived and digested new experiences. The researcher willingly took the position as assistant principal knowing the school was a low-performing school. He believes all students can learn, the school can make a positive difference in a students' life and all students deserve the opportunity to advance themselves through education.

The researcher was not aware that a state assistance team would be coming to the school until after he began work at the research site. The researcher felt this could be a valuable learning experience, and interactions between the state assistance team and the

researcher were positive. The experience of working with and being evaluated by the state assistance team added to the lens of which the researcher viewed the overall experience and the research. However, the researcher's position afforded him the access to uncover in-depth data.

Access

The researcher received permission from the school site first by discussing the study with the principal. The researcher followed the proper procedures to gain permission from the school district to conduct the study in one of the district's schools. The researcher had developed relationships with the Office of Accountability and Testing who give permission for studies to be conducted in the school system. Knowing people and building relationships with people in the central office will benefit a researcher when attempting to gain access (Glesne, 1999). The research was approved by the university's Institutional Review Board.

Research Setting

The setting was selected because a state assistance team was mandated to be present during the 2005/2006 school year.

District

The school district where the research site is located is one of the largest in the state of North Carolina. The district served over 67,000 students during the 2005/2006 school year, and the district employed 8,000 people, 4,310 which were teachers. The teachers taught at one of the district's 108 schools. The 108 schools had principals and there were 103 assistant principals across the schools. The budget for the school year was $449,820,641. The 2005/2006 school year was the superintendent's sixth year and the board extended his contract during the school year (www.gcsnc.com).

School

The school is described as an urban school in North Carolina. It served approximately 1100 students during the 2005/2006 school year. The percentage of students on free or reduced lunch was 61%. The student body was made up of 64% African American, 29% White/Non-Hispanic, 3% Hispanic, and 4% Other (www.gcsnc.com).

During the 2005/2006 school year the school had 84 teachers, 2 curriculum facilitators, 4 assistant principals, and 1 principal. The teacher turnover rate was 45% from the previous year, meaning almost half the staff was new.

The school experienced tremendous turnover with administration prior to the 2005/2006 school year. The principal started in March of 2005, and was the fifth principal in four years at the school. Three of the four assistant principals were new at the beginning of the 2005/2006 school year. This turnover in administration created inconsistencies that may have lead to the declining test scores, teacher turnover, and the mandated state assistance team (www.gcsnc.com).

The school also adjusted through a redistricting process from the district level in 1999. Following the redistricting, the test scores at the school begin to decline and the turnover in administration and teachers increased. In 2003, the local board of education implemented a plan that involved three high schools in the area in a student choice plan. Students could choose the high school they wanted to attend based on special programs offered at each of the schools. The school in this study had a technology specialty area. Renovations were completed at the school to add technology classrooms, and classes such as Computer Engineering, Networking, and Microsoft were offered. The choice plan was terminated at the end of the 2005/200 school year because the local board of education

completed a redistricting process at the end of the 2005/2006 school year that began at the beginning of the 2006/2007 school year. The redistricting affected a large number of students and created public resentment toward the board of education and superintendent. A large number of students were redistricted to other schools from the school that was the focus of this study. The research site has experienced many changes and inconsistencies over a period of five years. The school was assigned a state assistance team because it had a composite score lower than 50% for three consecutive years and because less than 95% of available students were tested during the 2004/2005 school year. It may have been an opportunistic time for a state assistance team to enter a school and make a large impact.

The research site is one the researcher worked as an assistant principal while the state assistance team was present and it did pose some research advantages and disadvantages, which are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

Advantages and Disadvantages of the Research Site

Research Site Advantages	Research Site Disadvantages
• Presence of a State Assistance Team • Additional organizational factors (i.e., large number of returning teachers and returning principal) • Personnel open to participation in study • Researcher was familiar with proposed site and brought a unique perspective • Familiarity of personnel with researcher encourages more open dialogue	• One research site reduces generalizability of findings • Familiarity of researcher with research site could have created biases in data analysis and interpretation process • Familiarity of researcher with personnel could have created positive bias in interview data

The State Assistance Team

The state assistance team was introduced to the faculty in September of 2005. The travel restrictions on government employees delayed their arrival. The team was made up of six experienced educators from across North Carolina. Three of the team members had worked together as a team the previous year at another school. The team leader had over 25 years of experience as a middle school teacher, high school teacher, elementary assistant principal, and middle school principal. As the team leader, this person worked with the principal and administrative team directly. The other team members worked with teachers in the four core subject areas (English, science, social studies, and math) and special education. English was supervised by a team member that had 19 years of experience as a middle school Language Arts teacher and high school English teacher. The team member that worked with the science teachers had 30 years of experience as a high school science teacher, middle school assistant principal and middle school principal. Social studies was assisted by an educator that had 18 years of experience as a high school social studies teacher, and the team member that supervised the math department had 21 years of experience as a high school math teacher. The team member that worked with the special education teachers had 15 years of experience as a special education teacher. The team member that worked with the exceptional children's department left in January of 2006 to take a position as a high school principal in a different area of North Carolina. His responsibilities were divided among the other team members. The team consisted of four white females, one African-American female, and one African-American male. The team arrived with high expectations.

The state assistance team entered the school and completed a needs assessment for the overall school. The needs assessment covers everything from the building itself to school safety. The team observed every teacher in the school twice in the first two months of the

school year and placed each teacher into a category. Category I teachers are teachers that are having success in the classroom and viewed as competent. Category II teachers are watched more closely and observed on a more regular basis. Category III teachers are assigned a team member to serve as a mentor. Category III teachers can be recommended not to return based on input from the state assistance team. Teachers that started in category III could have moved to category II or I based on the improvement in the pedagogical practices.

Sample Size/Participants

The first part of the study utilized a survey to draw some conclusions about teacher knowledge and perceptions of the Seven Correlates of Effective Schools and the impact of the state assistance team in the seven areas. The survey was given to the teachers that were present at the school concurrently with the state assistance team. Out of the 84 teachers at the research site during the 2005/2006 school year, 64 teachers returned the following year. Those teachers were given the opportunity to complete the survey. Of the 64 teachers that were given the opportunity to complete the survey, 45 teachers completed and returned the survey.

The second part of the study consisted of 11 in-depth interviews with teachers that included the five department heads, five other teachers and the principal. Interviewing the principal and 10 teachers, including the department heads, provided a representative sample of the teachers that interacted with the state assistance team. The teachers in the study are the respondents and not the subject of the study. The state assistance team was the focus of the study.

Data Collection

"The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth" (Glesne, 1999, p. 29). The participants were purposefully selected for this study to obtain rich data about the impact of the state assistance team on the participants and student achievement.

Data was collected by utilizing three main sources:

(1) Survey of 64 teachers who were present during the 2005/2006 school year

(2) In-depth interviews with 10 teachers and the principal.

(3) Data from the mid-year and year-end reports submitted by the state assistance team to the State Board of Education.

Survey

According to Creswell (2005), "Instances where surveys are most suitable are to assess trends or characteristics of a population; learn about individual attitudes, opinions, beliefs, and practices; evaluate the success or effectiveness of a program" (p. 377). The survey in this study sought to learn about individuals' attitudes and perceptions of the state assistance team and the seven correlates of effective schools. Since the survey was given to all the teachers that were present during the 2005/2006 school year, the results of the survey were used to guide the interview questions. By using the results of the survey to guide the interview questions, the researcher was able to compare the findings of the interviews and the survey results. Teachers reported their responses using the following categories.

- None- The state team had no impact at all on pedagogical practice and student achievement

- Low- The state team had a slight impact on pedagogical practice and student achievement (i.e. these were discussed at meetings)
- Moderate- The state team had a moderate level of impact on pedagogical practice and student achievement (i.e. helped me add to my teaching repertoire; improved student achievement in my class)
- High- The state team had a great deal of impact on pedagogical practice and student achievement (i.e. team had a direct impact and made me better my teaching practices; raised student achievement overall).

In-Depth Interviewing

Glesne (1999) describes interviewing as "a conversation with a purpose" (p. 108). The goal of the researcher was to conduct interviews with the participants that turn into conversations about the practices and changes the participants made, did not make, or observed based on their experience with the assistance team. Interviewing the participants about the perceptions of the team, the seven correlates, pedagogical practices, and student achievement allowed the teachers and principal to talk about their experiences with the team and the impact the team had based on the participants' experiences and perceptions. Utilizing a semi-structured interview protocol allowed participants to engage in the conversation. The protocol was adjusted based on the findings of the surveys. The interview guide, in Appendix A, covers specific topics and questions.

Five department heads, five teachers, and the principal were interviewed. The department heads are appointed to their positions in their departments based on experience and effectiveness in the classroom. Because these teachers are viewed as some of the most effective and most experienced teachers and because they were all at the school prior to the

arrival of the state assistance team, they possessed the knowledge and experience to provide rich data. Additionally teachers who were at the school the year before the state assistance team arrived could speak to any differences the team made. The five additional teachers provided data from the viewpoint of a regular teacher. The department heads may have had different interactions with the team due to their leadership positions. The building level principal works closely with the team to implement the strategies that can best affect the school, and the data collected from the interviews with the principal were invaluable. The interviews were conducted on a teacher workday, a Saturday, and before or after school in February of 2007. The interviews lasted from one hour thirty minutes to forty minutes. Most of the interviews lasted approximately one hour. A total of ten teachers and one principal were interviewed.

Review of Documents

Review of documents is an unobtrusive manner to gather data that can add historical and contextual dimensions to the study (Glesne, 1999). In this study the researcher was given access to the monthly, mid-year, and year-end documents. The documents include information relating to teacher attendance, personnel issues, and summaries of the individual efforts of the team members working with teachers, and areas that need improvement in the school. The reports also include information relating to EOC scores, strategies and suggestions implemented by the state assistance team for the school, principal, and the district. The data collected from these documents was used to support and add to the data collected from the interviews.

Analysis

The results of the survey were used in designing the interview protocol. The purpose of this was to cast a broad net and investigate if the findings support the data collected during the interviewing. The survey was giving to quantify the impact of the state assistance team on pedagogical practices and student achievement in the seven areas identified by the seven correlates of effective schools.

The surveys were collected and the data was organized using a tally mark table to organize the raw data. The team had an impact on the areas defined by the correlate and each was reported separately. The raw data was then calculated into averages. For example, there were 16 responses for high impact in correlate one on pedagogical practice. That was divided by the total number of responses (45) for correlate one to calculate the average.

The data from the interviews were transcribed and explored by the researcher. Creswell (2005) notes, "A preliminary exploratory analysis in qualitative research consists of exploring the data to obtain general sense of the data, memoing ideas, thinking about the organization of the data, and considering whether you need more data" (p. 237). Exploring the data allowed the researcher to become familiar with the data as a whole and he was then able to code the data for further analysis.

The researcher read the transcripts three times. The first time the researcher read through for general knowledge and to familiarize himself with the transcripts. The researcher made notes of comments that seemed unique. The researcher read through the transcripts a second time to note the perceptions and experiences the teachers and principal had with the team. The third read the researcher was looking specifically for the impact in the areas identified by the seven correlates, pedagogical practice, and student achievement.

Creswell (2005) states, "Coding is the process of segmenting and labeling text to form descriptions and broad themes in the data" (p. 237). The coded text was shaped into broad themes that matched the seven correlates of effective schools. The seven correlates served as the major themes the researcher searched for in the transcribed data; however the researcher was also conscious of and made note of themes that emerged from the data. In addition to the major themes, and emergent themes the researcher documented the strategies teachers implemented that changed in their pedagogical practices. These strategies may be helpful to other teachers at low-performing schools.

Trustworthiness

The researcher shared the analysis with a peer who has experience working with state assistance teams and working in low-performing schools. The researcher also shared the data with the participants during the interpretive stages of the research (Glesne, 1999). In the writing of the data, the researcher used as many direct quotes from the participants to present the participants' perspective.

Summary

Changing low-performing schools is not an easy process. There are many different educational reforms that have claimed to be effective. While one reform may be effective in one school or school district, NCLB has placed part of the responsibility on the states to provide the assistance for the low-performing schools. North Carolina has implemented technical assistance teams at the low-performing schools. This measure is costly and has proven to be effective in some instances. This study will add to the knowledge of if, why, and how the teams have an impact on student achievement and teacher pedagogical practices by utilizing a mixed method approach.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

North Carolina has utilized technical assistance teams in assisting low-performing schools for almost ten years. North Carolina's teams are knowledgeable of Lawrence Lezotte's and Ronald Edmonds Seven Correlates of Effective schools and use the correlates as basis for framing the school improvement plan and improving the low-performing schools. This study investigated the impact of a state assistance team on one low-performing high school in North Carolina. In exploring this impact, a mixed method approach was used and the study relied on three sources of data: (a) teacher survey responses which focused on quantifying the impact of the state assistance team on pedagogical practices and student achievement in the areas identified by the Seven Correlates of Effective Schools; (b) documents written by the state assistance team, such as reports to the principal and the Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) along with test data; and (c) interview data from one-on-one interviews with ten purposefully selected teachers and the principal. The documents provided information about specific strategies implemented by the team and suggestions made by the team to the school, principal, and district. The interviews allowed the researcher to investigate what strategies the state assistance team utilized to improve the areas as identified by the Seven Correlates of Effective Schools and what impact the team

had on pedagogical practices and student achievement. Specifically, the study addressed the following three research questions:

1. In what ways did the work of the state assistance team embody the seven correlates?
2. In what ways did the work of the state assistance team impact student achievement?
3. In what ways did the work of the state assistance team impact pedagogical practices of teachers?

This chapter presents the results of analyses of the three sources of data described above. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section summarizes the results of the analyses of teachers' responses to the survey. The second section summarizes the results of the documents and individual interviews. The third section discusses teachers' perceptions of which individuals were most influential in making positive changes in the school.

Survey Results

The results of the survey are presented in narrative form and tables. Teachers that were present during the 2005/2006 school year were given the opportunity to complete the survey. The survey was administered to quantify the impact of the state assistance team on the areas identified by the Seven Correlates of Effective Schools, pedagogical practice, and student achievement. Survey results and responses from interviews are used together to answer the research questions. It is important to note that the data were analyzed and are presented solely in descriptive terms. Creswell (2005) notes that descriptive statistics are appropriate when the "purpose is merely to describe a set of data" (p. 184). The number of teachers who responded to the survey, the small sample size used for interviews, and the lack

of intent to generalize to a larger population lead the researcher to utilize descriptive statistics to answer the research questions. The survey was administered during a workday at the research site in February of 2007.

Demographics

The first portion of the survey was designed to collect demographic and professional data. The respondents were asked to indicate their primary subject area, the number of years they had been teaching, and whether the courses they taught had an End-Course test or not. This data enabled the researcher to create a composite picture of the teachers participating in the study. Tables 2, 3, and 4 show a composite of the respondents.

Of the 82 teachers who taught at the research site during the 2005/2006 school year, 64 returned for the 2006/2007 school year. Because the intent of the study was to investigate the impact of the state assistance team present during the 2005/2006 school year, the study was limited to the 64 returning teachers. Of those 64 teachers, 45 (70%) returned completed surveys.

Of the respondents, 2 teachers (4.4%) indicated they taught physical education, 4 teachers (8.8%) indicated they taught a foreign language or cultural arts, 4 teachers (8.8%) indicated they taught exceptional children, 5 teachers (11.1%) indicated they taught math, 5 teachers (11.1%) indicated they taught science, 5 teachers (11.1%) indicated they taught English, 8 teachers (17.8%) indicated they taught social studies, and 12 teachers (26.7%) indicated they taught career and technical education classes. Table 2 shows the above data compared with the possible respondents. Because the state assistance team worked more in depth with certain subject areas, it was important to review from where the responses came.

Table 2

Subject Areas of Respondents and Possible Respondents

Subject Taught	Possible Respondents	Surveys Completed	Percentage	End-of-Course Test
Physical Education	6	2	33%	No
Foreign Lang./Cultural Arts	6	4	67%	No
Exceptional Children	8	4	50%	No
Math	7	5	71%	Yes
Science	7	5	71%	Yes
English	7	5	71%	Yes
Career/Technical Education	23	12	52%	No
Total	64	45	70%	

While the state assistance team worked with all teachers, the team's focus was in the courses and with teachers that had an End-of-Course (EOC) test. The results of past EOCs were the cause of the assistance team presence. It is important to note that the majority of teachers at the research site did not teach an EOC subject. Of the 45 respondents to the survey, 18 (40%) taught a course with an EOC test. Table 3 shows the number of EOC respondents and Non-EOC respondents.

Table 3

Number of EOC and Non-EOC Survey Respondents

EOC	18	40%
Non-EOC	27	60%

Table 4 summarizes the number of years of teaching experience the respondents had. While 18 (40%) of the respondents had less than three years teaching, 14 (31.1%) had ten or more years of experience. State assistance teams observe every teacher twice and determine

the type of assistance the teacher needs, regardless of the number of years they have been teaching.

Table 4

Number of Years of Teaching Experience of Survey Respondents

# of Years Teaching	# Respondents	Percentage
0-3 Years	18	40%
4-10 Years	13	28.9%
10+ Years	14	31.1%

Seven Correlates

The Seven Correlates of Effective Schools are a cornerstone for the state assistance teams in North Carolina. The teams use the correlates as a framework to structure the school improvement plan, improve student achievement, and improve teacher pedagogy. The second part of the survey asked teachers to respond to the impact the state assistance team had on the areas identified by the seven correlates and pedagogical practice and student achievement. Teachers reported their responses using the following categories.

- None- The state team had no impact at all on pedagogical practice and student achievement
- Low- The state team had a slight impact on pedagogical practice and student achievement (i.e. these were discussed at meetings)
- Moderate- The state team had a moderate level of impact on pedagogical practice and student achievement (i.e. helped me add to my teaching repertoire; improved student achievement in my class)
- High- The state team had a great deal of impact on pedagogical practice and student achievement (i.e. team had a direct impact and made me better my teaching practices; raised student achievement overall)

A simple average was used to collate the responses. The purpose of the tables is not to generalize the results, but the tables do reveal the state assistance team had a moderate to high impact on pedagogical practice, and a low to moderate impact on student achievement. *Correlate One: Instructional Leadership: In the effective school, the principal acts as an instructional leader and effectively and persistently communicates the mission of the school to staff, parents, and students.*

When teachers were asked about the impact of the state assistance team on correlate one with respect to pedagogical practices, 24 (52.3%) responded the moderate impact, 16 (35.6%) responded the team had a high impact.

When teachers were asked about the impact of the state assistance team on correlate one with respect to student achievement, 19 (42.2%) responded that the team had a moderate impact on student achievement and 16 (35.6%) responded the team had a low impact. Tables 5 and 6 summarize the impact of the state assistance team on correlate one as it relates to pedagogical practice and student achievement.

Table 5

Impact of State Assistance Team on Correlate One: *Pedagogical Practice*

Impact	# or Responses	Percentage
None	3	6.7%
Low	2	4.4%
Moderate	24	53.3%
High	16	35.6%

Correlate Two: Clear and Focused Mission: In the effective school, there is a clearly articulated mission of the school through which the staff shares an understanding of and a commitment to the school's goals, priorities, assessment procedures, and accountability.

Table 6

Impact of State Assistance Team on Correlate One: Student Achievement

Impact	# of Responses	Percentage
None	4	8.8%
Low	16	35.6%
Moderate	19	42.2%
High	6	13.3%

When teachers were asked about the impact of the state assistance team on correlate two with respect to pedagogical practices, 21 (46.7%) responded the state assistance team had a moderate impact, and 16 (35.6%) responded the team had a high impact. Table 7 summarizes correlate two as it relates to pedagogical practice.

Table 7

Impact of State Assistance Team on Correlate Two: Pedagogical Practices

Impact	# of Respondents	Percentage
None	3	6.7%
Low	5	11.1%
Moderate	21	46.7%
High	16	35.6%

When teachers were asked about the impact of the state assistance team on correlate two with respect to student achievement, 19 (42.2%) responded the team had moderate impact on student achievement, and 17 (37.8%) responded the team had a low impact. Table 8 summarizes correlate two as it relates to student achievement.

Table 8

Impact of State Assistance Team on Correlate Two: Student Achievement

Impact	# of Respondents	Percentage
None	4	8.8%
Low	17	37.8%
Moderate	19	42.2%
High	5	11.1%

Correlate Three: Safe and Orderly Environment: In the effective school we say there is an orderly, purposeful, business-like atmosphere, which is free from the threat of physical harm. The school climate is not oppressive and is conducive to teaching and learning.

Correlate three had the highest rating of impact when teachers responded about pedagogical practice. When teachers were asked about the impact of the state assistance team on correlate three with respect to pedagogical practice, 19 (42.2%) responded that the team had a high impact, and 15 (33.3%) responded that the team had a moderate impact on pedagogical practice. One of the team's focus was on helping teachers with classroom management. Writing responses on the survey indicate how helpful the team was with classroom management strategies and how beneficial it was to have more adults to help monitor students. Table 9 summarizes correlate three as it relates to pedagogical practice.

Table 9

Impact of State Assistance team on Correlate Three: Pedagogical Practice

Impact	# of Respondents	Percentage
None	2	4.4%
Low	9	20%
Moderate	15	33.3%
High	19	42.2%

When teachers were asked about the impact of the state assistance team on correlate three with respect to student achievement, 16 (35.6%) teachers responded that the team had a moderate impact, and 13 (28.9%) responded the team had a low impact on student achievement. Table 10 summarizes correlate three as it relates to student achievement.

Correlate 4: Climate of High Expectations: In the effective school, there is a climate of high expectations in which the staff believes and demonstrates that all students can obtain mastery

of the school's essential curriculum. They also believe that they, the staff, have the capability to help all students obtain that mastery.

Table 10

Impact of State Assistance Team on Correlate Three: Student Achievement

Impact	# of Respondents	Percentage
None	7	15.6%
Low	13	28.9%
Moderate	16	35.6%
High	9	20%

When teachers were asked about the impact of the state assistance team on correlate four with respect to pedagogical practice, 17 (37.8%) responded the team had a high impact, and 15 (33.3%) responded the team had a moderate impact on pedagogical practice. Table 11 summarizes correlate four as it relates to pedagogical practice.

Table 11

Impact of State Assistance Team on Correlate Four: Pedagogical Practice

Impact	# of Respondents	Percentage
None	5	11.1%
Low	8	17.8%
Moderate	15	33.3%
High	17	37.8%

When teachers were asked about the impact of the state assistance team on correlate four with respect to student achievement, 19 (42.2%) responded the team had a moderate impact, and 13 (28.9%) responded the team had a low impact on student achievement. Table 12 summarizes correlate four as it relates to student achievement.

Correlate 5: Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress: In the effective school, pupil progress over the essential objectives are measured frequently, monitored frequently, and the

results of those assessments are used to improve the individual student behaviors and performances, as well as to improve the curriculum as a whole.

Table 12

Impact of State Assistance Team on Correlate Four: Student Achievement

Impact	# of Respondents	Percentage
None	8	17.8%
Low	13	28.9%
Moderate	19	42.2%
High	5	11.1%

When teachers were asked about the impact of the state assistance team on correlate five with respect to pedagogical practice, 17 (37.8%) responded the team had a moderate impact, and 15 (33.3%) responded the team had a high impact on pedagogical practice regarding. Table 13 summarizes correlate five as it relates to pedagogical practice.

Table 13

Impact of State Assistance Team on Correlate Five: Pedagogical Practice

Impact	# of Respondents	Percentage
None	5	11.1%
Low	8	17.8%
Moderate	17	37.8%
High	15	33.3%

When teachers were asked about the impact of the state assistance team on correlate five with respect to student achievement, 19 (42.2%) teachers responded that the team had a moderate impact, and 16 (35.6%) responded the team had a low impact on student achievement. Table 14 summarizes correlate five as it relates to student achievement.

Correlate 6: Positive Home School Relations: In the effective school, parents understand and support the basic mission of the school and are given opportunities to play important roles in helping the school to achieve its mission.

Table 14

Impact of State Assistance Team on Correlate Five: Student Achievement

Impact	# of Respondents	Percentage
None	7	15.6%
Low	16	35.6%
Moderate	19	42.2%
High	3	6.7%

When teachers were asked about the impact of the state assistance team on correlate six with respect to pedagogical practice, 15 (33.3%) responded the team had a low impact, and 13 (28.9%) responded the team had no impact on pedagogical practice. Table 15 summarizes correlate six as it relates to pedagogical practice.

Table 15

Impact of State Assistance Team on Correlate Six: Pedagogical Practice

Impact	# of Respondents	Percentage
None	13	28.9%
Low	15	33.3%
Moderate	10	22.2%
High	7	15.6%

When teachers were asked about the impact of the state assistance team on correlate six with respect to student achievement, 18 (40.0%) teachers responded that the team a low impact, and 18 (40.0%) responded the team had no impact on student achievement. Table 16 summarizes correlate six as it relates to student achievement.

Table 16

Impact of State Assistance Team on Correlate Six: Student Achievement

Impact	# of Respondents	Percentage
None	18	40%
Low	18	40%
Moderate	7	15.6%
High	2	4.4%

Correlate 7: Opportunity to Learn and Student Time on Task: In the effective school, teachers allocate a significant amount of classroom time to instruction in the essential curricular areas. For a high percentage of this time, students are actively engaged in whole-class or large group, teacher-directed, planned learning activity.

When teachers were asked about the impact of the state assistance team on correlate seven with respect to pedagogical practice, 24 (53.3%) responded the team had a moderate impact. And 13 (28.9%) responded the team had a high impact on pedagogical practice. Table 17 summarizes correlate seven as it relates to pedagogical practice.

Table 17

Impact of State Assistance Team on Correlate Seven: Pedagogical Practice

Impact	# of Respondents	Percentage
None	3	6.7%
Low	5	11.1%
Moderate	24	53.3%
High	13	28.8%

When teachers were asked about the impact of the state assistance team on correlate seven with respect to student achievement, 18 (40.0%) teachers responded that the had a moderate impact, and 16 (40.0%) responded the team had a low impact on student achievement. Table 18 summarizes correlate seven as it relates to student achievement.

Table 18

Impact of State Assistance team on Correlate Seven: Student Achievement

Impact	# of Respondents	Percentage
None	6	13.3%
Low	16	35.5%
Moderate	18	40%
High	5	11.1%

Summary

The survey results have been presented as descriptive data. Generalizing the results was not the intention of the researcher. The impact the state assistance team had on pedagogical practice could be summarized as moderate to high. Of the seven areas, four had the highest response on pedagogical practice in the moderate category and two had the highest response in the high category. The team's impact on student achievement could be summarized as moderate. On the impact on student achievement six of the areas had the highest response rate in the moderate category. The results of the surveys helped frame the interview protocol that is discussed in the next section of this chapter.

Summary of Survey Results in Relation to Research Questions

This part of the section summarizes the data from the survey in relation to the following research questions:

1. In what ways did the work of the state assistance team embody the seven correlates?
2. In what ways did the work of the state assistance team impact student achievement?
3. In what ways did the work of the state assistance team impact pedagogical practices?

Research Question #1

The survey asked teachers to rate the impact of the state assistance team on the seven correlates of effective schools in relationship to pedagogical practice and student achievement. The responses show there was evidence of all seven correlates through the work of the state assistance team. *Instructional Leadership* was a correlate that had a

moderate impact according to the survey results. *Positive Home School Relations* was a correlate that had a low impact according to the results.

Research Question #2

The survey results show the team had a moderate amount of impact on student achievement. The data indicated the teachers believed the team had the most impact on student achievement with correlate four, *Climate of High Expectations.* Correlate six, *Positive Home School Relations* had the least amount of impact on student achievement. The results indicated the teachers did not believe there was high impact on student achievement by the state assistance team working through the correlates.

Research Question #3

The survey results indicate the team did have a moderate to high impact on the pedagogical practices of some teachers. The data indicate the teachers believed the team had the most impact on pedagogical practice with correlate one, *Instructional Leadership*. The team had the least amount of impact with correlate six, *Positive Home School Relations*, on pedagogical practice. The results indicate the teachers believed the work of the state assistance team using the correlates as a framework positively impacted pedagogical practices at the research site.

Interview and Document Review Results

This section of this chapter reports the qualitative data collected through individual interviews with ten teachers and the principal at the research site about the impact of the state assistance team. The interviews were conducted on a teacher workday, a Saturday, and before or after school in February of 2007. The interviews lasted from forty minutes to ninety minutes with most of the interviews lasting about 60 minutes. Table 19 summarizes the

breakdown of teacher interviewees in terms of their primary subject areas and years of teaching experience. Of the ten teachers, five were department heads, and five were regular teachers. The English, Social Studies, Science, Foreign Language, and Exceptional Children department heads were interviewed.

Table 19

Number of Teacher Interviewees by Subject Area

Math	English	Social Studies	Science	Foreign Language	Exceptional Children
1 teacher	3 teachers	2 teachers	2 teachers	1 teachers	1 teachers

Years of teaching experience

0-3 years teaching experience	4-10 years teaching experience	10+ years teaching experience
4 teachers	4 teachers	2 teachers

It is important to note that three of the teachers shared during the interviews that they were in category III after the assistance teams' initial observations and worked very closely with a team member for the rest of the year. The other teachers shared they were in category I or II and worked with team members, but not as often as the category III teachers. Category I teachers are teachers that are having success in the classroom and viewed as competent. Category II teachers are observed more closely and observed on a more regular basis. Category III teachers are assigned a team member to serve as a mentor. Category III teachers can be recommended not to return to the school based on input from the state assistance team. Teachers that started in category III could have moved to category II or I based on the improvement in the pedagogical practices. This is important because it gives some insight into how in depth some interviewees worked with team members.

The interview protocol (Appendix A and B) consisted of two sections. The first section consisted of questions that dealt with participants' perceptions of the state assistance team and how the team helped the school, the teacher, and student achievement. Assistance teams have the responsibilities of evaluating, intervening, and helping with implementations of effective school strategies at schools that have been labeled as low-performing (Mintrop & Trujillo, 2005; NCDPI, 2005). Teachers and the principal provided data, rich in context, by responding to questions about what the team did at the school. The second section of the interview protocol asked teachers to discuss the work of the state assistance team and how it impacted the school in the areas identified by the Seven Correlates of Effective schools. The interview protocols for the teachers and the principal were very similar. The principal's interview questions were adjusted, but drew from knowledge and experience of the entire school.

The first part of the interviews and document review resulted in data that suggested trends at the school and teacher level, but the data also revealed individual differences. After multiple stages of analysis, the data were grouped into three categories.

- Teacher experience with assistance team
- Pedagogical practices
- Student achievement

The latter two groups are closely related to the expectations of a state assistance team as outlined in the Guidelines (2005) and directly address the three research questions. Improving the academic performance of low-achieving students and building capacity in teacher practice are some of the expectations of a state assistance team. The findings are summarized in Table 20.

Table 20

Qualitative Findings

Teacher/Principal Experience with /SAT		Pedagogical Practice	Student Achievement
Teachers	Principal		
* Anxious * Some believed the team was needed * Were more comfortable after initial meeting with team * Collegiality * Positive interactions * Benefited from interactions and suggestions * Team was professional	* Anxious *Viewed the team as a resource * Team was professional * Positive experience	* Helped teachers improve their practice * Added strategies to tool box *A resource for teachers *Improved writing strategies * Support with instructional strategies *Improved classroom management strategies *Improved lesson plan writing	*Strategies helpful, but teachers had to put in practice *Did help improve writing scores *Assisted and provided strategies for EOC Jam *Some teachers felt team most effective when working with students * Modest improvement in test scores improved

The researcher reviewed the monthly, mid-year, and end of year reports submitted by the state assistance team to the principal, superintendent, and State Board of Education to find supportive data and consistency in the interviewees' responses. The documents revealed strategies and suggestions the team implemented and were also mentioned by teachers and the principal in their responses. Therefore, the document review is mentioned when relevant throughout the interview responses and not isolated. The next three sections present results of the first part of the interview protocol.

Experience with Assistance Team

The first part of the interview protocol was designed to give teachers an opportunity to share their experiences with the state assistance team without focusing on the correlates. Creating a dialogue about the team's work and giving the interviewees a chance to discuss

what they felt was important about the year they spent with the state assistance team was important in starting the discussion of how the work of the team impacted the seven correlates.

While teachers' experiences with the assistance team varied, there were several themes that emerged from the data. Teachers consistently stated they were anxious or nervous about a state assistance team coming to the school. The feeling that the team was coming in to take over the school was mentioned by six teachers and the principal. An exceptional children's teacher responded, "I was anxious about how much power they would have over what we did on a day-to-day basis in our classrooms." An English teacher said, "Oh God, here come the teaching police to catch all of my mistakes." Most of interviewees commented about having some apprehensions. These feelings were consistent with the Mintrop's (2004) study that found teachers at schools with intervention teams to be worried about the impact the teams would have on their jobs. However, two teachers thought the presence of the team was a good thing. One math teacher stated, "I thought that they were coming to help and it would benefit us as a school." One English teacher said, "I was glad because I was familiar with what they did at previous schools." The two teachers were in the minority, as the overall initial reaction was one of apprehension. This small disparity shows how different teachers view themselves as professionals.

The principal's response was similar to that of the teachers. The principal stated:

> When I first learned the state assistance team was coming to my school I was nervous, and I did not know what to expect. I had heard a lot of stories, most negative. I thought they were coming to take over.

After the initial meeting with the state assistance team, all the interviewees felt more comfortable, but still a little nervous. The principal stated, "Because I got to meet with each

of the team members individually, I felt more positive. They really wanted to re-iterate the fact that they were here to assist us in anyway they could." The relationship between the team and the principal was positive. The principal expressed how she tried to learn as much as possible from the team and team leader since she was a new principal.

Most of the teachers' initial perceptions changed once they met and talked with team members. The Science department head stated, "Once I met the state team I felt very comfortable, and very confident they were here to help us achieve a higher level of teaching." Another English teacher stated, "The teachers talked amongst themselves a lot and really tried to get a jist of how everybody was feeling. I started to calm down and feel more relaxed."

While most of the interviewees felt more comfortable about the team after the initial meeting, the English department head felt a little offended. At a meeting, the team discussed how the teachers were not the same problems of the past years. The teacher stated:

> But I was here in the past so I kind of felt like, wait a minute not all of us who were here have been problems. There was a definite emphasis on basically how bad they felt the school had been in the past. Since I was a teacher here in the past, I felt a little offended.

Even with that statement, most interviewees felt more comfortable after meeting the assistance team. This sentiment was probably the thought of many of the teachers who had been at the school for several years. Mintrop's (2004b) study revealed that teachers felt offended when assistance teams came to their school. While not all the teachers stated that they felt offended, they all had some apprehensions.

Once the team conducted the teacher evaluations and teachers were placed into categories, their experiences changed slightly. Teachers that were in category III had a mentor on the state team and met with them weekly. The teacher and the team member

worked on lesson plans and completing the teacher's action plan. The interviewees that were categorized as category III teachers gave mostly positive feedback about their experience with team members. One Math teacher stated:

> My interactions with the team members were positive. My team member was extremely knowledgeable and really, really whipped me into shape and I was glad to have that, because up until I was working so closely with the state team person in my subject area, I didn't really have a mentor.

The Social Studies department head stated, "I felt that there was a lot of collegiality and that they (the team) really did want to make an impact in the school." Almost all of the interviewees felt the experience with the state assistance team was positive. One English teacher expressed some positive experiences with one member and a negative experience with another. She stated:

> Because there was a need for me to work with classroom management and to work with my curriculum, I had two different meetings. The one with the team member about classroom management was positive. I would leave with ideas and things to try. When I would meet with the other team member, I would walk away feeling that maybe I was incompetent or I needed to stop teaching.

While the principal was not placed in a category in the same manner as teachers, the principal was required to meet with the team leader on a weekly basis. The principal and the team leader discussed the progress of teachers, the school, and discussed areas the principal was doing well in and needed to improve or focus. The principal expressed that the meetings were beneficial for her as a leader and kept the communication to teachers fairly consistent. The principal said:

> Having to meet with the team leader at least once a week was very helpful, because that line of communication got to where we became very comfortable with talking to each other about whatever the problems or concerns were on both sides and we were able to talk about resolutions. We formed bonds with the team members. They were very appreciative that we were open to them

> being here. They didn't feel any resistance and they re-iterated that a lot of times so it was good interaction.

In discussing the experience with the state assistance team, teachers focused on how they were treated by the team members. The principal discussed the team and the ideas, strategies, and suggestions the team brought to the school. The team's presence and the interactions between the teachers and the team members were professional and cordial. The responses are consistent with Brinson's (2004) and Turner's (2002) studies, in which teachers perceived the experience with the state assistance team as positive and the impact positive for the school.

The experiences with the state assistance teams help answer the first research question: In what ways did the work of the state assistance team embody the seven correlates? Teachers talked about the professional relationships that developed and how the team became a part of the school. Correlate one, instructional leadership, was most prevalent in the participants' experiences. The teachers' and the principal's experiences reflected correlate one through the state assistance team's work. The team met with teachers and administration on a regular basis to discuss instruction and ways to improve. The team had many suggestions and resources for teachers and the principal to utilize to improve classroom instruction. The next section focuses more on how the team affected pedagogical practices.

Pedagogical Practices

One of the state assistance team's responsibilities when working at a low-performing school is to raise students from levels I and II to proficient levels on the end-of-course test. Student scores on EOCs are reported by the level they achieve. The achievement levels are:

> (1) Level I – Students performing at this level do not have sufficient mastery of knowledge and skills in the subject.
> (2) Level II – Students performing at this level demonstrate inconsistent mastery

of knowledge and skills in the tested area.

(3) Level III – Students performing at this level consistently demonstrate mastery of grade level subject area.

(4) Level IV – Students performing at this level consistently perform in a superior manner clearly beyond that required to be proficient.

State team members worked closely with all teachers to improve pedagogical practices and improving pedagogical practices is one way to improve student achievement. Interview results indicate that teachers felt the state assistance team did help them to become better teachers, but they did not change their own practices.

Teachers felt the state assistance team was a great resource for strategies and practices in the classroom. An English teacher when discussing pedagogical practices commented, "Having things to add to my tool box was a great help." Some of the resources were bell ringer activities, games, centers, assistance with alignment with standard course of study, and others. The team conducted professional development in areas of lesson planning, essential questions, and classroom management. A Math teacher commented that "the most effective thing the team did was give me resources that I may not have had otherwise." Only one Foreign Language teacher stated, "Their involvement with me was very little." Overall, teachers felt the team provided resources they could utilize in the classroom.

Some teachers were specific about the type of strategies and resources the team provided. An area that saw improvement and several teachers commented on was the writing process and tenth grade writing test. The team organized a "writing blitz" four weeks before the writing test. English teachers were given the tools and the strategies to work with a small group of students preparing for writing test. Students were pulled from elective classes and teachers and state team members worked with students in small groups. Interviewees that were not English teachers talked about how there was a focus on writing. A Social Studies

teacher stated "One of the most effective things the team did was work with teachers teaching the writing process and getting students ready for the writing test." An English teacher stated:

> I didn't have any of those classes (EOC classes), but I did help with the writing blitz. The materials the team provided were very effective, I thought. It allowed the kids to manipulate things and it created a more fun atmosphere for learning. It was all aligned with the test.

The writing test was an important focus for the team and the school. The team and teachers put time, effort, and resources into helping students be successful on the writing test.

The principal remarked about how much of a support the team was to teachers and how the team readily helped teachers with instructional strategies. She stated:

> They were a resource for teachers. They had a wealth of knowledge as a team and as individuals. The resources, in regards to instructional practices and strategies helped our teachers improve as teachers and increased the ideas they (teachers) could utilize in the future. I mean the team had resources at their fingertips and they were very open about sharing those and helping teachers to be able to implement the strategies.

Another goal state assistance teams have at low-performing schools is to help the school make Annual Yearly Progress (AYP). The writing test, along with English I and Algebra I, comprise the data that high schools in North Carolina use to measure AYP. Additionally, the writing test is administered to students in March, when there are not as many tests to focus on as there are at the end of the year, when End-of-Course tests are administered. Therefore, the team could focus more on the writing tests.

While the writing test was important to the state assistance team, teachers, and the school, teachers discussed other ways the state assistance team impacted their pedagogical practices. Several of the teachers discussed how the team assisted, advised, and directed them with classroom management issues. An English teacher stated,

> My weakest area was classroom management. The team gave me lots of ideas to try. That was the biggest thing, because as a brand new teacher you can read a thousand books about classroom management, but a child in your face is not the same as a problem in a book. I realized not everything they suggested worked, but having a bigger tool box to deal with classroom issues is a great help, even now.

This statement may show that the team did not change pedagogical practices as much as they helped improve some teachers' classroom management skills. Teachers mentioned frequently how the team talked about building relationships with students and having organized, engaging lessons was a key to minimizing student disruptions during a class period. Almost all of the interviewees mentioned bell to bell instruction. According to monthly reports, the team discussed bell to bell instruction at almost every meeting with teachers. In reports it was mentioned how this was an expectation of the principal, and the principal mentioned bell to bell instruction frequently at faculty meetings.

A review of the monthly reports showed the state assistance team required lesson plans from all teachers for the first two observations and from category III teachers on a weekly basis. A team member met with category III teachers and discussed the lesson plans on a weekly basis. One interviewee stated, "Having to turn in lesson plans and discuss them made me more prepared for class and help me get organized, even for this year." Another interviewee noted, "I had to provide one of the more detailed lesson plans I have ever done in a long time, since my student teaching, but it made me think more about strategies." Teachers talked about how the assistance with lesson planning helped with alignment with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS). One interviewee said, "My team member helped me write lesson plans that matched up with the standard course of study." Another interviewee noted, "They helped widdle down some of my teaching and make it more streamlined to the set course of study."

Not all teachers believed turning in lesson plans was beneficial. “After the meetings with my team member I felt as if I should quit teaching” noted an English teacher. One teacher, who was category I and the Social Studies department head, stated,

> There were a few teachers who were given a lot of suggestions about how to change. And some of those teachers were struggling. They were having problems. There was some resistance to make change but that was just a very small number of teachers who had been put on action plans. In other words, they weren’t really willing to take the advice that was given to them by the state team as well as other teachers that were consulting with them.

This teacher was giving their opinion, but this was not an uncommon thought. Working with individual teachers and reviewing lesson plans was a critical method used to change teachers practice in the classroom. Some teachers embraced this and used the suggestions to get better and a few did not. The teachers that did not follow the suggestions or improve throughout the year did not return.

Another specific way the state assistance team tried to impact pedagogical practices was by modeling lessons for teachers in the classroom. This may not have had the best results. An English teacher notes about the team member working with him,

> They (students) felt she was condescending, and talking down to them. Because she was modeling for me and other teachers, I saw she was not condescending to them, but I think her expertise was a younger group of students. And you know candy and games she used, I believe my kids thought that stuff was childish. So in some ways I guess the state team would go and get on their high horse and say watch me this is what works, and in some cases I do not think it worked. The team seemed to be out of touch with what our student population was really looking for or could use.

This was one instance where the expertise of a state assistance team member was questioned. It may show that while team members are experienced educators, they may not be placed in areas of their expertise. This teacher may have realized the team members were not perfect

with all the answers, but experienced educators that could provide valuable suggestions that teachers could use or shape into their own ideas about teaching.

Two other interviewees mentioned a team member modeling lessons for them and one was described as "not spectacular." The math teacher stated, "She was well organized, but the kids did not respond to her, but it still helped me see how a lesson should flow." The other teacher, and English teacher, described the lesson as "great." The teacher stated, "The state team member did help me pull together a podia seminar with my AP students." Modeling lessons was one strategy the state assistance team used to change pedagogical practices, and it seemed to be the one that may not have had as large an impact as other strategies.

The principal discussed two main areas where the team assisted in improving pedagogical practices at the school. The first was showing teachers and administrator how to use the available data to improve instruction. The principal stated,

> I think the most effective thing the team did with teachers and administrators was to show how to manipulate data and use data; how to look at data and be able to improve instruction. The team showed how to focus on the important data. There is so much. But having a focal point from which to go with the data, I think was one of the strategies that really stuck out with me.

The analysis of the monthly reports showed the team leader discussed different types of data frequently with the principal and encouraged her to share with the staff. Some of the data consisted of EOC scores, teacher attendance, student attendance, report cards, failure lists, and student and teacher schedules. The second area the principal talked about was the alignment of lessons with the standard course of study. The team worked with teachers to write and present lessons that were aligned with the NCSCOS to better prepare students for

the EOCs. A review of monthly reports revealed that lesson plans were reviewed to ensure the information that was being taught was aligned with the NCSCOS.

Pedagogical practices at the research site were impacted by the state assistance team. A majority of the teachers interviewed felt the team helped make them a better educator. Appendix E has a more detailed list of strategies and services the state assistance team utilized to improve pedagogical practices.

Student Achievement

The strategies and efforts of the state assistance team to improve pedagogical practices had an impact on student achievement. One way impact on student achievement can be measured is test scores. However, this study asked teachers if the state assistance team had an impact on student achievement in their classrooms. While test scores can show a quantitative growth or decline, teachers measure student achievement in their classrooms in more ways than just test scores. This section answers the second research question: in what ways did the work of the state assistance team impact student achievement.

Teachers felt that student achievement was impacted somewhat in their classrooms. The teachers felt the strategies the team shared were helpful, but it was the teachers who had to put the suggestions into practice to get the improvement in student achievement. The sentiment that the teachers did the work is consistent with Farris' (1999) study. When asked if the team had an impact on student achievement, a Social Studies teacher responded, "I am not sure if it was the team or me implementing the strategies from the team. I guess if it was their suggestions it could be their impact." A Foreign Language teacher responded, "I guess in the EOC classes, our scores went up, but I know the EOC teachers worked very hard." While the state assistance team made suggestions, modeled lessons, or provided help

planning, teachers felt they were the ones that implemented the strategies and did the actual work to improve student achievement. That thought is consistent with findings in Farris's (1999) and Turner's (2002) studies. The majority of the respondents felt they were the front line workers that have direct impact on student achievement.

In this study there were two instances were teachers agreed the team may have had a direct impact on student achievement. Team members worked directly with students in both instances. The first was the "writing blitz." The Social Studies department head stated,

> The one area where I think the state assistance team was the most effective, and I think that our scores bear it out, is the work that was done by the team member who pulled the students out that were struggling with writing and worked with small groups of them. And if I'm not mistaken our writing scores improved more than any others.

Almost all the teachers interviewed mentioned the "writing blitz" and what an impact the team had working with small groups of students. The "writing blitz" involved more teachers working with small groups than state team members, but teachers saw the team members working directly with students. A review of monthly reports the team submitted to the principal and superintendent show the team spent diligent time developing writing strategies and plans to give to teachers to conduct the lessons themselves. The English teachers will use the same strategies and methods during the 2006/2007 school year for the writing test. The English teacher stated, "I think personally that (writing strategies) was the biggest help for me because now I have those resources still and I can pull those out." The writing test was a focal point of the state assistance team. Teachers discussed in depth how the team worked to improve writing scores on the tenth grade writing test and the writing scores did improve.

The other instance where the state assistance team members worked directly with students was the EOC Jam. The EOC Jam was an adjusted day and students were in small

groups to review for exams, specifically EOCs. Students were assigned to study groups based on the EOC course they were taking. The first thirty minutes of the day the students reported to the study group for the seven days prior to the EOC test to study and review. A review of the monthly reports revealed team members worked in their specific areas to develop reviews for teachers to utilize during these review sections. Some team members lead their own small group of students or worked with a specific teacher. Almost all the teachers noted the team members worked with small groups and felt the student achievement went up because of the EOC Jam strategy. One interesting point was made by the Exceptional Children's department head discussing the work of the assistance team and student achievement, "I do not know if the team helped improve the scores, but students were more aware of the tests and the importance of them." The state assistance team's work with the students made such an impression that the Social Studies department head felt working directly with students should be the focus of future teams.

> It's my opinion that the state assistance team should do a lot more of that (working with students). What they really need to do is to identify students who are struggling and students who have behavior problems and pull those students out if they are trouble makers or struggling. That allows the teacher in the classroom to work better with the rest of the students and the struggling students get help also. State assistance teams need to continue focusing on weak and struggling teachers, but focus on the student population. Too much focus was on teachers and getting teachers to work, when the writing test results show how working with students the team made an improvement.

This teacher's perception of the state assistance team was not mentioned in the exact words by any other teachers, but almost all the teachers and the principal mentioned the two ways team members worked directly with students. The two viewpoints show that teachers believe the focus of the state assistance team should have been more on helping students prepare for the EOCs. A great deal of the state assistance team's focus was on working with teachers and

improving pedagogical practices, when maybe there should have been more of a focus on directly preparing students for the EOCs.

After reviewing the test scores from the 2004/2005 school year and comparing to the 2005/2006 school year, student achievement did improve. The only subject that did not improve was the English I EOC scores. All other EOC scores improved the year the state assistance team was present. Table 20 shows the EOC scores and the composite scores. The composite score went from 35.2% in 2004/2005 to 41.7% in 2005/2006.

While these scores appear to be positive, the research site has still been determined a low-performing school due to the lack of growth in student scores. However, with the label of low-performing, the principal and teachers felt there were great gains in student achievement and the school is moving in the right direction. Better understanding of the importance of the EOCs by students and teachers is one way the school was improving.

Overall, teachers had a positive experience with the state assistance team and felt the team was there to help improve the school. This perception is consistent with the previous studies conducted about state assistance team (Brinson, 2004; Farris, 1999; Turner, 2001). The principal felt the experience was more positive for the administration. Student achievement improved while the state assistance team was present as evidenced by the test results and the teachers' statements. The next section is an analysis of the responses of teachers when asked about their perceptions of the impact of the state assistance team on the areas identified by the seven correlates of effective schools and further addresses the research questions.

Table 21

End-of Course Scores and Composite Scores

EOC	2003/04 % of Proficient Students	2004/05 % of Proficient Students	2005/06 % of Proficient Students
Algebra I	32.7	15.6	38
Algebra II	45.7	29.6	47.7
Geometry	28.8	18.6	24.8
Biology	36	26.9	31.6
Chemistry	44.7	29.4	37.2
Physical Science	33.2	27.5	31.5
Physics	NA	NA	27.3
US History	NA	NA	32.9
Civics	NA	NA	24.1
English I	66.0	66.3	60.3
Writing	NA	60.3	66.3
Composite Score	40.9	35.2	41.7

Impact on Seven Correlates of Effective Schools

State assistance teams in North Carolina use the correlates to frame the interventions and to assist low-performing schools they are serving. The correlates provide a starting point for the teams to improve instruction in the schools (Brinson, 2004). The teachers at the research site were knowledgeable about the correlates after the team arrived and explained them in a faculty meeting early in the school year. A review of the monthly documents revealed the team consistently discussed the correlates at meetings with teachers and administrators. The following section discusses the responses of interviewees when asked about the impact of the state assistance team on the areas identified by the correlates and how the assistance team's

work impacted pedagogical practice and student achievement. A description of each correlate will be followed by a discussion of how teachers observed or experienced the team's work.

Interviewees were asked specifically about the correlate and how the work of the assistance team embodied the correlate and impacted pedagogical practice and student achievement. The researcher was investigating how the state assistance team's work embodied each correlate.

Interviewees were asked the following questions regarding each correlate.

- Describe how this correlate impacted your teaching practices as the assistance team worked with you?
- Describe how this correlate impacted student achievement in your classroom?
- What strategies suggested by the team fit in this correlate that impacted student achievement in your room?

***Instructional Leadership**:*

This correlate proved to be difficult for teachers to distinguish who was doing the work; was it the state assistance team or the administration. Most teachers believed the administrators and the assistance team worked together. One interviewee stated, "I definitely saw a collaborative effort between the leadership of the school and the state assistance team to make it feel like there was a combined effort to improve student achievement." Another teacher commented about the collaboration between the assistance team and the administration regarding instructional leadership,

> We knew that both the principal, assistant principals, and members of the state assistance team were coming in to see if we were posting our essential questions. Then if our lesson was oriented towards teaching the essential question, that is where good leadership came in and if the essential questions were related to the standard course of study student achievement should improve. The constant reminders and emphasis is what we really needed.

One other interviewee stated, “I think they (the team) tried to do a lot of that as far as trying to constantly put little notes in our boxes reminding us of this focus. I know that there was a lot of communication between the principal and the state assistance team.” Another interviewee commented, “It was the first year since I’ve been here that you had administration and the state team more involved in day-to-day activities.” Only one interviewee felt differently about instructional leadership,

> I don’t think the state assistance team really increased that (instructional leadership) much because we had an excellent principal and staff. As being an instructional leader, I think she was doing an excellent job at that and I don’t think that would have changed much whether the team was here or not.

Teachers felt the team worked with the principal to improve pedagogical practices and that had some impact on improving student achievement. Correlate one’s impact could be labeled as moderate to high.

The principal stated the team leader worked closely with her on observing teachers and providing feedback. She stated, “Looking at how they did their observations, what data they collected when going into the classrooms. I think I garnered some good tools from them as an instructional leader.” The principal also stated the team helped with changing the master schedule the second semester to get the best teachers in the appropriate classes. She stated “The team leader worked with me to adjust the master schedule to get our best teachers teaching more EOC classes. I had not had much experience working with a master schedule. The master schedule is crucial to helping teachers be successful and improving student achievement.” As far as this correlate and student achievement the principal said, “We didn’t make the growth we wanted to make, but we did grow. I think the resources the team

provided to teachers helped me become a better instructional leader and raise student achievement."

A review of the monthly reports revealed the team worked with the principal on consistently talking about the mission of the school at faculty meetings and department meetings. Instructional leadership was a correlate teachers and the principal felt the assistance team's work helped improve pedagogical practices and student achievement.

Clear and Focused Mission:

Teachers expressed different opinions regarding the impact in the area described by correlate two. Teachers knew the school mission, and felt the state assistance team's mission was more focused on test scores in some instances. One interviewee stated, "Their kind of mission was tests scores, where with our mission it's broader. So, I really didn't see them having the same mission we do." Another interviewee stated, "I really did not see any evidence the state team had a mission. The mission of the school was already engrained and there wasn't anything they had to add." Other teachers felt the team helped focus the school and the tests scores should have been the focus. One interviewee said,

> I would say they helped frame the goals more clearly. I think for several years our goals for our school were not clearly stated. I think everybody was kind of running off in different directions. I definitely think now, that with our data driven system that the goals are much more clearly defined in the classroom.

Another interviewee stated the following way, "I would say because of our past history of our low performance on test scores, it (test scores) was our main goal." Another teacher stated,

> We talked a lot about a mission statement last year and you know before that we didn't really. I really didn't even know the mission statement to be honest and now I do. There was unity in the school and a goal. I actually think our principal did that more than the state assistance team.

Teachers had different opinions on correlate two and how the state assistance team impacted the mission of the school.

The principal felt the mission was very clear and the team helped to focus the teachers on the mission. She stated, "We had so many new teachers the administration could not have given them the attention they needed. The team helped out with getting the new teachers on board." The principal felt the team's mission and the schools mission had to be to get the test scores up even with the overall school mission.

Safe and Orderly Environment:

The teachers also responded to the impact on this area in different ways. The majority of teachers felt the team was vital in creating a safe and orderly environment because there were more adults in the school and their presence helped with some students' inappropriate behaviors. One teacher stated, "When students are coming in the building they are (team members) greeting the students just as the teachers are. It was made known that they are here to work with you (students) just like any other teacher." Another teacher commented on the teams' persistence of keeping students in class and out of the halls, "One of their big things was keeping students out of the halls and in the classroom. They patrolled the halls regularly." One teacher responded, "They were visible in the hallway which I thought was good. One team member would get on kids and ask where are you supposed to be? It was good for them to model some of the disciplinarian role for us." Another interviewee discussed how the team talked with teachers about working together to consistently enforce rules. He said, "They really emphasized the faculty really needing to pull together more as a team and we all needed to be consistent in the way we treated our students." Teachers were aware and students were aware of the team's presence and some felt their presence had a

positive impact on the environment of the school. One teacher even noted, "I heard students say I will be glad when they are gone."

One teacher felt the team was more focused on instruction than helping with discipline. The interviewee stated,

> No, I didn't see anything as far as them impacting a safe, or creating a more safe school. I think they were more focused on instruction side of it, it's just so much a person and a group of people can do. So I didn't see too much of the creating a more safe and friendly school atmosphere.

The perception of this teacher was not consistent with the perceptions of the other respondents. While most teachers felt at least the presence of more adults was positive, there was a general feeling that this did not have much impact on student achievement. The teachers talked about how if kids were in class achievement had to go up, and if student behavior in class was not inappropriate then achievement would improve. There was no connection made between what the team did that reflected this correlate and student achievement.

The principal believed the procedures were in place and the team only had suggestions for some small improvements. She stated,

> There were several procedures that we put in place as an administrative team to create the safe environment. The previous year the environment was not safe and orderly. The team came in and tweaked them a little, but I wouldn't say necessarily that it was the assistance team that helped change that. I think that when they came we had very good policies and procedures in place and used their input to improve some, a little. I wouldn't say we could give them credit for that, because the administrative team worked very hard to make the right things happen.

The principal may have felt some need to claim some ownership in the improvements that the teachers discussed. A review of monthly documents revealed that teachers believed the overall school atmosphere was improving from the previous year and there were not as many

discipline issues. This correlate may have been a focus the principal wanted to improve when she started.

This correlate seemed important to the principal and the teachers that were at the research site the years before. As they talked about the ideas and the strategies suggested by the state assistance, team they were not sure if the team was the reason for the improvement or the administration. Regardless of who implemented the strategies, the correlate was important to administration, teachers, and the assistance team and improvements at the school were evident.

Climate of High Expectations:

The teachers' responses to the impact of the team on this area were consistent. The state assistance discussed at faculty meetings, department meetings, and individual meetings that students would achieve what teachers expected. One interviewee stated,

> That (high expectations) was another thing that the team was very vocal about. Really believing that all the children can learn and you have to find a way that will engage them. I don't use every suggestion they made, but they drilled into us that every student can learn and you have to find a way to motivate them. I can say that they raised the expectations of what the teachers were expected to do and I think by proxy that helped a lot because they were holding the teachers to a higher standard and by that we were all more capable to teach and more able to reach and motivate the children but also more ready to hold the students to a higher standard.

Another interviewee summed high expectations up this way,

> I think they came in with fresh eyes. Seeing these kids differently from some people who have been here for a while and pushing us to make them reach their potential. I think that was good because sometimes you get a little burned out or faded, or whatever, but they weren't at that point so they helped us maybe get past that. They (the team) pushed teachers to push students. The team helped with the scaffolding. The student is here and we need them to be here. Meet the student where he is and bring him to where you expect him to be. Again the resources they provided allowed us to do that, I think.

Other teachers' responses were similar. The team tried to get teachers to buy into the belief that all students can learn and educators have the responsibility to motivate and engage the student. Another interviewee responded, "They made me feel like, well if they (the team) believed the kid could do it then I started to believe the kid could do it." The team gave encouragement to teachers and students to improve in the classroom.

The principal felt the team did not encourage high expectations as much as the teachers. She stated,

> That's (high expectations) a mind set and the teachers already had a negative mindset about them being here and kind of just taking over. So I wouldn't say they had too much impact on changing mindsets on high expectations. That really wasn't their focus. Their focus was to get these teachers the instructional help they needed.

The principal and the teachers differed on this correlate when it came to the work of the state assistance team, but they both believed student achievement was not directly impacted by the work under this correlate.

Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress:

The impact on this correlate by the team was focused mainly on benchmark tests given to students. Teachers discussed the use of the benchmark testing that was given to students every three and a half weeks in the EOC subject areas. The school district provided the tests, graded the tests, and provided on-line data. Most of the teachers noted the district was responsible for this and not the state assistance team. Team members did work with teachers to use the data to improve instruction and re-teach some goals. One teacher summed it this way,

> The school system gave us these tests based on the standard course of study and a computer program gave us specific feedback on how our students were doing on specific goals. The information was given to the teacher and the state assistance team member. The team member would work with us on going

> back and re-teaching some of the goals that students did not do well on. She would give strategies and encourage us to use the test questions as warm-ups. She also gave us positive feedback on goals students were doing well on. So I would say there was a lot of feedback as a result of the requirements of the school system.

Most of the teachers' responses were similar regarding frequent monitoring of student progress. Benchmark tests were given by the district and the state assistance team utilized the benchmark data to assist teachers to inform instruction and assists students. The team analyzed the benchmark data with teachers and created reviews for EOCs, warm ups, and lessons. The benchmark tests were given in each EOC area and were supposed to be aligned with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS). A review of one of the monthly reports submitted to the principal and superintendent revealed the state assistance team did not believe the benchmark tests were appropriately aligned with the NCSCOS. The assistance team discussed the alignment with teachers. The teachers did not believe the team had much of an impact on student achievement under this correlate.

The principal agreed with the teachers, "Their (assistance team) work was more towards the teacher. The team looked at the data, but it was inconsistent. They could have helped teachers inform instruction more." The inconsistencies came from the alignment issues discussed earlier. Also, the team leader discussed many different types of data with the principal on a regular basis; team members did not discuss as many different types of data with the teachers. Data such as student attendance, EOC data, teacher attendance, and valued added data was discussed with the principal and not as much with the teachers. While this correlate appears to reflect student achievement, the interviewees did not feel the work of the state assistance team had much impact on student achievement.

***Positive Home-School Relations**:*

A review of monthly reports submitted to the principal and superintendent revealed team members attended PTSA meetings, report card collection night, and an introduction meeting to the community. Teachers felt the team did not have an impact under this correlate. One interviewee stated, "I can't say that I actually saw them doing any of that (working to inform parents and community). I know the team member I worked with asked how involved we were with parents." When asked about this correlate one interviewee said, "I'm not sure if it was just the state assistance team or just the administration of the school that organized all the information nights and report card pick ups." Even another interviewee stated, "I don't know, I did not really see any evidence of the state team with home life or parents. I can't remember anything that they did connecting to that element." The guidelines for state assistance teams are not specific as to what is expected of team members regarding home school relations.

The principal stated, "They did not do anything with parents, they weren't here for parents." The principal strongly believed the team was at the school to improve instruction and work with teachers. The responsibility of communicating with the parents and the community was the school's responsibility. The overall impression of the interviewees was the state assistance did not have an impact on making a connection with students' homes, and therefore student achievement did not improve due to any of the work through this correlate.

***Opportunity to Learn and Student Time on Task**:*

A phrase that appeared consistently when teachers were asked about this correlate was "bell to bell" instruction. Interviewees talked about the expectations of the state

assistance team and the administration that instruction would take place during the entire period. One interviewee stated,

> Our administrators put pressure on us to teach from bell to bell. That was the exact expression that they would use. It was also an expectation of the state assistance team that when they came in to do our observations they wanted to see teaching bell to bell.

Another interviewee phrased it this way, "One of the big things that we were constantly drilled about was bell to bell instruction." Still another interviewee commented, "I know that was definitely noted on the evaluations, student time on task, making sure there was bell to bell instruction." Teachers felt there was a clear expectation to teach from bell to bell.

While the teachers felt there was an expectation to teach bell to bell, they also noted the assistance team gave resources to assist with instruction. One interviewee said, "Just being shown there is a way to do bell to bell instruction was a help." Another teacher stated,

> There were lots of suggestions the assistance team gave us to use. They helped with ideas for bell ringers to get students started off on task quickly. There was the professional development about learning centers and graphic organizers. We were expected to use or at least try some of the ideas. The state team member I worked with was a big resource for activities. She would come and help me make the game and work with me in the class. This was the biggest help for me actually; I still use most of the ideas this year.

Teachers discussed the professional development about centers, essential questions, and graphic organizers as an example of the resources the team provided. The team conducted professional development in ways to improve instruction for the whole school on four different occasions, according to a review of the monthly reports submitted to the principal and superintendent. Team members conducted model lessons for teachers that were struggling with the concepts, and assisted other teachers in their classrooms. When asked about this correlate, interviewees talked about the resources the state assistance team was able to offer to meet the expectation of bell to bell instruction.

Teachers agreed that if students were on task more, then achievement was going to improve. One teacher said, "Oh yeah, if students are working of course they learn more, but it has to be monitored." While almost all the interviewees mentioned the expectation of bell to bell instruction, a few talked about how it did not happen. One teacher even commented, "Now I personally feel like if you don't give the kids a break here or there to goof off every once in a while, then what is there incentive to work. I mean it can be used as an incentive." Another interviewee stated, "I did sometimes hear the state team talking about teachers allowing students to play cards and to do other things rather than being on task." So, even though there was an expectation for teachers to provide instruction for the entire class period, the expectation was not met all the time.

Two teachers responded to this correlate by saying the team had no impact with student time on task. One interviewee stated,

> I think it was about the same as years past. It didn't make a difference to the kids that the state assistance team was present; we were doing what we had been doing all along; which was spending our time trying to make sure that we were providing the necessary instruction for them (students) to be successful.

Another interviewee said, "Personally I didn't see any type of evidence that took place." These teachers' responses were not consistent with the other teachers. The majority of the teachers believed the state assistance team added valuable ideas and new strategies to help improve instruction in their classrooms.

The principal's statements were consistent with the majority of the teachers. The team was a resource for teachers to learn from and gain practices to help improve instruction. The principal stated,

> I think it (pedagogical practice) was probably a little more impacted with this correlate because of their observations, evaluations, and their following up

> with teachers. I think a large part was the fact the state team was a resource. They provided resources for teachers of their views in the classrooms. The activities and strategies created less time off task and more time on task because teachers had a wealth of instructional strategies they could use in the classroom. So, I think there was more evidence of time on task.

The principal went on to say the following about student achievement as it related to this correlate,

> For those teachers who the team directly influenced by being resources for and giving strategies to was great, but if the strategies were used correctly and student achievement was impacted may be a different story. But when you talk time on task and the team being a resource for teachers, I think that was the biggest reason for them being here. The impact was empowering teachers and giving them tools for their tool belts.

Teachers and the principal felt the team made significant impact on pedagogical practice under this correlate because of the strategies and ideas the state assistance team provided for teachers. Some examples of the resources the team provided have been discussed and there is a detailed list in Appendix E. Teachers had to implement the strategies effectively in the classroom for students to achieve more and spend more time on task. Some teachers felt the strategies were not effectively implemented enough to have a significant positive impact on student achievement. The state assistance team provided many proven strategies that work in the classroom. Teachers have to implement the strategies correctly and effectively for there to be significant improvement in student achievement. The team modeled lessons, did some team teaching, and worked with individual teachers to improve instructions in an effort to improve student achievement. Some teachers did not believe the teachers were effective and therefore student achievement did not improve as much as it could have if some of the suggestions were followed.

Teachers at the research site were aware and informed about the seven correlates of effective schools. While some teachers felt the state assistance team's work helped establish

the correlates and improved pedagogical practices, others felt the team's work helped a little and the presence of more adults helped improve teacher behavior and student behavior. The next section of this chapter is a discussion of a theme that emerged from the teachers' and principal's responses in the interviews.

Was the Impact from the New Administration or State Assistance Team?

The research site had a new principal and three new assistant principals that started the 2005/2006 school year. The state assistance team began work in September of the same year. Teachers that were interviewed had a difficult time separating the assistance team from the administration and deciding who really impacted the school. An emergent was that the assistance team and the administration worked together to improve instruction and achievement. One teacher stated, "I think it was a collaborative as far as instruction goes, but the administration dealt with the discipline problems that we had and put some policies in place to handle discipline." Another interviewee said,

> I say it as a cohesive group. They were working together. In fact, I would say that in all the years I have been at this school that last year, when we had the state assistance team, was the most cohesive year that I've experienced. I really feel like the administration, the faculty, and the state assistance team were all working together to really improve the school. The school was much more cohesive last year than I've ever seen it actually.

Another interviewee commented,

> Determining who or what was the big improvement is the hardest thing. I didn't feel that they (state assistance team) stepped on the toes of administration. I think they let the new administration come in and do what they needed to do, and maybe guide from behind a little. I think having the team around let administrators focus on some certain areas and let the assistance team work in other areas. I think that was a big help for administrators.

The perception of the teachers was the state assistance team and the new administration worked together and with collaboration there were improvements.

The principal felt the working relationship with the state assistance team was positive and the experience was positive for the team and the administration. She stated,

> We formed certain bonds with all the team members. They were very appreciative that we were open to them being here. They didn't feel any resistance and they re-iterated that a lot of times.

While the principal felt the assistance team and the administration worked together in positive means, the principal stated the following when asked about positive changes in the school,

> I think it (improvement) was more due to the administrative team. When we started there were lots of things that had not been addressed. We came in and set forth policies about student expectations and teacher expectations. The team was not here necessarily for whole school reform. They worked with teachers and gave a few suggestions here and there about head gear or electronic devices, but I would attribute the changes to the administration.

Farris (1999) interviewed principals and teachers about state assistance teams. In her study the principals were removed from the schools and new principals were brought in to lead the school until the principal was reinstated. In that case the state assistance teams were perceived as coming in and taking over the school. When the team and administration work closely together, as in this case, the results were similar to the findings of the Farris study. The principal was new in the principal role and willingly worked with the state assistance team to improve pedagogical practices and student achievement. The principal gave credit to the assistance team for helping teachers; but for improving the overall school, she believed the administration deserved the credit. Determining who solely lead the way for what the teachers saw as positive changes at the research site could not be attributed solely to the state assistance team. The majority of the teachers believed the assistance team and the administration worked together very closely to improve the school. The perceived team effort between the assistance team and administration was positive. Principals at other low-

performing schools that receive state assistance teams may want to embrace the team and work with the team so teachers will be more willing to utilize the state assistance team.

Summary of Findings

One of the strengths of this study proved to be the utilization of a mixed methods approach. Using the seven correlates as the framework the researcher was able to compare the findings of the surveys with the findings of the in-depth interviews. The comparison of the surveys and interviews added validity to the study and made for a well organized summary of all the findings. This section is a summary of the comparison.

Instructional Leadership

The principal is a key person when it comes to instructional leadership. The principal must be able to solve day-to-day problems as well as create a vision and communicate the mission of the school to the stakeholders. The principal influences teachers' behavior that ultimately should accomplish the goals of the individual school. The state assistance team worked very closely with the principal to accomplish the goal of the instructional leader. The results from the surveys show the impact on pedagogical practices was moderate. The interviewees had a more difficult time distinguishing between the principal and the state assistance team under this correlate. The interviewees overall felt the team and the principal worked well together to talk about the mission and remind students, teachers, and parents what the mission of the school was for the year. The results from the surveys with respect to student achievement and this correlate show the impact was moderate. This is consistent with the interview results. While the interviewees saw collaboration between the state assistance team and the principal they did draw conclusions of that having a direct impact on student

achievement. Results from the interviews were consistent with the survey regarding correlate one.

Clear and Focused Mission

In any organization the mission must be made obvious to each person involved. The stakeholders must be reminded of the mission and leaders must ask themselves will this decision help accomplish the mission with each decision. In a low-performing school the mission must be the focus of every decision teachers and administrators make about instruction also. The procedures of everyday school should reflect the mission and accomplishing the goals. While teachers at the research site may not have liked what the mission was for the 2005/2006 school year, they were clear about the goals for the year.

The survey results show the impact the state assistance team had regarding this correlate on pedagogical practices was moderate. The feelings of the interviewees were not quite the same, but consistent with the survey results. The interviews indicated the overarching school mission was discussed each day; however, the state assistance team's mission was the test scores. The principal felt the test scores were the most important mission and discussed tests results at many faculty meetings. Interviewees did say the mission of the school was discussed more than in the years past. Student achievement was impacted moderately according to survey results. Interviewees leaned more toward the low impact. The mission of the team was the test scores, but that may not have helped students achieve more on the tests. Interviewees did agree that students were more aware about the EOCs and new the significance roles they have on the school and tests scores.

Safe and Orderly Environment

The literature reflects that an effective school is one that students and teachers feel safe in and can focus on learning. This may be one of the most important characteristics and goals for a school to turn the corner and start on the upward trend with student achievement and pedagogical practices. The majority of the interviewees felt the presence of more adults in the school helped create a safer environment. The team talked frequently with the principal and teachers about being consistent and working together to supervise and enforce rules to create a more conducive learning environment.

Teacher responses to the survey reflected the same feelings. The impact the state assistance team had on pedagogical practice was high. Interviewees discussed how the state assistance team modeled some of the disciplinarian roles and did more than just observe student behavior. The team assisted with correcting negative student behavior. The state assistance team also helped with classroom management that created more safe and orderly learning environments in the classroom. Many teachers discussed the strategies and suggestions given by the state team and worked with team members to improve the learning environment in their classrooms.

While the teachers discussed how much better the school was as far as their perception of student behavior and discipline during the 2005/2006 school year, the impact the team had on student achievement was only moderate. Interviewees did not really make a connection to any improvement in student achievement under this correlate. The discussion was about how much better the school year was going based on student behavior and discipline. The principal felt the reasons for the improvement in student behavior were due to the administration, not the work of the state assistance team.

Climate of High Expectations

The state assistance discussed this philosophy at every opportunity. Some of the documents reviewed showed the state assistance team members felt this was a problem with many teachers and students. Some team members felt teachers did not have high expectations for the students. Research suggests that lack of high expectations and belief that the students can not master the curriculum is one of the largest characteristics of a low-performing school.

The survey results of this correlate show the impact on pedagogical practices were high. The teacher interviewees' responses were consistent with the survey findings with pedagogical practices. Almost all of the teacher interviewees commented on how often this correlate was talked about at meetings and anytime a team member had the opportunity to mention high expectations. Teachers talked about how the expectations were higher for teachers and that had a hand in teachers having higher expectations of the students.

The principal did have a different feeling about the team and high expectations. The principal felt the team was there to help teachers more with instruction and high expectations was a mindset the teachers already had, and their mindset was not positive. While the teachers felt the team pushed and was very vocal about high expectations, the principal did not feel the same.

The impact on student achievement, according to the surveys was moderate. Interviewees did not make a connection between high expectations and student achievement as much, however the teacher interviewees talked about how if expectations of teachers and students are higher, then student achievement and teachers' practices had to improve some.

Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress

Research shows that student progress that is monitored frequently helps improve instruction and achievement. The survey found the impact on pedagogical practices to be moderate. Teacher interviewees talked about how the district gave benchmark tests to students in EOC courses every three and a half weeks. The district provided the tests, graded the tests, and gave the results back to the teachers. The team worked with teachers to disaggregate the data and help shape instruction. Teachers may have felt the team was not directly responsible for the benchmark tests, but helping teachers reap the benefits of the monitoring of student progress was beneficial. The principal's response was consistent with the teachers' responses.

While the teachers felt this correlate and the work of the state assistance team had some impact on pedagogical practices, the impact on student achievement according to the surveys was moderate. The teachers discussed student achievement in the interviewees briefly. Almost all the EOC teachers complained about how the benchmark tests were not quite aligned with the NCSCOS. The state assistance team made note of the lack of alignment in the documents. While this was a concern, teachers still felt the importance of the monitoring of student progress was viable and planned to continue using the benchmarks and helping the district to better align the tests with the NCSCOS.

Positive Home-School Relations

Of all the correlates, the interviews and the surveys show the team had the least impact on positive home-school relations. While this is a very important aspect of turning around a low-performing school, the team did not have a great impact. Teachers discussed how team members asked about parent contacts and told everyone how important it was to

get parents involved, they did not give many suggestions or strategies for getting the parents involved. The principal felt the state assistance team was there for the teachers and not so much for parents. The survey results reflected the same findings. The impact on pedagogical practices was low. The impact on student achievement was none. The state assistance team had little impact on pedagogical practices and student achievement under this correlate.

Opportunity to Learn and Student Time on Task

Student time on task and opportunity to learn may have seen the most improvement according to teachers that were interviewed. Almost all teachers commented about "bell to bell instruction". The phrase was used by state assistance team members and the administration to emphasis to teachers of the importance of using all available time to instruct students. Teachers discussed the many resources the team members gave and strategies suggested to improve instruction. The principal discussed how the state assistance team was a resource to all the teachers. She discussed how the team had a wealth of knowledge and shared all the resources they could with teachers in an attempt to improve instruction.

The survey showed the impact on pedagogical practices was moderate. While the teachers commented on how time on task was talked about a great deal, the feeling was that the students did about the same as in years past. The survey results reflected the consensus about student achievement. The impact on student achievement was moderate. The state assistance team had some impact on student time on task because of the strategies and ideas shared or suggested to teachers.

Summary

North Carolina has utilized technical assistance teams in assisting low-performing schools for almost ten years. Improving student achievement and building the capacity of teaching practices is a goal of the state assistance team. This study investigated the impact of one state assistance team on one low-performing high school in North Carolina, specifically asking what impact the team had on pedagogical practices and student achievement.

Survey responses and interview question responses showed teachers believed the team had more of an impact on pedagogical practices than on student achievement. However, the team's work did help in certain areas of student achievement, specifically writing. The team's ideas, strategies, and suggestions provided teachers with more and different tools for improving their pedagogical practices. Teachers were able to utilize the strategies while the team was there and discussed being able to continue to utilize the strategies and ideas in the future to help further improve pedagogical practices.

If pedagogical practices improve, then student achievement should improve. Teachers at the research site believed that to be true. Teachers may not have connected student achievement directly to the state assistance team, but teachers did believe some of the strategies suggested by the team helped them to improve student achievement.

The state assistance team was most of all a resource for teachers and the principal. The first year principal utilized the team's experience and knowledge to rearrange the master schedule for success, keep the school's mission and vision of the school on the forefront, and use data to inform instruction. Teachers used the strategies, suggestions, directives, and the resources of the state assistance team to improve their pedagogical practices. The majority of the teachers had a positive experience with the state assistance team and believed they grew

professionally as teachers from the state assistance team being present. Due to the new administration and the assistance team working so closely together, teachers viewed the improvements made at the school as a collaborative effort between the state assistance team and the administration. Regardless of who helped with the problems the research site had experienced, there were positive changes and pedagogical practices and student achievement were impacted for the better.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This study investigated the impact of a state assistance team at a low-performing high school in North Carolina. The major research question for this study was: How did the work of a state assistance team impact the areas identified by the Seven Correlates of Effective schools, pedagogical practice and student achievement at one low-performing high school? Using the seven correlates of effective schools as the framework this study utilized both quantitative and qualitative data to answer the three research questions:

1. In what ways did the work of the state assistance team embody the seven correlates of effective schools?
2. In what ways did the work of the state assistance team impact student achievement?
3. In what ways did the work of the state assistance team impact pedagogical practices of teachers?

This chapter begins with a summary of major findings. The chapter continues with a section outlining the limitations of the study. The chapter concludes with the implications of the study and recommendations for further research.

Major Findings

The design of this study was a case study that utilized a mixed method approach. Giving the detail and rich description that usually accompanies case studies, the design proved to be the most logical choice. This study attempted to find the relationship between the state assistance team, the seven correlates of effective schools, pedagogical practices, and student achievement. The design provided the opportunity to focus on the particular phenomenon and allowed for rich analysis. While the design allowed for deep and rich data, a case study does not allow for easy generalization of the findings. This study collected data from one school and a small number of participants; however it is the intent of the researcher that the rich data presented here will prove useful to educational leaders in many different types of educational settings.

The major findings of this research can be broken into four categories that appear in the data. The first one is teachers need time and instruction on effective planning. Throughout the data, emphasis on teaching teachers to plan effective lessons was documented. Included in the planning process was developing and following pacing guides and aligning instruction with the NCSCOS. Also, teachers need time to discuss plans and lessons with other educators. In many schools teachers are isolated and only draw from their own experiences. The state assistance team provided time and a person for teachers to discuss lessons and plans. Teachers were provided with another resource besides themselves.

The second category is best teaching practices. Teachers must be knowledgeable of different types of teaching strategies and best practices. The team provided examples and models of best practices. Along with modeling best practices, the team provided professional development pertaining to best teaching practices. For example, using essential questions

and learning centers were two of the several professional developments conducted by the state assistance team.

The third category is professional development in data analysis. Teachers and the principal noted how the team helped with data analysis, but could have done more. In education today, data analysis can really assist improving classroom instruction. The team attempted to help teachers with the benchmark tests data, attendance, and grade data to help inform instruction. Teachers that are familiar with student work can better target areas of student's needs in the classroom. The team started and briefly touched on data analysis.

The fourth category is classroom management. The team assisted many teachers with classroom management strategies and improving the classroom to enhance instruction. In this category the team assisted teachers with strategies and modeled the strategies so teachers could see appropriate classroom management strategies at work. While effective and engaging lessons cut down on classroom misbehaviors, teachers still need an assortment of ideas to pull from their teacher tool box to maintain a positive learning environment.

Summary

Table 22 summarizes the findings of four studies conducted about North Carolina State Assistance Teams. Based on these studies, state assistance teams have had an impact on certain areas of the school: instructional leadership, principal and teacher effectiveness, school culture and climate, and site-based management.

Table 22

Summary of North Carolina Studies on State Assistance Teams

Study	Findings
Farris, (1999)	*How team implemented change in the school *What interventions and patterns had positive effects on change in school *Team performed many duties of the principal *Team restructured school day *Team worked with principals to improve communications
Turner, (2002)	*Investigated teachers' perceptions of effectiveness of teams *How sustain growth after team left *Students expectations higher due to presence of team *Team's interventions improved principal and teacher effectiveness *Respondents felt growth gains could be sustained
Brinson, (2004)	*Investigated similarities between work of different state assistance teams *Strategies separated into categories defined by Seven Correlates of Effective Schools *Investigated perceptions of teachers *Mostly positive feedback from teachers *Strategies useful for teachers
Johnson, (2007)	*Investigated impact of team in seven areas defined by Seven Correlates of Effective Schools, Pedagogical Practice, and Student Achievement *Teachers perceptions of team positive *Principal perceptions and experience mostly positive *Collegial relationship between team, teachers, and principal *Team was a valuable resource for teachers and principal

By utilizing the seven correlates of effective schools as a framework, more than just the mentioned areas were investigated for impact of the state assistance team's work. The data from the surveys was consistent with the data collected from the in-depth interviews and the area that was impacted the most was pedagogical practice. The survey data, the interview data, and the document review data show how the team was a great resource for teachers.

Utilizing the Seven Correlates of Effective Schools as the conceptual framework assisted the researcher in answering the research questions. The correlates helped the research target specific areas to focus on the impact of the state assistance team. Teachers

could categorize the strategies and interventions into the correlates or areas defined by the correlates. Again, the correlates are not causal. The correlates provide areas to target when working to improve a low-performing school.

Teachers at the research site believe that if the teaching practices at the school improve then student achievement will rise. A few teachers did comment on how some of the responsibility had to be placed on the students, but a majority of the teachers believe achievement can be improved by improving teachers and the state assistance team had an impact on pedagogical practice.

Teachers were not clear as to whether the state assistance team had an impact or the new administration had an impact. This was viewed by many as a positive problem because the administration and the team worked together to achieve the same goals. Overall, the state assistance team had more of an impact on pedagogical practice than on anything else at the research site. The research site was labeled as a low-performing school even with a state assistance team. Teachers felt that many improvements were made in all the seven correlates. Teachers expressed frustration about being labeled a low-performing school, but felt the experience with the state assistance team was positive and helped the school for the upcoming year. Many of the teachers felt the next year would be the year when test scores soared.

Limitations of the Study

The study is limited by the following factors:

- The Seven Correlates of Effective Schools: The correlates may not be causal, but predictive characteristics of an effective school. Research has been conducted that

show schools can be effective in the absence of the correlates, but the correlates are the model the state assistance teams are modeled after.

- One school: Findings from the study may not be generalized except to schools that closely match the research site.
- Teacher perceptions: Surveys and interviews rely on the participants perceptions. In this case the perceptions of the state assistance team. Teachers' perceptions are important in research, but it is only one person's perception.
- Researcher's Relationship to site: The researcher was an assistant principal while the state assistance team was present. While this does allow insight by the researcher into the everyday workings of the team at the school and the reaction of some of the teachers, it could also affect the responses the teachers gave to interview questions (teachers may be prompted to respond overly positively or leave out information that seems negative due to researcher's position). There may be some biases due to the researcher failing to ask a question because he feels the answer is obvious to people that worked at the school. Or, the researcher may interpret the data based on personal experience and create a bias. Because of the relationship, teachers may have given what they thought the researcher wanted to hear.
- Alternative Factors: Teachers may have felt the improvement in their instruction and student achievement may be due to alternative factors (different students, new administration). Utilizing surveys, qualitative interviews, and document review this study attempted to identify and separate the alternative factors from impact of the state assistance team. Schools are so complex in nature that one set of criteria

can not be completely created for improving student achievement or pedagogical practices. While this study suggested a relationship between the state assistance team and improved student achievement and pedagogical practices, the alternative factors must be acknowledged.

- Neither the state assistance team, parents, nor students were interviewed about the impact of the state assistance team. These stakeholders may have viewed the impact through a different lens than teachers or the principal.
- The principal may have felt she had to give responses that favored the state assistance team because she was new to the principalship and new to the research site.

Significance of the Study

Improving the academic achievement of all students has become a priority in North Carolina. The use of state assistance teams to improve low-performing schools is a result of legislation and directives from the State Board of Education. This study addressed the question: What impact have state assistance teams had on low-performing schools?

Findings from this study will assist superintendents and educational leaders' understanding of issues related to individual school reform. This knowledge will allow them to give more support in the areas to sustain growth. The results will help principals better employ professional development strategies that have been proven to be effective by the state assistance team. Teachers will gain important skills from the strategies implemented by the state assistance team. Those skills will develop into the desired site-based instructional management practices that work and are consistent with the C in the ABCs, local control. The study shared effective strategies and can expand the skills of educators that are in a

position to turn around low-performing schools. Students will be the benefactors of all the professional practices teachers and administrators will be able to provide as a result of the identified strategies.

This study becomes more significant when strategies to improve low-performing schools from other states are being considered. Improving failing high schools has become a national issue. Table 23 shows strategies used by four states surrounding North Carolina.

Table 23

Strategies Used to Improve Low-Performing Schools

State	Strategies
Georgia	*Goal of School Improvement Division "is to design and implement a coherent and sustained statewide system of support" (Georgia Dept. of Education) *Support giving to schools and LEAs not making AYP for two consecutive years *Five Regional Support teams made of Georgia DOE employees and college and university representatives *Schools in Needs Improvement Years one through seven receive a leadership facilitator (Georgia Dept. of Education, 2007)
South Carolina	*Principal Specialists and Teacher Specialists *Principal Specialists-Show a past history of exemplary student achievement, may be hired to replace a principal at a low-performing school, assist school in gaining knowledge of best practices and improving classroom instructional strategies *Teacher Specialists-Designed to compliment the Principal Specialists, teacher specialists are experienced, exemplary educators that help coach other teachers, assist faculties in implementing best practices *Principal Specialists and Teacher Specialists may be requested by LEAs or sent by SCDOE to schools rated below average or unsatisfactory on the South Carolina Report Card (South Carolina Dept. of Education, 2007)
Tennessee	*Title I Schools that fail the same cell (Math, Reading, Attendance/Graduation rate) for two consecutive years, or not make AYP deemed High Priority *Five years of Requirements if schools continue to not Make AYP *Year 1- budget requirements, Parent notification, Revise School Improvement Plan, Implement school choice plan, and teacher mentor program *Year 2- Same as above and students must be provided free tutoring from a supplemental educational service *Year 3-All previous and school must implement corrective action *Year 4-All previous and Restructure of school i.e. as a charter school or state takeover and replace most of staff

	*Year 5 All previous and implement plan of alternative governance (Tennessee Dept. of Education, 2007)
Virginia	*Partnership with University of Virginia to train a cadre of experts to work in consistently low-performing schools *Monetary incentives for specialist to improve low-performing schools (Virginia Dept. of Education, 2007)

Implications for Policy and Practice

There are numerous strategies to improve low-performing schools. The use of assistance teams is a costly measure, but one that may be utilized more if proven to be effective. The strategies the team implements are tested each year. The strategies that are proven to be effective will appear and reappear in educational reform and educational literature. One practice that appeared to be effective in raising student achievement by this team was working with small groups of students. The writing blitz was an example of this practice and was mentioned by many of the participants as having a positive impact on the writing scores. Anytime a teacher has the opportunity to work with a small group of students, improving achievement becomes more obtainable. The team helped teachers align the standard course of study and what was being taught. Teachers need assistance with aligning what is being taught and what will be assessed. The EOCs are assessed from the standard course of study and the team assisted teachers with that understanding. Another area the team helped teachers was with data and forming instruction using data. More and more data is being provided to teachers, but if they do not know how to use the data to improve instruction, the data is useless. These strategies and practices will appear in effective schools and may appear in more and more school reforms. This study, while a case study of one school, revealed some implications for policy and practice in education.

While the seven correlates are not causal, the correlates can be a guide for schools and districts to write effective, working school improvement plans. The correlates can not be put into a school. Each of the seven areas can identify a specific course of action a school or district can use in measuring performance. Improvement in curriculum and instruction, instructional leadership, and student achievement can be documented using the seven correlates. Again, the correlates are not causal, but the correlates are a set of guidelines for improving a low-performing school.

While the state assistance team did have an impact on pedagogical practice, the teachers still have the most impact on student achievement. Therefore, districts need to take measures to attract the best teachers to low-performing schools. This means administrators and teachers that are effective at low-performing schools need more pay and incentives to stay at the low-performing school. Teacher and administrator turnover or reassignment must be kept to a minimum to create consistency at low-performing schools. Districts must have clearly defined and required professional development for teachers and administrators at low-performing schools. Districts must also work with teachers at low-performing schools to ensure alignment of lessons, pacing guides, benchmark tests, and instruction with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. The school district can and will have to take a vested interest in low-performing schools for the schools to have success.

Policymakers that continue to use education as a platform to get elected or gain notoriety must begin to understand some of the causes of low-performing schools and provide the resources to districts to assist the low-performing schools. The resources are not just financial. The most valuable resource is teachers. Adjusting the formula for teacher allotment in North Carolina so class sizes are smaller would help in low-performing schools.

Policymakers may need to restructure state assistance teams to focus more on the tested areas. In the era of high stakes testing, the focus will be more and more on the tested subjects. However, the ultimate responsibility still lies with the school and the teachers and administrators must be committed to turning around a low-performing school.

Suggestions for Further Research

Upon completion of this study, the researcher realizes the need for further research. The following recommendations are suggested for further research:

- The State of North Carolina should conduct a longitudinal study of all schools that had a state assistance team to determine the sustainability of interventions, what team members have learned from working with previous members and staffs, and what strategies are working in low-performing schools.
- An analysis of recruitment and retention of teachers and administrators in schools that have had state assistance teams.
- Analysis of the seven correlates of effective schools and if they are present in any of the low-performing schools.
- An in-depth look at if one year is enough time for a state assistance team to be effective enough to turn around a low-performing school.
- An in-depth look to determine if a one strong educational leader serving as the mentor to the principal could have the same impact as a whole team.
- An analysis of the cost and determining if state assistance teams are cost effective.
- A comparison study of different state assistance team to determines if the results of the team depend on the leadership of the team.

Future research will determine more so if state assistance teams have success on turning around low-performing schools. The research must determine what and why certain strategies are effective and how can the success be communicated to other low-performing schools across the state and nation. Education will go through many changes in the 21st century, but their success must remain the focus of all the new reforms.

APPENDIX A

TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Category 1 (Perceptions of the State Assistance Team)

1. What were your initial thoughts when you learned the state assistance team would be coming to your school?
   - What emotions did you feel?
   - What type of pressure did you feel?
2. After the initial meeting with the state assistance team what were your thoughts?
   - What concerns did you still have?
   - How did your initial thoughts change?
   - What was your comfort level after the meeting?
3. Describe how you interacted with the team members?
   - How often did you speak to the team members?
   - Did you met with one or more team members at a time?
   - What information did the team provide?
   - What type of questions did the team ask?
4. How were staff members treated by the state assistance team?
   - Professionally?
   - Were they treated as mentees or something different?
5. How did your perceptions of the work of the team develop as the year progressed?
   - What type of strategies did you see being utilized?
6. In what areas was the state assistance team effective?
   - What areas improved because of their presence?
   - What strategies did they bring and model that improved instruction?
   - What changed about the school culture?
7. In what areas was the state assistance team least effective?
   - In what areas was there no improvement?
   - What strategies did they bring and model that did not improve instruction?
   - Any negative effects on school culture?
8. In what areas has the state assistance team helped you to become a more effective educator?
   - With regards to instruction?
   - With regards to use of student data?
   - With regards to school climate?

Category 2 (The Seven Correlates of Effective Schools)

Instructional Leadership. In the effective school, the principal acts as an instructional leader and effectively and persistently communicates the mission of the school to staff, parents, and students.

1. Describe how this correlate impacted your teaching practices as the assistance team worked with you?
    - What strategies did they suggest?
    - How was the correlate worked into your classroom culture?
2. Describe how this correlate impacted student achievement in your classroom?
    - What strategies suggested by the team fit in this correlate that impacted student achievement in your room?

Clear and Focused Mission. In the effective school, there is a clearly articulated mission of the school through which the staff shares an understanding of and a commitment to the school's goals, priorities, assessment procedures, and accountability.

1. Describe how this correlate impacted your teaching practices as the assistance team worked with you?
    - What strategies did they suggest?
    - How was the correlate worked into your classroom culture?
2. Describe how this correlate impacted student achievement in your classroom?
    - What strategies suggested by the team fit in this correlate that impacted student achievement in your room?

Safe and Orderly Environment. In the effective school we say there is an orderly, purposeful, business-like atmosphere, which is free from the threat of physical harm. The school climate is not oppressive and is conducive to teaching and learning.

1. Describe how this correlate impacted your teaching practices as the assistance team worked with you?
    - What strategies did they suggest?
    - How was the correlate worked into your classroom culture?
2. Describe how this correlate impacted student achievement in your classroom?
    - What strategies suggested by the team fit in this correlate that impacted student achievement in your room?

Climate of High Expectations. In the effective school, there is a climate of high expectations in which the staff believes and demonstrates that all students can obtain mastery of the school's essential curriculum. They also believe that they, the staff, have the capability to help all students obtain that mastery.

1**.** Describe how this correlate impacted your teaching practices as the assistance team worked with you?
    - What strategies did they suggest?
    - How was the correlate worked into your classroom culture?

2. Describe how this correlate impacted student achievement in your classroom?

- What strategies suggested by the team fit in this correlate that impacted student achievement in your room?

Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress. In the effective school, pupil progress over the essential objectives are measured frequently, monitored frequently, and the results of those assessments are used to improve the individual student behaviors and performances, as well as to improve the curriculum as a whole.

1. Describe how this correlate impacted your teaching practices as the assistance team worked with you?
    - What strategies did they suggest?
    - How was the correlate worked into your classroom culture?
2. Describe how this correlate impacted student achievement in your classroom?
    - What strategies suggested by the team fit in this correlate that impacted student achievement in your room?

Positive Home-School Relations. In the effective school, parents understand and support the basic mission of the school and are given opportunities to play important roles in helping the school to achieve its mission.

1. Describe how this correlate impacted your teaching practices as the assistance team worked with you?
    - What strategies did they suggest?
    - How was the correlate worked into your classroom culture?
2. Describe how this correlate impacted student achievement in your classroom?
    - What strategies suggested by the team fit in this correlate that impacted student achievement in your room?

Opportunity to Learn and Student Time on Task. In the effective school, teachers allocate a significant amount of classroom time to instruction in the essential curricular areas. For a high percentage of this time, students are actively engaged in whole-class or large group, teacher-directed, planned learning activity.

1. Describe how this correlate impacted your teaching practices as the assistance team worked with you?
    - What strategies did they suggest?
    - How was the correlate worked into your classroom culture?
2. Describe how this correlate impacted student achievement in your classroom?
    - What strategies suggested by the team fit in this correlate that impacted student achievement in your room?

APPENDIX B

PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Category 1 (Perceptions of the State Assistance Team)

1. What were your initial thoughts when you learned the state assistance team would be coming to your school?
   - What emotions did you feel?
   - What type of pressure did you feel?
   - Others?
2. After the initial meeting with the state assistance team what were your thoughts?
   - What concerns did you still have?
   - How did your initial thoughts change?
   - What was your comfort level after the meeting?
   - Others?
3. Describe how you interacted with the team members?
   - How often did you speak to the team members?
   - Did you met with one or more team members at a time?
   - Others?
4. How were staff members treated by the state assistance team?
   - Professionally?
   - Were they treated as mentees or something different?
   - Others?
5. How did your perceptions of the work of the team develop as the year progressed?
   - What type of strategies did you see being utilized?
   - Others?
6. In what areas was the state assistance team effective?
   - What improved because of their presence?
   - What strategies did they bring and model that improved instruction?
   - What improved about school culture?
   - Others?
7. In what areas was the state assistance team not effective?
   - In what areas was there no improvement?
   - What strategies did they bring and model that did not improve instruction?
   - Any negative effects on school culture?
   - Others?
8. In what areas has the state assistance team helped you to become a more effective educational leader?
   - With regards to instruction?
   - With regards to use of student data?
   - With regards to school climate?
   - How change leadership style
   - Others?

Category 2 (The Seven Correlates of Effective Schools)

Instructional Leadership. In the effective school, the principal acts as an instructional leader and effectively and persistently communicates the mission of the school to staff, parents, and students.

1. Describe how this correlate impacted your teaching practices as the assistance team worked with you?
    - What strategies did they suggest?
    - How was the correlate worked into your classroom culture?
2. Describe how this correlate impacted student achievement in your classroom?
    - What strategies suggested by the team fit in this correlate that impacted student achievement in your room?

Clear and Focused Mission. In the effective school, there is a clearly articulated mission of the school through which the staff shares an understanding of and a commitment to the school's goals, priorities, assessment procedures, and accountability.

1. Describe how this correlate impacted your teaching practices as the assistance team worked with you?
    - What strategies did they suggest?
    - How was the correlate worked into your classroom culture?
2. Describe how this correlate impacted student achievement in your classroom?
    - What strategies suggested by the team fit in this correlate that impacted student achievement in your room?

Safe and Orderly Environment. In the effective school we say there is an orderly, purposeful, business-like atmosphere, which is free from the threat of physical harm. The school climate is not oppressive and is conducive to teaching and learning.

1. Describe how this correlate impacted your teaching practices as the assistance team worked with you?
    - What strategies did they suggest?
    - How was the correlate worked into your classroom culture?
2. Describe how this correlate impacted student achievement in your classroom?
    - What strategies suggested by the team fit in this correlate that impacted student achievement in your room?

Climate of High Expectations. In the effective school, there is a climate of high expectations in which the staff believes and demonstrates that all students can obtain mastery of the school's essential curriculum. They also believe that they, the staff, have the capability to help all students obtain that mastery.

1**.** Describe how this correlate impacted your teaching practices as the assistance team worked with you?
    - What strategies did they suggest?
    - How was the correlate worked into your classroom culture?
2. Describe how this correlate impacted student achievement in your classroom?

- What strategies suggested by the team fit in this correlate that impacted student achievement in your room?

Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress. In the effective school, pupil progress over the essential objectives are measured frequently, monitored frequently, and the results of those assessments are used to improve the individual student behaviors and performances, as well as to improve the curriculum as a whole.

1. Describe how this correlate impacted your teaching practices as the assistance team worked with you?
    - What strategies did they suggest?
    - How was the correlate worked into your classroom culture?
2. Describe how this correlate impacted student achievement in your classroom?
    - What strategies suggested by the team fit in this correlate that impacted student achievement in your room?

Positive Home-School Relations. In the effective school, parents understand and support the basic mission of the school and are given opportunities to play important roles in helping the school to achieve its mission.

1. Describe how this correlate impacted your teaching practices as the assistance team worked with you?

    What strategies did they suggest?
    - How was the correlate worked into your classroom culture?
2. Describe how this correlate impacted student achievement in your classroom?
    - What strategies suggested by the team fit in this correlate that impacted student achievement in your room?

Opportunity to Learn and Student Time on Task. In the effective school, teachers allocate a significant amount of classroom time to instruction in the essential curricular areas. For a high percentage of this time, students are actively engaged in whole-class or large group, teacher-directed, planned learning activity.

1. Describe how this correlate impacted your teaching practices as the assistance team worked with you?
    - What strategies did they suggest?
    - How was the correlate worked into your classroom culture?
2. Describe how this correlate impacted student achievement in your classroom?
    - What strategies suggested by the team fit in this correlate that impacted student achievement in your room?

APPENDIX C

SURVEY TOOL

The following survey is intended to gather data about the nature and impact of the state assistance team that was present during the 2005/2006 school year. North Carolina's state assistance teams are designed around the Seven Correlates of Effective Schools reflected in the research of Lawrence Lezotte and Ronald Edmonds. For all questions, please consider how the state assistance team impacted you as a teacher and your students' achievement in your classroom. Please return the survey to the large envelop in the main office.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Should you wish not to complete the survey, it is your right to refuse to do so.

Section 1: Participant Data

1. Please indicate the subject area you taught during the 2005/2006 school year (please select only one):

Math____ Science____ English____ Social Studies____

Career and Technical Education (CTE)____ Foreign Language____

Cultural/Performing Arts_____ Health/Physical Education_____

2. Did the courses you taught during the 2005/2006 school year have an End-of-Course test?

Yes _____

No _____

3. Please indicate the total number of years of teaching/education experience that you had at the end of the 2005/2006 school year:

0-3 ____

4-10 ____

10+ ____

Section 2: Seven Correlates of Effective Schools and Assistance Team Impact.

The state assistance teams implement the seven correlates as the foundation for improving instruction in the schools. What impact did the state assistance team have on

your teaching practices and student achievement in your classroom in the areas identified in the Seven Correlates of Effective Schools?
Please indicate how much of an impact the assistance team made using the following scale:
None- No Impact at all
Low- Only a slight impact
Moderate- Moderate level of impact
High- Made a great deal of impact

Correlate 1
Instructional Leadership
In the effective school, the principal acts as an instructional leader and effectively and persistently communicates the mission of the school to staff, parents, and students.

Teaching Practice
None____ Low____ Moderate____ High____
Student Achievement
None____ Low____ Moderate____ High____

Describe what the team did that had an impact on teaching practices i.e. strategies or suggestions:

Describe what the team did that had an impact on student achievement i.e. strategies or suggestions.

Correlate 2
Clear and Focused Mission
In the effective school, there is a clearly articulated mission of the school through which the staff shares an understanding of and a commitment to the school's goals, priorities, assessment procedures, and accountability.

Teaching Practice
None____ Low____ Moderate____ High____
Student Achievement
None____ Low____ Moderate____ High____

Describe what the team did that had an impact on teaching practices i.e. strategies or suggestions:

Describe what the team did that had an impact on student achievement i.e. strategies or suggestions.

Correlate 3
Safe and Orderly Environment
In the effective school they say there is an orderly, purposeful, business-like atmosphere, which is free from the threat of physical harm. The school climate is not oppressive and is conducive to teaching and learning.

Teaching Practice
None____ Low____ Moderate____ High____
Student Achievement
None____ Low____ Moderate____ High____
Describe what the team did that had an impact on teaching practices i.e. strategies or suggestions:

Describe what the team did that had an impact on student achievement i.e. strategies or suggestions.

Correlate 4
Climate of High Expectations
In the effective school, there is a climate of high expectations in which the staff believes and demonstrates that all students can obtain mastery of the school's essential curriculum. They also believe that they, the staff, have the capability to help all students obtain that mastery.

Teaching Practice
None____ Low____ Moderate____ High____
Student Achievement
None____ Low____ Moderate____ High____

Describe what the team did that had an impact on teaching practices i.e. strategies or suggestions:

Describe what the team did that had an impact on student achievement i.e. strategies or suggestions.

Correlate 5
Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress
In the effective school, pupil progress over the essential objectives are measured frequently, monitored frequently, and the results of those assessments are used to improve the individual student behaviors and performances, as well as to improve the curriculum as a whole.

Teaching Practice
None____ Low____ Moderate____ High____
Student Achievement
None____ Low____ Moderate____ High____

Describe what the team did that had an impact on teaching practices i.e. strategies or suggestions:

Describe what the team did that had an impact on student achievement i.e. strategies or suggestions.

Correlate 6
Positive Home-School Relations
In the effective school, parents understand and support the basic mission of the school and are given opportunities to play important roles in helping the school to achieve its mission.

Teaching Practice
None____ Low____ Moderate____ High____
Student Achievement
None____ Low____ Moderate____ High____

Describe what the team did that had an impact on teaching practices i.e. strategies or suggestions:

Describe what the team did that had an impact on student achievement i.e. strategies or suggestions.

Correlate 7
Opportunity to Learn and Student Time on Task
In the effective school, teachers allocate a significant amount of classroom time to instruction in the essential curricular areas. For a high percentage of this time, students are actively engaged in whole-class or large group, teacher-directed, planned learning activity.

Teaching Practice
None____ Low____ Moderate____ High____
Student Achievement
None____ Low____ Moderate____ High____

Describe what the team did that had an impact on teaching practices i.e. strategies or suggestions:

Describe what the team did that had an impact on student achievement i.e. strategies or suggestions.

APPENDIX D

INVITATION LETTER

Dear Valued Educator:

You are invited to take part in a research study examining the effect of a state assistance team on one low-performing high school in North Carolina. Bryan Johnson, a graduate student in the School of Education's Ed. D program, is conducting the study. The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of a state assistance team on student achievement and teachers' pedagogical practices. Information from this study may help educational leaders make decisions in reforming low-performing schools.

During this study you will:

1) Be asked to participate in an individual interview with the researcher, or
2) Be asked to complete a survey.

During the interview group you will:

1) Be asked to share your thoughts and reflections about the state assistance team.
2) Be asked to give your opinion on the impact of the state assistance team.

If you have any questions or concerns about participating in this study, you should contact _____, by phone at _____, or by email at _____.

Every effort will be made to protect your privacy. Your name will not be used in any of the information from this study or in any of the research reports. Any information from this study will be recorded with a code specific to each participant. At the completion of the study, the key that shows the codes and names will be destroyed. The interview and/or focus group will last about an hour, and I may contact you for a follow-up interview for clarification.

You should experience no personal risk or discomfort as a result of your participation in this study. If you participate, you have the right to drop out of the study at any time.

I have had the opportunity to ask any questions I might have about this study and they have been answered to my satisfaction. Two copies of this form have been provided. I will keep one copy and return one, signed copy, to the researcher.

I have read the information in this consent form and
____I agree to be in the study. ____I do not agree to be in the study.

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Date

APPENDIX E

SERVICES AND INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES PROVIDED BY THE STATE ASSISTANCE TEAM

Services and Instructional strategies provided by the state assistance team:

- Scheduling (Master Schedule, Placement of Teachers)
- Requiring and monitoring lesson plans
- Enforcing discipline policies
- Assisting in appropriately placing students
- Data analysis
- Communicate vision of school
- Encouraging strategies to build morale
- Increasing supervision of the school by all staff members
- Assist in developing and conducting staff development to improve classroom management strategies
- Modeling high expectations
- Modeling lessons
- Reviewing pacing guides
- Assist teachers in using data
- Providing professional development on best practices and engaging lessons
- Providing strategies for improving student/teacher attendance
- Promoting rigor in all classes
- Increasing remediation opportunities
- Establishing word walls
- Celebrating successes of students and staff
- Creating games for lessons
- Creating centers for classroom instruction
- Providing professional development for using centers
- Providing professional development for using graphic organizers
- Monitoring Essential Questions
- Modeling Essential Questions
- Providing Professional Development for Essential Questions
- Analyzing test data
- Assisting with EOC JAM (Review for EOCs)
- Facilitating Writing Blitz (Review for writing test)
- Conferencing with students about writing test/EOCs
- Assist administrators monitor instruction

APPENDIX F

IRB FORMS

OFFICE OF HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS
Institutional Review Board

APPLICATION FOR IRB APPROVAL OF
HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH
Version 5-Oct-2006

For IRB Use
Behav Biomed PH-Nurs
IRB Study #_____
Rec'd_____
Full Expedited Exempt

Name of funding source or sponsor:
_X_ not funded __ Federal __ State __ industry __ foundation __ UNC-CH
__ other (specify): **Sponsor or award number**:

Include following items with your submission, where applicable.

- Check the relevant items below and include one copy of all checked items 1-11 in the order listed.
- Also include two additional collated sets of copies (sorted in the order listed) for items 1-7.

→ Applications may be returned if these instructions are not followed.

Check	Item	Total No. of Copies
□	1. This application. One copy must have original PI signatures.	3
□	2. Consent and assent forms, fact or information sheets; include phone and verbal consent scripts.	3
□	3. HIPAA authorization addendum to consent form.	3
□	4. All recruitment materials including scripts, flyers and advertising, letters, emails.	3
□	5. Questionnaires, focus group guides, scripts used to guide phone or in-person interviews, etc.	3
□	6. Protocol, grant application or proposal supporting this submission; (e.g., extramural grant application to NIH or foundation, industry protocol, student proposal).	3
□	7. Documentation of reviews from any other committees (e.g., GCRC, Oncology Protocol Review Committee, or local review committees in Academic Affairs).	3
□	8. Addendum for Multi-Site Studies where UNC-CH is the Lead Coordinating Center.	1
□	9. Data use agreements (may be required for use of existing data from third parties).	1
□	10. Only for those study personnel *not* in the online UNC-CH ethics training database (http://cfx3.research.unc.edu/training_comp/): Documentation of required training in human research ethics.	1
□	11. Investigator Brochure if a drug study.	1

Principal Investigator: I will personally conduct or supervise this research study. I will ensure that this study is performed in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations and University policies regarding human subjects research. I will obtain IRB approval before making any changes or additions to the project. I will notify the IRB of any other changes in the information provided in this application. I will provide progress reports to the IRB at least annually, or as requested. I will report promptly to the IRB all unanticipated problems or serious adverse events involving risk to human subjects. I will follow the IRB approved consent process for all subjects. I will ensure that all collaborators, students and employees assisting in this research study are informed about these obligations. All information given in this form is accurate and complete.

_____ _____

Signature of Principal Investigator Date

Faculty Advisor if PI is a Student or Trainee Investigator: I accept ultimate responsibility for ensuring that this study complies with all the obligations listed above for the PI.

Signature of Faculty Advisor Date

Department or Division Chair, Center Director (or counterpart) of PI: (or Vice-Chair or Chair's designee if Chair is investigator or otherwise unable to review): I certify that this research is appropriate for this Principal Investigator, that the investigators are qualified to conduct the research, and that there are adequate resources (including financial, support and facilities) available. If my unit has a local review committee for pre-IRB review, this requirement has been satisfied. I support this application, and hereby submit it for further review.

Signature of Department Chair or designee Date

Print Name of Department Chair or designee Department

Part A.2. Summary Checklist

Are the following involved?

	Yes	No
A.2.1. Existing data, research records, patient records, and/or human biological specimens?	_X_	__
A.2.2. Surveys, questionnaires, interviews, or focus groups with subjects?	_X_	__
A.2.3. Videotaping, audiotaping, filming of subjects (newly collected or existing)?	_X_	__
A.2.4. Do you plan to enroll subjects from these vulnerable or select populations:		
a. UNC-CH students or UNC-CH employees?	__	_X_
b. Non-English-speaking?	__	_X_
c. Decisionally impaired?	__	_X_
d. Patients?	__	_X_
e. Prisoners, others involuntarily detained or incarcerated, or parolees?	__	_X_
f. Pregnant women?	__	_X_
g. Minors (less than 18 years)? ***If yes***, give age range: to years	__	_X_
A.2.5. a. Is this a multi-site study (sites outside UNC-CH engaged in the research)?	__	_X_
b. Is UNC-CH the sponsor or lead coordinating center?	__	_X_
If yes*,** include the ***Addendum for Multi-site Studies where UNC-CH is the Lead Coordinating Center.		
If yes, will any of these sites be outside the United States?	__	__
If yes, provide contact information for the foreign IRB.		
A.2.6. Will there be a data and safety monitoring committee (DSMB or DSMC)?	__	_X_
A.2.7. a. Are you collecting sensitive information such as sexual behavior, HIV status, recreational drug use, illegal behaviors, child/physical abuse, immigration status, etc?	__	_X_
b. Do you plan to obtain a federal Certificate of Confidentiality for this study?	__	_X_
A.2.8. a. Investigational drugs? (provide **IND #** _____)	__	_X_
b. Approved drugs for "non-FDA-approved" conditions?	__	_X_
All studies testing substances in humans must provide a letter of acknowledgement from the UNC Health Care Investigational Drug Service (IDS).		
A.2.9. Placebo(s)?	__	_X_
A.2.10. Investigational devices, instruments, machines, software? (provide **IDE #** _____)	__	_X_
A.2.11. Fetal tissue?	__	_X_
A.2.12. Genetic studies on subjects' specimens?	__	_X_
A.2.13. Storage of subjects' specimens for future research? ***If yes****, see instructions for* ***Consent for Stored Samples***.	__	_X_
A.2.14. Diagnostic or therapeutic ionizing radiation, or radioactive isotopes, which subjects would not receive otherwise? ***If yes****, approval by the* ***UNC-CH Radiation Safety*** ***Committee*** *is required.*	__	_X_
A.2.15. Recombinant DNA or gene transfer to human subjects? ***If yes****, approval by the* ***UNC-CH Institutional Biosafety*** ***Committee*** *is required.*	__	_X_
A.2.16. Does this study involve UNC-CH cancer patients? ***If yes****, submit this application directly to the* ***Oncology Protocol Review Committee***.	__	_X_
A.2.17. Will subjects be studied in the General Clinical Research Center (GCRC)? ***If yes****, obtain the* ***GCRC Addendum*** *from the GCRC and submit complete application (IRB application and Addendum) to the GCRC.*	__	_X_

Part A.3. Conflict of Interest Questions and Certification

The following questions apply to **all investigators and study staff** engaged in the design, conduct, or reporting results of this project **and/or their immediate family members.** For these purposes, "family" includes the individual's spouse and dependent children. "Spouse" includes a person with whom one lives together in the same residence and with whom one shares responsibility for each other's welfare and shares financial obligations.

A.3.1. Currently or during the term of this research study, does any member of the research team or his/her family member have or expect to have:		
(a) A personal financial interest in or personal financial relationship (including gifts of cash or in-kind) with the sponsor of this study?	__ yes	_X no
(b) A personal financial interest in or personal financial relationship (including gifts of cash or in-kind) with an entity that owns or has the right to commercialize a product, process or technology studied in this project?	__ yes	__X no
(c) A board membership of any kind or an executive position (paid or unpaid) with the sponsor of this study or with an entity that owns or has the right to commercialize a product, process or technology studied in this project?	__ yes	__X no
A.3.2. Has the University or has a University-related foundation received a cash or in-kind gift from the Sponsor of this study for the use or benefit of any member of the research team?	__ yes	_X no
A.3.3. Has the University or has a University-related foundation received a cash or in-kind gift for the use or benefit of any member of the research team from an entity that owns or has the right to commercialize a product, process or technology studied in this project?	__ yes	_X no

If the answer to ANY of the questions above is *yes*, the affected research team member(s) must complete and submit to the Office of the University Counsel the form accessible at http://coi.unc.edu. List name(s) of all research team members for whom any answer to the questions above is *yes*:

<u>Certification by Principal Investigator</u>: By submitting this IRB application, I (the PI) certify that the information provided above is true and accurate regarding my own circumstances, that I have inquired of every UNC-Chapel Hill employee or trainee who will be engaged in the design, conduct or reporting of results of this project as to the questions set out above, and that I have instructed any such person who has answered "yes" to any of these questions to complete and submit for approval a Conflict of Interest Evaluation Form. I understand that as Principal Investigator I am obligated to ensure that any potential conflicts of interest that exist in relation to my study are reported as required by University policy.

Signature of Principal Investigator _____ Date _____

<u>Faculty Advisor if PI is a Student or Trainee Investigator</u>: I accept ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the PI complies with the University's conflict of interest policies and procedures.

Signature of Faculty Advisor Date

Part A.4. Questions Common to All Studies

For all questions, if the study involves only secondary data analysis, focus on your proposed design, methods and procedures, and not those of the original study that produced the data you plan to use.

A.4.1. **Brief Summary**. Provide a *brief* non-technical description of the study, which will be used in IRB documentation as a description of the study. Typical summaries are 50-100 words.

Purpose:

North Carolina has utilized technical assistance teams to turn around low-performing schools for almost ten years. North Carolina's teams are designed around Lawrence Lezotte's and Ronald Edmonds seven correlates of effective schools. The teams use the seven correlates to frame the school improvement plan for improving the low-performing school. However, there is very little research that suggests what impact the work of state assistance teams has had on low-performing schools. The purpose of this research is to investigate the impact of a state assistance team on one low-performing high school in North Carolina.

Participants:

The first part of the proposed study will utilize a survey to draw some conclusions about teacher knowledge and perceptions of the Seven Correlates of Effective Schools as they relate to the impact of the state assistance team. The survey will be given to the teachers that were present at the school concurrently with the state assistance team. A survey will be given to 64 teachers that were present at the research site will the state assistance team was assigned to the school. The second part of the proposed study will consist of 11 in-depth interviews with teachers that includes the seven department heads three other teachers and the principal. Interviewing the principal and 10 teachers, including the department heads, will provide an adequate sample of the individuals who interacted with the state assistance team. The teachers in the proposed study are the respondents and not the subject of the proposed study. The state assistance team and the seven correlates are the focus of the study.

Procedures (methods):

"The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth" (Glesne, 1999, p. 29). The participants will be purposefully selected for this study to obtain rich data about the impact the state assistance team had on teacher pedagogical practices and student achievement.

Data will be collected by utilizing three main sources:

(1) Survey of 64 teachers who were present during the 2005/2006 school year
(2) In-depth interviews with 10 teachers and the principal. The interview protocol will utilize the findings from the survey to supplement the questions.
(3) Data from the mid-year and year-end reports submitted by the state assistance team to the State Board of Education.

A.4.2. **Purpose and Rationale**. Provide a summary of the background information, state the research question(s), and tell why the study is needed. If a complete rationale and literature review are in an accompanying grant application or other type of proposal, only provide a brief summary here. If there is no proposal, provide a more extensive rationale and literature review, including references.

Improving the academic achievement of all students has become a priority in North Carolina. The use of state assistance teams to improve low-performing schools is a result of legislation and directives from the State Board of Education. The major research question for this study is: How did the work of a state assistance team impact the seven areas identified by the seven correlates of effective schools, student achievement and teacher pedagogical practices at one low-performing high school?

Research Questions

In what ways did the work of the state assistance team embody the seven correlates of effective schools?

In what ways was did the work of the state assistance team impact student achievement?

In what ways did the work of the state assistance team impact pedagogical practices of teachers?

Findings from this study may assist superintendents and educational leaders in understanding of issues related to individual school reform. This knowledge will allow them to give more support in the areas to sustain growth. The results may help principals better employ professional development strategies that have been proven to be effective by the state assistance team. Teachers may gain important skills from the strategies implemented by the state assistance team. Those skills will develop into the desired site-based instructional management practices that work and are consistent with the C in the ABCs of North Carolina, local control. The study may carve out effective strategies and expand the skills of educators that are in a position to turn around low-performing schools. Students will be the benefactors of all the professional practices teachers and administrators will be able to provide as a result of the identified strategies. Along with describing strategies, this study will be significant by testing the efficacy of the Seven Correlates of Effective Schools in a low-performing school.

There are numerous strategies to improve low-performing schools. The use of assistance teams is a costly measure, but one that may be utilized more if proven to be effective. The strategies the team implements are tested each year. The strategies that are proven to be effective will appear and reappear in educational reform and educational literature.

A.4.3. **Subjects.** *You should describe the subject population even if your study does not involve direct interaction (e.g., existing records).* Specify number, gender, ethnicity, race, and age. Specify whether subjects are healthy volunteers or patients. If patients, specify any relevant disease or condition and indicate how potential subjects will be identified.

The participants of this study are not the focus of the study rather, the impact of the state assistance team is the subject of the study. The teachers' perceptions and experiences are the important aspects of the study. The teachers vary in age, gender, and race, and ethnicity. Of the 64 teachers, 41 are female and 23 are males. 37 of the teachers are white and 27 of the teachers are African-American. All the participants are volunteers and in good health as far as the

researcher knows. The teachers that are being interviewed are selected based on their experiences before the state assistance team began their work and their experience with the state assistance team. The teachers are not the focus of this study, they are the respondents. The state assistance team consisted of 5 members of varying races and ages. The team was made up of four white females and one African-American female. The state assistance team members will not be directly involved in this study.

A.4.4. **Inclusion/exclusion criteria.** List required characteristics of potential subjects, and those that preclude enrollment or involvement of subjects or their data. Justify exclusion of any group, especially by criteria based on gender, ethnicity, race, or age. If pregnant women are excluded, or if women who become pregnant are withdrawn, specific justification must be provided.

The only requirement for a subject of this study is to have been a teacher or administrator during The 2005/2006 school year at the proposed research site. A potential participant would not be excluded due to gender, ethnicity, race, or age.

A.4.5. **Full description of the study design, methods and procedures.** Describe the research study. Discuss the study design; study procedures; sequential description of what subjects will be asked to do; assignment of subjects to various arms of the study if applicable; doses; frequency and route of administration of medication and other medical treatment if applicable; how data are to be collected (questionnaire, interview, focus group or specific procedure such as physical examination, venipuncture, etc.). Include information on who will collect data, who will conduct procedures or measurements. Indicate the number and duration of contacts with each subject; outcome measurements; and follow-up procedures. If the study involves medical treatment, distinguish standard care procedures from those that are research. If the study is a clinical trial involving patients as subjects and use of placebo control is involved, provide justification for the use of placebo controls.

Data will be collected by utilizing three main sources:

- Survey of 64 teachers who were present during the 2005/2006 school year
- In-depth interviews with 10 teachers and the principal. The interview protocol will utilize the findings from the survey to supplement the questions.
- Data from the mid-year and year-end reports submitted by the state assistance team to the State Board of Education.

North Carolina State assistance teams are designed around Lezotte's seven correlates of effective schools. The correlates are the framework in which the teams work and attempt to improve the school to which they are assigned. The team bases the interventions used in a school on the correlates. This study utilizes the seven correlates as a conceptual framework.

Figure one (p. 44) shows three circles around the seven correlates. The correlates can be observed in almost every effective school. Lezotte's (2001) seven correlates are:

Instructional Leadership. In the effective school, the principal acts as an instructional leader.

Clear and Focused Mission. In the effective school, there is a clearly articulated mission of the school.

Safe and Orderly Environment. In the effective school we say there is an orderly, purposeful, business-like atmosphere.

Climate of High Expectations. In the effective school, there is a climate of high expectations.

Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress. In the effective school, pupil progress over the essential objectives are measured frequently, monitored frequently, and the results of those assessments are used to improve the individual student behaviors and performances.

Positive Home-School Relations. In the effective school, parents understand and support the basic mission of the school.

Opportunity to Learn and Student Time on Task. In the effective school, teachers allocate a significant amount of classroom time to instruction.

According to Lezotte, the existence of the correlates in a school has a positive impact on student learning and achievement. North Carolina's technical assistance teams attempt to model, share, and weave the correlates into the culture of the low-performing schools.

In Figure 1 the *correlates* are the center and the circle is read from inside out. The first circle around the correlates represents the *team*. Where the teams are effective, they have an understanding of the correlates and the importance of the existence of the correlates in an effective school. Part of the team's job is to spread the knowledge of the correlates to the school *administration* and *teachers*. The second circle represents the teachers and administrators. While the team does have the responsibility of modeling and sharing the correlates, they strive to assist the teachers and administrators in changing the school from a low-performing school to an effective school by improving areas that are covered by the correlates. If the team succeeds in embedding the seven correlates in the school before their departure, the administration, teachers, and students recognize the characteristics of an effective school and know what needs to be done to make the school effective. This study will utilize the seven correlates when investigating teacher perceptions about the impact of a state assistance team on student achievement and pedagogical practices.

The survey and interview protocol are attached in the proposal. The teachers will be asked to complete the survey once. The teachers involved in the interviews will be interviewed once, with a possible follow-up interview. The data will be collected by Bryan Johnson, the PI. Bryan Johnson was an assistant principal at the research site during the 2005/2006 school year. Teachers will be given the introduction letter to the study and the survey instrument during a faculty meeting. The researcher will ask that teachers read the introduction letter and complete the survey. Teachers will be instructed to return the surveys to the researcher in an envelope at the conclusion of the meeting. Permission has been given by the building principal for the survey to be administered in this manner.

A.4.6. **Benefits to subjects and/or society.** Describe any potential for direct benefit to individual subjects, as well as the benefit to society based on scientific knowledge to be gained; these should be clearly distinguished. Consider the nature, magnitude, and likelihood of any direct benefit to subjects. If there is no direct benefit to the individual subject, say so here and in the consent form (if there is a consent form). Do not list monetary payment or other compensation as a benefit.

The teachers involved in this study will benefit from participating by being able to express their perceptions of the work of the state assistance team. The benefits to the educational community will be strategies that may help improve low-performing high schools. State assistance teams will benefit because of the data collected and may adjust or fine tune some of their strategies.

A.4.7. **Full description of risks and measures to minimize risks.** Include risk of psychosocial harm (e.g., emotional distress, embarrassment, breach of confidentiality), economic harm (e.g., loss of employment or insurability, loss of professional standing or reputation, loss of standing within the community) and legal jeopardy (e.g., disclosure of illegal activity or negligence), as well as known side effects of study medication, if applicable, and risk of pain and physical injury. Describe what will be done to minimize these risks. Describe procedures for follow-up, when necessary, such as when subjects are found to be in need of medical or psychological referral. If there is no direct interaction with subjects, and risk is limited to breach of confidentiality (e.g., for existing data), state this.

There are minimal risks to the participants in this study. The researcher will not use names or any identifiable information related the participants to ensure confidentiality. The participants are volunteers that can withdraw from the study at any time. The participants should feel little emotional distress. The researcher will communicate with the participants to ensure they feel comfortable while participating in this study.

A.4.8. **Data analysis.** Tell how the qualitative and/or quantitative data will be analyzed. Explain how the sample size is sufficient to achieve the study aims. This might include a formal power calculation or explanation of why a small sample is sufficient (e.g., qualitative research, pilot studies).

The first part of the proposed study will utilize a survey to draw some conclusions about teacher knowledge and perceptions of the Seven Correlates of Effective Schools as they relate to the impact of the state assistance team. The survey will be given to the teachers that were present at the school concurrently with the state assistance team. Out of the 84 teachers at the research site during the 2005/2006 school year, 64 teachers returned. Those teachers will be given the opportunity to complete the survey.

The second part of the proposed study will consist of 11 in-depth interviews with teachers that includes the Seven department heads three other teachers and the principal. Interviewing the principal and 10 teachers, including the department heads, will be a fair sample of the teachers that interacted with the state assistance team. One-on-one interviewing is very time consuming (Creswell, 2005). Because of the time involved in conducting in-depth interviews, 11 interviews is a decent sample. The teachers in the proposed study are the respondents and not the subject of the proposed study. The state assistance team and the seven correlates are the focus of the study.

The results of the survey will be used in designing the interview protocol.

The data from the interviews will be transcribed and explored by the researcher. Creswell (2005) notes, “A preliminary exploratory analysis in qualitative research consists of exploring the data to obtain general sense of the data, memoing ideas, thinking about the organization of the data, and considering whether you need more data” (p. 237). Exploring the data will allow the researcher to become familiar with the data as a whole and he will then be able to code the data for further analysis.

Creswell (2005) states, “Coding is the process of segmenting and labeling text to form descriptions and broad themes in the data” (p. 237). The coded text will be shaped into broad themes that match the seven correlates of effective schools. The seven correlates will serve as the major themes the researcher looks for in the transcribed data, however the researcher will also be conscious of and make note of themes that emerge from the data. In addition to the major themes, and emergent themes the researcher will document the strategies teachers implemented

that changed in their pedagogical practices. These strategies may be helpful to other teachers at low-performing schools.

A.4.9. **Will you collect or receive any of the following identifiers?** Does not apply to consent forms.

_X_ No __ Yes *If yes, check all that apply*:

a. __ Names
b. __ Telephone numbers
c. __ Any elements of dates (other than year) for dates directly related to an individual, including birth date, admission date, discharge date, date of death. For ages over 89: all elements of dates (including year) indicative of such age, except that such ages and elements may be aggregated into a single category of age 90 and older
d. __ Any geographic subdivisions smaller than a State, including street address, city, county, precinct, zip code and their equivalent geocodes, except for the initial three digits of a zip code
e. __ Fax numbers
f. __ Electronic mail addresses
g. __ Social security numbers
h. __ Medical record numbers
i. __ Health plan beneficiary numbers
j. __ Account numbers
k. __ Certificate/license numbers
l. __ Vehicle identifiers and serial numbers (VIN), including license plate numbers
m. __ Device identifiers and serial numbers (e.g., implanted medical device)
n. __ Web universal resource locators (URLs)
o. __ Internet protocol (IP) address numbers
p. __ Biometric identifiers, including finger and voice prints
q. __ Full face photographic images and any comparable images
r. __ Any other unique identifying number, characteristic or code, other than dummy identifiers that are not derived from actual identifiers and for which the re-identification key is maintained by the health care provider and not disclosed to the researcher

A.4.10. **Confidentiality of the data**. Describe procedures for maintaining confidentiality of the data you will collect or will receive. Describe how you will protect the data from access by those not authorized. How will data be transmitted among research personnel? Where relevant, discuss the potential for deductive disclosure (i.e., directly identifying subjects from a combination of indirect IDs).

The data that is collected will be kept in a locked office in a locked filing cabinet. The tapes, transcripts, and surveys will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study. The research team will be the only persons with access to the data. The PI will be the only person with a key to the filing cabinet. Since there are no identifiable indicators being collected, confidentiality will be maintained.
Data collected from the survey will be reported in percentages only. The open ended sections of the survey will be utilized to help frame additional interview questions and analyzed for themes consistent with the seven correlates. Pseudonyms will be used for all participants (teachers, principals, team members, name of location of school and school district). Numbers will be used for survey participants.

Data collected from the interviews will be analyzed for themes relating to the seven correlates. If names of people or the school or school district are reported by the participants during the interviews pseudonyms will be used. All data collected from interviews will be reported using pseudonyms.

A.4.11. **Data sharing.** With whom will *identifiable* (contains any of the 18 identifiers listed in question A.4.9 above) data be shared outside the immediate research team? For each, explain confidentiality measures. Include data use agreements, if any.

_**X**_ No one
__ Coordinating Center**:**
__ Statisticians**:**
__ Consultants**:**
__ Other researchers**:**
__ Registries**:**
__ Sponsors:
__ External labs for additional testing:
__ Journals:
__ Publicly available dataset:
__ Other:

A.4.12. **Data security for storage and transmission**. Please check all that apply.

For electronic data:
__ Secure network _X_ Password access __ Encryption
__ Other (describe):
_X_ Portable storage (e.g., laptop computer, flash drive)
Describe how data will be protected for any portable device: Password protected

For hardcopy data (including human biological specimens, CDs, tapes, etc.):
__X Data de-identified by research team (stripped of the 18 identifiers listed in question 7 above)
__ X Locked suite or office
__ X Locked cabinet
__ X Data coded by research team with a master list secured and kept separately
__ Other (describe):

A.4.13. **Post-study disposition of identifiable data or human biological materials**. Describe your plans for disposition of data or human biological specimens that are identifiable in any way (directly or via indirect codes) once the study has ended. Describe your plan to destroy identifiers, if you will do so.

The transcriptions and interview responses will be incentarated at the end of the study. No identifiers will be collected other than the consent form. The consent forms will not be directly connected to the data.

Part A.5. The Consent Process and Consent Documentation (including Waivers)

The standard consent process is for all subjects to sign a document containing all the elements of informed consent, as specified in the federal regulations. Some or all of the elements of consent, including signatures, may be altered or waived under certain circumstances.

- If you will obtain consent in any manner, complete **section A.5.1**.
- If you are obtaining consent, but requesting a waiver of the requirement for a signed consent document, complete **section A.5.2**.
- If you are requesting a waiver of any or all of the elements of consent, complete **section A.5.3**.

You may need to complete more than one section. For example, if you are conducting a phone survey with verbal consent, complete sections A.5.1, A.5.2, and possibly A.5.3.

A.5.1. **Describe the process of obtaining informed consent from subjects**. If children will be enrolled as subjects, describe the provisions for obtaining parental permission and assent of the child. If decisionally impaired adults are to be enrolled, describe the provision for obtaining surrogate consent from a legally authorized representative (LAR). If non-English speaking people will be enrolled, explain how consent in the native language will be obtained. Address both written translation of the consent and the availability of oral interpretation. *After you have completed this part A.5.1, if you are not requesting a waiver of any type, you are done with Part A.5.; proceed to Part B.*

Participants will be asked to sign a consent form. The form is attached with the proposal. All participants or over the age of 18 and speak English as their first language. Participants will be given the consent forms in a meeting by an administrator at the research site and ask to return to a marked envelop at the end of the meeting.

A.5.2. **Justification for a waiver of *written* (i.e., signed) consent**. *The default is for subjects to sign a written document that contains all the elements of informed consent.* Under limited circumstances, the requirement for a signed consent form may be waived by the IRB if either of the following is true:

a. The only record linking the subject and the research would be the consent document and the principal risk would be potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality (e.g., study involves sensitive data that could be damaging if disclosed). __ yes __ no
Explain.

b. The research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context (e.g., phone survey). __ yes __ no
Explain.

→ If you have justified a waiver of written (signed) consent (A.5.2), you should complete A.5.3 *only* if your consent process will not include all the other elements of consent.

A.5.3. **Justification for a full or partial waiver of consent.** *The default is for subjects to give informed consent.* A waiver might be requested for research involving only existing data or human biological specimens (see also Part C). More rarely, it might be requested when the research design requires withholding some study details at the outset (e.g., behavioral research involving deception). In limited circumstances, parental permission may be waived. This section should also be completed for a waiver of HIPAA authorization if research involves Protected Health Information (PHI) subject to HIPAA regulation, such as patient records.

__ Requesting **waiver of some elements** (specify; see SOP 28 on the IRB web site):
__ Requesting **waiver of consent entirely**
If you check either of the boxes above, answer items a-f.. To justify a full waiver of the requirement for informed consent, you must be able to answer "yes" (or "not applicable" for question c) to items a-f. **Insert brief explanations that support your answers.**

a. Will the research involve no greater than minimal risk to subjects or to their privacy? __ yes __ no
Explain.

b. Is it true that the waiver will *not* adversely affect the rights and welfare of subjects? *(Consider the right of privacy and possible risk of breach of confidentiality in light of the information you wish to gather.)* __ yes __ no
Explain.

c. When applicable to your study, do you have plans to provide subjects with pertinent information after their participation is over? *(e.g., Will you provide details withheld during consent, or tell subjects if you found information with direct clinical relevance? This may be an uncommon scenario.)* __ yes __ not applicable
Explain.

d. Would the research be impracticable without the waiver? *(If you checked "yes," explain how the requirement to obtain consent would make the research impracticable, e.g., are most of the subjects lost to follow-up or deceased?).* **Explain.** __ yes __ no

e. Is the risk to privacy reasonable in relation to benefits to be gained or the importance of the knowledge to be gained? __ yes __ no
Explain.

If you are accessing patient records for this research, you must also be able to answer "yes" to item f to justify a waiver of HIPAA authorization from the subjects.

f. Would the research be impracticable if you could not record (or use) Protected Health Information (PHI)? *(If you checked "yes," explain how* not *recording or using PHI would make the research impracticable).* __ yes __ no
Explain.

Part B. Questions for Studies that Involve Direct Interaction with Human Subjects

→ *If this does not apply to your study, do not submit this section.*

B.1. **Methods of recruiting.** Describe how and where subjects will be identified and recruited. Indicate who will do the recruiting, and tell how subjects will be contacted. Describe efforts to ensure equal access to participation among women and minorities. Describe how you will protect the privacy of potential subjects during recruitment. *For prospective subjects whose status (e.g., as patient or client), condition, or contact information is not publicly available (e.g., from a phone book or public web site), the initial contact should be made with legitimate knowledge of the subjects' circumstances. Ideally, the individual with such knowledge should seek prospective subjects' permission to release names to the PI for recruitment. Alternatively, the knowledgeable individual could provide information about the study, including contact information for the investigator, so that interested prospective subjects can contact the investigator.* Provide the IRB with a copy of any document or script that will be used to obtain the patients' permission for release of names or to introduce the study. Check with your IRB for further guidance.

All 64 participants will be given the opportunity to complete a survey. The participants for interviews will be selected from the 64 teachers that were present during the 2005/2006 school year, the school year that the state assistance team was present at the research site. The principal will be selected for an interview due to her position as the instructional leader at the research site. The 7 department heads will be selected based on their experiences with the state assistance team members and subject matter expertise which is related to standardized testing. Three additional teachers will be selected to balance the participation of women and minorities and based on their subject matter expertise which is related to standardized testing.
The teachers' availability will also be a consideration in participating in the interviews.
The researcher will not reveal the identities of any participants and ever effort will be made to protect the identity and privacy of the participants.
The participants will not be asked to give any information that would identify them in any way in the interviews or the surveys. The participants' names will not appear any where in the data or findings.

B.2. **Protected Health Information (PHI).** If you need to access Protected Health Information (PHI) to identify potential subjects who will then be contacted, you will need a *limited waiver of HIPAA authorization*. If this applies to your study, please provide the following information.

a. Will the information collected be limited only to that necessary to contact the subjects to ask if they are interested in participating in the study? N/A

b. How will confidentiality/privacy be protected prior to ascertaining desire to participate? N/A

c. When and how will you destroy the contact information if an individual declines participation? N/A

B.3. **Duration of entire study and duration of an individual subject's participation, including follow-up evaluation if applicable.** Include the number of required contacts and approximate duration of each contact.

Participants will have the opportunity to complete survey 30 Minutes
Participants participating in interviews 2 hours
Follow up interview 30 minutes

Possible of three contacts with participants

B.4. **Where will the subjects be studied?** Describe locations where subjects will be studied, both on and off the UNC-CH campus.

Subjects will be interviewed off of the UNC-CH campus at the school where the teachers work.

B.5. **Privacy.** Describe procedures that will ensure privacy of the subjects in this study. Examples include the setting for interviews, phone conversations, or physical examinations; communication methods or mailed materials (e.g., mailings should not indicate disease status or focus of study on the envelope).

Participants will be interviewed in a private conference room at the school. The only communication will be face to face.

B.6. **Inducements for participation.** Describe all inducements to participate, monetary or non-monetary. If monetary, specify the amount and schedule for payments and how this will be prorated if the subject withdraws (or is withdrawn) from the study prior to completing it. For compensation in foreign currency, provide a US$ equivalent. Provide evidence that the amount is not coercive (e.g., describe purchasing power for foreign countries). Include food or refreshments that may be provided.

Participants will not be paid any money, nor will any refreshments be provided.

B.7. **Costs to be borne by subjects.** Include child care, travel, parking, clinic fees, diagnostic and laboratory studies, drugs, devices, all professional fees, etc. If there are no costs to subjects other than their time to participate, indicate this.

There are no costs to the participants other than their time.

Part C. Questions for Studies using Data, Records or Human Biological Specimens without Direct Contact with Subjects

→ *If this does not apply to your study, do not submit this section.*

C.1. What records, data or human biological specimens will you be using? *(check all that apply)*:

__ Data already collected for another research study
_X Data already collected for administrative purposes (e.g., Medicare data, hospital discharge data)
__ Medical records (custodian may also require form, e.g., HD-974 if UNC-Health Care System)
__ Electronic information from clinical database (custodian may also require form)
__ Patient specimens (tissues, blood, serum, surgical discards, etc.)
__ Other (specify):

C.2. For each of the boxes checked in 1, how were the original data, records, or human biological specimens collected? Describe the process of data collection including consent, if applicable.

The data was collected by the state assistance team and given to the researcher at the end of the 2005/2006
school year. No names appear on the documents given to the researcher or any other identifiable markings.

C.3. For each of the boxes checked in 1, where do these data, records or human biological specimens currently reside?

In a locked filing cabinet in the researchers office.

C.4. For each of the boxes checked in 1, from whom do you have permission to use the data, records or human biological specimens? Include data use agreements, if required by the custodian of data that are not publicly available.

The data was collected by the state assistance team and given to the researcher at the end of the 2005/2006 school year. This information is not in the public domain.

C.5. If the research involves human biological specimens, has the purpose for which they were collected been met before removal of any excess? For example, has the pathologist in charge or the clinical laboratory director certified that the original clinical purpose has been satisfied? Explain if necessary.

__X yes __ no __ not applicable (explain)

C.6. Do all of these data records or specimens exist at the time of this application? If not, explain how prospective data collection will occur.

_X_ yes __ no If no, explain

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