Schools of Excellence AND Equity: Closing Achievement Gaps
Through Collective Efficacy

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ABSTRACT

Currently, the debate in public schools centers on the achievement gap and is politically bathed in the language of equity and excellence. While research continues to suggest that our schools are plagued with inequities that perpetuate this gap and maintain the status quo (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Jenks & Phillips, 1998; Kozol, 1991; McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004), there are some schools that play a key role in raising student achievement for all students and in closing the achievement gap across socio-economic and racial lines (Comer, 1994, Ladson-Billings, 1994, Reyes et al., 1999, Skrila & Scheurich, 2001). This study explored how K-5 elementary school principals of state recognized “Honor Schools of Excellence” are (or are not) pursuing, supporting, and achieving excellence and equity and sought to offer school leaders specific strategies for attaining this goal. For the purpose of this study, the researchers rank ordered and then separated the identified schools into two categories, small gap and large gap schools.

The data from this study were analyzed using the framework of collective efficacy (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000, 2004). Collective efficacy is defined as, “the judgment of teachers in a school that the faculty as a whole can organize and execute the courses of action required to have a positive effect on students” (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2004, p.4).

Differences emerged in nearly all four components of collective efficacy; these differences were linked by student learning. As a whole, small gap schools focused on student learning more than the large gap schools. Through mastery experience, principals of small gap schools articulated a clearer vision of the specific type of instruction that impacted student learning. These principals also were more likely to provide teachers with specific feedback on their instruction. In terms of social persuasion, principals of
small gap schools provided more specific feedback to teachers, and teachers focused more on individual students. Even through affective states, where both groups of schools were similar, teachers in small gap schools tied their own job satisfaction to student learning. At the heart of this focus on student learning is the leadership of the principal.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

Although studies have examined schools that make a difference in the lives of marginalized children (Oakes, Quartz, Ryan & Lipton, 2000; Riester, Pursch & Skrla, 2002), there is an absence of literature regarding principals as the unit of analysis and the process of principals serving as leaders for social justice. Related to this is an absence of documented strategies that principals who are leading for equity and excellence use to advance their work in the face of countervailing pressures of public schools.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this two-phase empirical inquiry of “good” schools was to explore “how” K-5 elementary principals of state recognized “Honor Schools of Excellence” are (or are not) pursuing, supporting, and achieving both academic excellence AND systemic equity in their schools. Furthermore, the researchers shed light on a flawed accountability system that touts excellence while ignoring glaring inequities among student subgroups. Although the state’s accountability system, unlike the Federal system, accounts for student growth, many children are still left behind. A school is deemed a “School of Excellence” regardless of whether subgroups meet or exceed the targeted proficiency level. While some subgroups consistently outperform others with regard to proficiency, many schools boast the title of “Excellence” despite hidden inequities that reinforce the achievement gap. By definition in the selected county, “Honor Schools of Excellence”
have at least 90 percent of their students perform at or above grade level (i.e. achieved a level 3 or 4 on state exams) and the school meets expected growth and federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) proficiency requirements for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). This accountability system conflates excellence and equity, therefore offering a narrow definition of student achievement and perpetuating the current achievement gap that separates many minorities from their white counterparts.

In Phase One, quantitative data were collected through equity audits to scan for equities and inequities across multiple domains of student learning and activities. The purpose was to document and distinguish between “good schools” (i.e. those that are both excellent and equitable) and those that are not and to uncover practices in the “good schools” that lead to both excellence AND systemic equity. In Phase Two, through the use of semi-structured interviews with principals, assistant principals, teachers, and parent leaders, qualitative data were collected to document the specific strategies that principals of “good schools” used to confront and change past practices anchored in open and residual racism and class discrimination. “Good leaders” committed to excellence AND equity find a way “for all students to achieve high levels of academic success, regardless of any student’s race, ethnicity, culture, neighborhood, income of parents, or home language” (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003, p.1).

For the purpose of this study, the researchers rank ordered and then separated the identified schools into two categories. The 12 more equitable schools that recorded achievement gaps of 15% or less between their White students and their minority students were labeled SGS for “small gap schools.” The 12 less equitable schools that recorded achievement gaps of more than 15% between their White students and their
minority students were labeled LGS for “large gap schools” (see Chapter 3 for methodology). Categorizing the schools by the size of their achievement gap allowed the researchers the opportunity to compare and contrast leadership styles with the hope of identifying specific practices that support both excellence AND equity.

Research Questions

The following question focused the research study: How are principals of K-5 public “Honor Schools of Excellence” pursuing, supporting and advancing social justice, excellence, and systemic equity in a suburban southeastern county? The sub-questions include the following: a) What are principals of K-5 “Honor Schools of Excellence” doing to ensure the success of all of their students? (b) What similarities do school leaders, who are successful in creating equity and excellence, have in common? (c) What findings can connect to and build upon the literature related to leadership for social justice and systemic equity? (d) What can be learned from “Honor Schools of Excellence” that could benefit other schools with similar demographics?

Background

The historical marginalization of underprivileged students often results in a school culture that perpetuates the status quo and ignores the social injustices that permeate our schools. As a result, the fate of many of our students is a pre-determined mold designed for school failure and social inequity. A school culture that does not embrace the responsibility of responding to the needs of these students and their families simply perpetuates hegemony and leaves these students behind—without hope, without vision, and without equal access to the excellent education to which all children are entitled.
School-based administrators can attempt to resist hegemony by making social justice the primary focus of their administrative agendas.

Social justice, due to its historical roots, carries various, contextual meanings and is therefore an elusive term to define. “In Latin, justice comes from the word *equitas*, which means fairness, and social derives from the word *socius*, meaning companion. Combining these Latin roots produces a literal definition of social justice as being fair to one’s companion” (Shoho, Merchant & Lugg, 2005, p.47). Social justice has roots in fields such as sociology, history, law, social work, and theology. While there appears to be no single definition for social justice, there has been wide consensus with regard to the guiding principles of equality, fairness, acceptance of others, and inclusiveness (Shoho et al., 2005).

Recently, many prominent scholars in the field of education have offered definitions of social justice (Bogotch, 2002; Furman & Gruenewald, 2004; Riester, Pursch, & Skrla, 2002; Shields, 2004). Scheurich and Skrla (2003) equate social justice in schools with equity and excellence in schools whereby “literally all students achieve high levels of academic success, regardless of any student’s race, ethnicity, culture, neighborhood, income of parents or home language” (p.1). Moreover, Theoharis (2004), in a paper entitled “Toward a Theory of Social Justice Educational Leadership,” goes a step further by attributing social justice [in schools] to school leadership by stating:

I define social justice leadership to mean that [these] principals advocate, lead and keep at the center of their practice and vision issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States. (p.3)

In tandem, the definitions from Scheurich and Skrla and Theoharis served as a guide to explore strategies employed by school-based administrators who are committed to
supporting and advancing social justice—leading schools in which *all* students achieve high levels of academic success.

**Historical Roots**

Spring (2005), in his book, *The American School: 1642 – 2005*, suggests that hegemony is a central theme in educational history. Spring lays the foundation beginning with the English invasion of North America in the 16th century, eventually leading the U.S. government to aim for a national culture to preserve, honor and maintain Protestant Anglo-American values. He reveals that one reason for the 19th century development of public schools was to “ensure the dominance of Anglo-American values that were being challenged by Irish immigration, Native Americans and African Americans” (p.3). Spring explains that public schools, as a result, became “defenders of Anglo-American value with each new wave of immigrants” (p.3) and, in the following century, served to assimilate minorities and therefore perpetuated hegemonic practices. Although educators have preached equality of opportunity, schools have been repeatedly plagued with acts of religious intolerance, racial segregation, cultural genocide, and discrimination against immigrants and non-whites. Spring argues that hegemony (this quest for cultural and racial domination) persists today in the debate over multiculturalism and is evident as schools perpetuate and reproduce the dominant cultures and values in society.

Although many lawsuits have addressed the issue of equality of opportunity, none has had a greater or more lasting impact on public schools than the landmark *Brown vs. The Board of Education* decision (1954). Among one of the most significant rulings in the history of the U.S. Supreme Court, state imposed racially segregated schooling was declared unconstitutional and was described as depriving “minority children of equal
education opportunities in violation of their rights under the “equal protection clause” of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution” (Brown & Harris, 2004, p.239). Although Brown sparked four major educational developments (Elementary and Secondary Education Act Title I and Title VII, funding equity and adequacy, affirmative action, and multicultural education), “improvement has been mixed, slow in coming, insufficient in impact, and with a few backward steps” (Valverde, 2004, p.377).

Present Issues in Education

Currently, the debate in public schools centers on the achievement gap and is politically bathed in the language of equity and excellence. Despite decades of efforts to provide an equitable education to all of our nation’s students, significant gaps in achievement remain between White students, students of color, and students living in poverty. A gap also exists for middle class students of color in suburban schools. This achievement gap has been reported and discussed extensively in the research on student achievement (Kozol, 1991; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Williams, 2003).

Recent data compiled by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) indicate that this achievement gap persists. Using data from the 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth grade math tests, researchers found that the average scale score for White students was 246 while the average score for African American students was 220, and the average score for Hispanic students was 226. The size of the gap for all subgroups of students was similar on the reading test. White students had an average scale score of 229, while African-American and Hispanic or Latino students scored 200 and 203, respectively. Similar gaps were found when the data were disaggregated by socioeconomic levels. Students who received subsidized
lunches scored 23 scale score points lower on the math section of the NAEP than students who were not eligible for subsidized lunches. The gap between the same subgroups was 29 scale score points on the reading section of the NAEP.

McKenzie and Scheurich’s (2004) research of the current educational achievement gap reveals the following:

There is an abundance of data and research that show that students of color not only are performing at lower achievement levels than their White counterparts but, also, are overrepresented in special education and lower level classes, dropping out of school at higher numbers, frequently educated by teachers who do not believe they can learn or who are actively negative in their attitude toward these students, underrepresented in gifted and talented and higher level classes, often times educated in schools with less resources and with the least experienced teachers, and more likely to be suspended or expelled. (p.602)

These data reflect an inequality with regard to student achievement, program accessibility, teacher expectations of students, instructional delivery, curriculum implementation, and resource allocation. There is no question that minority and socio-economically disadvantaged children are being left behind and, as a result, this growing disparity has gained national attention.

Many researchers have attempted to explain why this gap exists. Some (Jensen, 1969; Herrnstein & Murray, 1994) believe that the gap exists due to the genetic inferiority of African-Americans in comparison to Whites. Although the validity of their studies has come into serious question, many still subscribe to this genetic deficiency line of thinking. Other scholars, such as Slavin (1986), have pointed to class differences, families, and the access to learning opportunities at home as a major cause of the achievement gap. Slavin, and others who believe as he does, postulates that, if students of color or students of poverty were raised in White middle-class homes, they would
achieve greater levels of academic success, and the gap would be reduced or eliminated. These same authors, however, do not address the many examples of students who are successful but were not raised in White middle-class homes.

Valencia (1997) called the views of individuals such as Slavin, Jensen and others *deficit thinking*. Those who believe in these views blame poor school achievement on the deficits of the students and their families. When blame is placed on the student, it simultaneously exonerates the school. As King, Houston, and Middleton (2001) state, “Individual characteristics emerge as most responsible for poor school performance. Such discussions render invisible schooling practices that contribute to school failure” (p.434). However, many schools exist that have been successful educating students of color and students of poverty (Comer, 1994; Johnson & Asera, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Reyes, Scribner, & Scribner, 1999; Skrla & Scheurich, 2001). Considering the evidence from these schools, it is impossible to ignore the role that the school system plays in providing an excellent and equitable education for all students.

The problem then becomes that overwhelming evidence suggests the school system is responsible for providing an excellent and equitable education for all students, yet has failed to do so. Specifically, schools have missed opportunities to provide all students with an equitable opportunity to learn. This is evidenced by the unequal representation of subgroups of students in academically gifted education and special programs. Another factor that deprives students of an equitable and excellent education is the inequitable access that students have to the schools most talented teachers. These lack of opportunities, coupled with the prevailing deficit view that schools often take towards students, contribute heavily to the inequities in schools. It is the deficits of the school
system, not the individual students and their families, that are responsible for the gap in achievement that exists in our nation’s public schools. Granted, this is not an easy problem to solve, but as Skrla, Scheurich, Johnson, and Koschoreck (2001) conclude, “…the fact that, broadly speaking, our children experience differential levels of success in school that is distributed along race and social class lines continues to be the overriding central problem of education” (p.239).

The standards based movement, along with the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, proposes criteria for how to eliminate the achievement gap between minority students and their peers. “The broad goal of NCLB is to raise the achievement levels of all students, especially underperforming groups, and to close the achievement gap that parallels race and class distinctions” (Darling-Hammond, 2004, p.3). Across the country, school systems are required to publish “report cards” that report disaggregated data regarding students’ results on standardized tests. This information is then used to advertise the quality of teaching within a school, the performance of individual groups of students and, in many cases, leads to the dismissal of school leaders and/or the involvement of a team of people (often without educational experience) who “take over” the school to ensure equity and excellence.

As English (2002) points out, discriminatory practices, although banned by law, “continue in other guises” (p.298), and result in the resegregation of our schools. Among the most insidious of practices, prevalent in schools throughout our nation, is the use of standardized tests to “discriminate and separate students for purposes of instruction” (p.298). Furthermore, Darling-Hammond (2004) explains that NCLB fails to address the blatant and disturbing systemic inequality regarding the provision of education offered in
the United States. Students in our wealthier schools and districts, for instance, receive up to ten times greater funding than that of students in our poorer districts. Kozol’s (1991) research, documented in his book, *Savage Inequalities*, elaborates upon these funding inequities and paints a sad, disheartening picture of the impact they have upon the education of poor and minority children across our nation. Regardless, there is still hope that the United States will move forward with a socially just agenda of providing all children with equal access to quality, desegregated public education (Brown & Harris, 2004).

Despite funding inequities that favor the wealthy and ignore the disadvantaged, despite federal mandates that conflate measuring schools with fixing them, and despite societal norms and values that often serve as impediments to equality and excellence, our schools can serve as vehicles for social justice. We must first turn our attention to what is happening within our schools; we must uncover and expose hegemonic practices, identify socially and morally just strategies for how to respond, and must insist and ensure that all children receive the equitable and excellent education to which each is entitled. The success of our schools relies upon leadership that upholds and advocates equality of opportunity for all of our children.

**Conceptual Framework**

This research study was analyzed through the lens of academic optimism (Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfok Hoy, 2006), a construct developed by the authors to explain student achievement while controlling for socioeconomic status, previous achievement, and urbanicity. The notion of optimism as a factor related to success was suggested by Seligman (1998). He argued that optimism influences achievement as much as talent and
motivation and that optimism can be learned and developed (Hoy et al., 2006). The structural model of academic optimism supports and builds upon Seligman’s model of learned optimism. Hoy and his colleagues outline three underlying components: (1) academic emphasis; (2) collective efficacy; and (3) faculty trust, and suggest that collectively, these components enhance learning, improve student achievement, and shape school norms and behavioral expectations.

Limitations

One of the central limitations of this study is that “excellence” in the selected county is defined solely by students’ attainment of a target score (AYP) on a standardized test. The “target” score, as defined and measured by NCLB, conflates excellence and equity, therefore offering a narrow definition of student achievement and perpetuating the current achievement gap that separates many minorities from their white counterparts.

Another limitation is its focus on a single school district. Furthermore, this district is unique in its focus to keep most schools balanced by subgroups of students identified under NCLB. As a result, most of the schools in this study have a population of African-American and Hispanic students that ranges from 20% to 40% of the total school population. This is not representative of many districts or many schools in these districts that essentially remain segregated. Despite the limitation, it is an opportunity to add a unique district to the research on equity in schools. Also, the site selection process did not include other variables, such as budgets and Title I status that might have impacted findings.

An additional limitation lies in the definition of “good” schools and “bad” schools in this study. Some of the schools where African-American, Hispanic, and Economically
Disadvantaged students are achieving at the highest levels still have achievement gaps between 10 and 20%. Admittedly, these schools are not perfectly equitable. However, it further illustrates the need for this research and the importance of not only learning from, but also building on, the success of the more equitable schools in the district.

A final limitation is a result of the large quantity of interviews (80 in all) that were conducted by multiple researchers. As a result, a broad semi-structured interview protocol was used, which did not allow for specific probing. In addition, data was self-reported in interviews but not verified through observations. To counter this limitation, data was collected and triangulated through multiple sources.

**Definition of Terms**

- **Academic Optimism:** A conceptual framework adopted by this study that consists of three sub-components. The sub-components include:
  - Academic emphasis: The extent to which a school is characterized by a press for academic achievement (Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2006).
  - Collective efficacy: Includes self-efficacy beliefs of students, self-efficacy beliefs of teachers, and teachers’ collective efficacy beliefs about the school (Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2006).
  - Faculty trust: A willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open (Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2006).

- **Deficit Thinking:** Students who fail in school do so because of alleged internal deficiencies (such as cognitive and/or motivational limitations) or shortcomings socially linked to the youngster—such as familial deficits (Valencia, 1997).
- Hegemony: Racial and cultural domination (Spring, 2005).

- Leadership for Excellence and Equity:
  - Schools in which all students achieve high levels of academic success, regardless of any student’s race, ethnicity, culture, neighborhood, income of parents, or home language (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003, p.1).
  - Schools in which principals advocate, lead and keep at the center of their practice and vision issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States. (Theoharis, 2004, p.3).

- Systemic Equity: The transformed ways in which systems and individuals habitually operate to ensure that every learner—in whatever learning environment that learner is found—has the greatest opportunity to learn enhanced by the resources and supports necessary to achieve competence, excellence, independence responsibility, and self-sufficiency for school and for life (Scott, 2001).
  - Achievement Equity: Having comparably high performance for all groups of learners when academic achievement data are disaggregated and analyzed.
  - Opportunity to Learn Equity: Equal access to a rigorous curriculum for all students.
  - Resource Distribution Equity: Equal distribution of funds and human resources to all schools and students who populate those schools
Treatment Equity: The belief and expectation that literally all students can learn and achieve academic success at the highest levels

Significance

Many people, including educators, still believe that factors such as genetic deficiency, class differences, families and access to learning opportunities at home are the most reliable predictors of school achievement. With this view, schools excuse themselves from any accountability for inequities among student subgroups. However, with this study of schools that teach similar populations of students from the same geographical region, it is impossible to ignore the reality that the school plays an important role in the achievement of all students. This study gives leaders data to support the notion that the school plays a significant role in the achievement of students. More importantly, educational leaders who read this study will learn strategies that will facilitate excellence and equity from the principals who lead the most equitable schools in this district.

Although studies have examined schools that make a difference in the lives of marginalized children (Oakes, Quartz, Ryan & Lipton, 2000; Riester, Pursch & Skrla, 2002), there is an absence of literature regarding principals as the unit of analysis and the process of actually leading for excellence and equity. The rationale of this two-phase empirical inquiry of leadership for excellence and systemic equity was to document how schools, and leaders in particular, can and are pursuing, supporting, and achieving both goals. They decide they can create both equitable and excellent schools and then use their time and energy to figure out how to do so. This research and review of the literature
uncovered strategies that principals can use to achieve both excellence and equity in their schools.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

Efforts to provide an equal education for racially and economically diverse students can be traced back to 1849 when an African-American father sued the city of Boston for mandating that his child walk beyond a White school to attend a school established for Blacks only. In Roberts v. City of Boston (1849), the court concluded that the school committee was within its power to separate the White and Black students, especially if the education was equal (Gooden, 2004). Gooden points out that the struggle to achieve equality in education gained national prominence in 1954 with the landmark court case of Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas.

Since Brown, authors such as Edmonds (1979) have documented schools that do provide an equal education to students regardless of their race or family’s socioeconomic status. Edmonds noted that student performance did not derive from family background, but rather it derived from the school’s response to family background. While this discussion of providing an equitable education for all students has continued for well over a century, our current educational system remains inequitable.

Our current discussions of equity in education are centered around the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) that was signed by President Bush on January 8, 2002. The stated purpose of this law is to close “the achievement gap between high- and low-performing children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and non-minority
students, and between [economically] disadvantaged children and their more [economically] advantaged peers” (Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2005, p.1). NCLB defines non-minority students as White students and divides minority students into the following subgroups: African-American, Hispanic, and Native American students. To remain consistent with the terms defined by NCLB, the literature refers to subgroups of students such as African-American, Hispanic, White, economically disadvantaged, and non-economically disadvantaged. It is important to recognize that an achievement gap exists between these subgroups of students; this does not mean, for example, that all African American or Hispanic students are low-achieving compared to their White counterparts. Although the manner in which the discussion of equity is framed has changed over time, our schools have not. They remain systemically inequitable.

The following review of the literature describes the current research on the three components of Systemic Equity; (a) Achievement Equity; (b) Programmatic Equity; and (c) Teacher Quality Equity. After broadly discussing these three components, the review moves into the literature on the role leadership plays in creating schools that are systemically equitable. Specifically, the authors review the literature on characteristics of leaders for social justice, equity, and excellence. The conceptual framework of Academic Optimism is then described in detail.

Systemic Equity

This persistent inequity has prompted Skrla, Scheurich, Johnson, and Koschoreck (2001) to conclude, “… the fact that, broadly speaking, our children experience differential levels of success in school that is distributed along race and social class lines
continues to be the overridingly central problem of education” (p.239). Since equity remains the central issue of education, the review of the literature will focus on the research that centers around systemic equity (Scott, 2001). Scott defines systemic equity as:

The transformed ways in which systems and individuals habitually operate to ensure that every learner—in whatever learning environment that learner is found—has the greatest opportunity to learn enhanced by the resources and supports necessary to achieve competence, excellence, independence responsibility, and self-sufficiency for school and for life. (p.2)

The literature review is based on Scott’s four components of systemic equity: (a) achievement equity; (b) opportunity to learn equity; (c) resource distribution equity; and (d) treatment equity. The researchers have combined Scott’s four components into three sections titled: (a) Achievement Equity; (b) Programmatic Equity; and (c) Teacher Quality Equity. The review begins with achievement equity and evidence that it is possible to create schools that are excellent and equitable. Next, the literature on programmatic equity is presented and specifically addresses students in special and academically gifted programs, inequities in the disciplining of students as well as offering a rigorous curriculum for all students. The following section addresses teacher quality equity and includes sections on teacher certification, years of experience, National Board Certification, and teacher quality formulas.

Achievement Equity

Introduction

According to Scott (2001), achievement equity means having comparably high performance for all groups of learners when academic achievement data are
disaggregated and analyzed. This section provides examples of schools that have attained achievement equity.

In answer to his own question, how many schools one would have to see in order to be persuaded of the educability of poor children, Edmonds (1979) answered, “If your answer is more than one, then I submit that you have reasons of your own for preferring to believe that basic pupil performance derives from family background instead of school response to family background” (p.23). Unfortunately, many educators still believe, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, that the school system cannot impact student achievement as much as family background. However, researchers have found schools that are both excellent and equitable (Comer, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Reyes, Scribner, & Scribner, 1999; Skrla & Scheurich, 2001).

**Exemplars of Achievement Equity**

In a study of high-performing, high-poverty elementary schools, Johnson and Asera (1999) found nine schools that were excellent schools. One school in their study was 100% African American, with 87% of the students receiving subsidized lunches, experienced a rapid growth in test scores over a short period of time. For example, fourth grade students passed the state’s reading test at a rate of only 22.4% in the spring of 1994. However, in the spring of 1998, fourth grade students passed the test at a rate of 65%. This was better than the state average of 58.6%. Although the success of the nine schools in the study was similar, Johnson and Asera reported that the methods by which each school achieved success were varied.

Noblit, Malloy, and Malloy (2001) also found several examples of high-performing schools when they studied schools with a population of predominantly
African-American students. They report improved student achievement on indicators such as a greater representation of minority students on the honor roll and in accelerated classes. The schools compare favorably with schools that serve mostly students from middle class surroundings. Perhaps the most significant finding is that “the distribution of achievement is becoming more equitable” (p.74). Although these schools were part of the Comer Process and the School Development Program where they were reformed using particular strategies and resources, that does not discount them as exemplars of the fact that all students, regardless of their background, can (and should) achieve academically.

In a study of school districts, Skrla, Scheurich, Johnson, and Koschoreck (2001) found evidence of entire districts that were successful with all students. One district in their study, with an African American population of 36% and a Latina/o population of 47%, raised test scores for both subgroups of students from 45% to 76% passing and 56% to 81% passing respectively. With evidence of highly successful schools that serve large groups of economically disadvantaged and minority students, it seems impossible to ignore the role that schools play in student achievement.

In their study of five high performing, high poverty schools, Ragland, Clubine, Constable, and Smith (2002), studied five elementary schools that had at least 60% of their students receiving subsidized lunches. Two of the five schools had 92% of their students receiving subsidized lunches. All five of these schools received Exemplary or Recognized status, which means 80% of all subgroups of students passed the reading, writing, and math sections of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills.
HiPass Model

Scheurich (1998), in his article, “Highly Successful and Loving, Public Elementary Schools Populated Mainly by Low-SES Children of Color,” provides a research-based description of the “type of school that is needed to provide both a loving environment and strong academic success for low-SES students of color” (p.452). This grassroots model, developed and implemented by school-level administrators, is known as HiPass (High Performance All Student Success Schools). Scheurich documents the importance of five core beliefs and seven cultural characteristics that are common to each of the identified (HiPass) schools and attributes each to the vision, commitment and practice of the school leader. The five core beliefs include: (1) All Children Can Succeed; (2) Children or Learner Centered Schools; (3) All Children Must Be Treated With Love, Care Appreciation and Respect; (4) The Racial Culture, Including the First Language of the Child is Always Valued; and (5) The School Exists for and Serves the Community, and the seven cultural characteristics are: (1) A Strong, Shared Vision; (2) Loving, Caring Environments for Children and Adults; (3) Strongly Collaborative – We Are a Family; (4) Innovative, Experimental, Openness to New Ideas; (5) Hardworking but Not Burning Out; (6) Appropriate Conduct is Built Into the Organizational Culture and (7) School Staff as a Whole Hold Themselves Accountable for the Success of All Children. The principals included in the study each stated that these core beliefs and cultural characteristics serve as a prerequisite for high achievement. According to Scheurich, these principals, while retaining 80% to 90% of teachers, transformed these schools within about a 3- to 5- year period into schools that were academically competitive with some of the higher performing schools in the state. One high school principal, for
example, was able to take a “predominantly low-SES African American school with less than 20% of the African American students passing the state math test and, within five years, have more than 60% of these same students passing the math test” (p.458). It is clear that the HiPass metaphor extends beyond academic success as it is traditionally measured solely by student scores on standardized tests; HiPass is an embodiment of the espoused and enacted beliefs and values of the schools’ leaders. Under the leadership of these principals, the HiPass schools are “highly collaborative and democratic, with all participants, including parents, empowered; they do not treat the student as a passive consumer of knowledge; and they deeply value the racial culture and language of the child” (p.455).

*Effective Schools Research*

The quest for more effective forms of schooling has traditionally been synonymous with the quest for greater educational equity across racial and socioeconomic levels. Beginning with the Coleman Report of the mid-1960s (Coleman, 1966), the past 40 years have witnessed a growing number of research studies aimed at reducing the gap in quality between the school experiences of economically disadvantaged and more affluent youth. Concluding that the strongest predictors of achievement across all racial groups were social characteristics of the student's home environment (e.g., parents' education, income), Coleman proposed that children from economically disadvantaged families and homes, lacking the prime conditions or values to support education, could not learn, regardless of what the school did—in essence, absolving schools of the responsibility for student achievement. Through the “effective schools research,” Edmunds, Brookover, Lezzotte, and others (see Rosenholtz, 1985) set
out to find schools where children from low income families were highly successful and thereby prove that schools can and do make a difference and that children from poverty backgrounds can learn at high levels. Many of these process-product studies identified samples of high-performing schools, documenting certain school, classroom and leadership practices that are critical to enhanced student achievement and school productivity, regardless of family background. These unique characteristics and processes within the purview of schools are correlated with high and equitable levels of student learning.

Summarizing these findings, Odden and Odden (1995) noted that effective teachers maximize instruction time; are well prepared; maintain a smooth and steady instructional pace (especially during the first few weeks of school); focus on academic learning; and emphasize student mastery of material. With regard to organizational characteristics, effective schools evidence strong instructional leadership, usually provided by the principal; consensus on academically focused school goals; realistic but high expectations for student learning; regularized monitoring of progress toward academic goals; ongoing staff development; and an orderly and secure environment (Odden & Odden, 1995).

School Climate and Community

Other studies found similar characteristics of a school’s climate associated with improved student learning. For example, in 1988, Bryk and Driscoll expanded the notion of school commonality, arguing that "communally organized" schools evidence: (1) a consensus over beliefs and values; (2) a "common agenda" of course work, activities, ceremonies, and traditions; and (3) an ethic of caring that pervades the relationships of
student and adult school members. On the basis of analyses of a national sample of
schools and students, Bryk and Driscoll found that schools with higher levels of
commonality (as measured by an array of survey items representing each of the three core
components) also evidenced higher attendance rates, better morale (among both students
and teachers), and higher levels of student achievement. Shouse’s (1996) follow-up study
separately examined the achievement effects of commonality (measured along lines
similar to those of Bryk and Driscoll's study) and "academic press" (measured in terms of
an assortment of survey items reflecting school academic climate, disciplinary climate,
and teachers' instructional behavior and emphasis). The findings revealed that academic
effectiveness among low-SES schools was significantly tied to academic press and to an
integrated culture of academic press and commonality. Achievement in low-SES schools
having high levels of both academic press and commonality rivaled that of schools
serving more affluent students. Conversely, the least academically effective low-SES
schools were those that combined strong commonality and weak academic press.
Although these findings reveal the tensions between meeting students' social and
academic needs, they also reveal the tremendous potential of school social networks that
are supportive, cohesive, and academically oriented to greatly enhance the quality of
educational experiences for disadvantaged students (Shouse, 1996).

School Restructuring

Similar to the effective schools movement, the school restructuring movement
also denotes a fairly specific array of prescriptions for improving organizational
effectiveness and student achievement. The tenets offered by this movement center
around three basic areas: (1) shifting the thrust of school governance to a more "bottom
up" direction through decentralization, site-based management, staff professional development, teacher empowerment, and greater parent involvement; (2) refocusing curriculum and instruction toward cooperatively organized, mixed-ability classrooms with a greater emphasis on higher-order learning and the use of performance-based student assessment; and (3) reducing school size, typically through the creation of "schools within schools." Research evidence links the collective adoption of these areas with significant gains in high school achievement. A study by Lee and Smith (1994), for example, contrasted achievement gains in three types of school: (a) those with no reform or restructuring; (b) those that had sought to improve on their traditional, more bureaucratic practices; and (c) those that had engaged in some level of organizational restructuring. Although students in traditionally oriented schools that were seeking improvement outgained those in nonreform schools, students in restructured schools (those having adopted at least three out of 12 restructuring practices) significantly outgained those in both other types of schools. More important, the achievement gap between more economically advantaged students and less economically advantaged students was narrowest within restructured schools.

Also significant, the collective involvement of teachers appears to be a key to effective school restructuring. Researchers found that school effectiveness and student learning were enhanced when schools took on the qualities of "professional communities" (Louis & Kruse, 1995; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). Such communities had the following three basic features: "Teachers pursue a clear shared purpose for all students' learning. Teachers engage in collaborative activity to achieve the purpose. Teachers take collective responsibility for student learning" (Newmann & Wehlage,
In effective schools, which typically operate as strong professional learning communities, Fullan (2000) found that teachers systematically study student assessment data, relate the data to their instruction, and work with others to refine their teaching practices. Louis and Kruse (1995) concur, claiming that reflective dialogue, deprivatization of practice, and collaborative efforts all enhance shared understandings and strengthen relationships within a school. Barth (1990) added that a “good school … is a place where everyone is teaching and everyone is learning—simultaneously, under the same roof” (p.163). He writes that the adults enter into a collaborative relationship and create an “ecology of reflection, growth, and refinement of practice” (p.162). Such communities of teachers, administrators, and parents promote purposeful and collaborative classrooms to improve instruction, create a climate of care, and use accountability to continuously scan for inequities across multiple domains of student learning and activities.

In recent years, a revival of effective schools research has surfaced, most likely due to widespread national concerns about student achievement. Such research has shifted in emphasis over the years, from economic to structural and on to social models of urban school effectiveness, from highlighting school funding and physical resources to teachers’ instructional behaviors and on toward a school’s sense of community and academic culture. For example, a recent study of highly effective schools in New York City (Teske & Schneider, 1999) suggests that within these schools, there is a culture defined and sustained by a combination of strong, consistent leadership and strong community support. Another study by Taylor, Pressley, and Pearson (2002) summarized findings from five large-scale research studies on effective, high-poverty elementary
schools (Charles A. Dana Center, 1999; Designs for Change, 1998; Lein, Johnson, & Ragland, 1997; Puma, Karweit, Price, Ricciuiti, Thompson, & Vaden-Kiernan, 1997; Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000). The six recurring themes that emerged from these five studies support and extend the earlier research on effective schools: (1) putting the students first to improve students learning; (2) strong building leadership; (3) strong teacher collaboration; (4) focus on professional development and innovation; (5) consistent use of student performance data to improve learning; and (6) strong links to parents. Such research stresses the importance of educators (teachers and principals) learning and changing together over an extended period of time, as they reflect on their practice and implement new teaching strategies (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996).

While the effective schools movement has been influential among researchers, educators, and policymakers, questions persist regarding its various recommendations, particularly the direction of causal effect. In other words, although certain characteristics might produce higher-achieving students, the reverse might also be the case. That is, schools may maintain these characteristics because they are fortunate enough to have greater numbers of high-achieving students. That some schools identified as effective at one point in time were found not to be so a few years later might, for example, suggest the latter possibility. Thus, although "effective schools" clearly share important practices, it has never been consistently established that ineffective schools could become more effective by adopting these features. Still unattained and perplexing is the crucial research goal of establishing a reliable set of techniques for transforming ineffective schools into effective ones. As such, the next section emphasizes the critical role of programmatic equity as a vehicle for attaining systemic equity.
It is not only important to know that these excellent and equitable schools exist, but also to know what these schools did in order to become excellent and equitable. A common thread throughout all of these schools was the belief that all students could be successful. The staff at these schools accepted shared responsibility for making this belief a reality and spent the majority of their time focusing on strategies to help all students be successful. Perhaps the most prevailing theme that arose from all of these studies was that of a collaborative environment. Educators at these schools worked together to ensure the success of all students. If schools that serve high populations of minority students and poor students are highly successful, one cannot argue that a student’s background is the sole predictor of school-achievement. It becomes the duty of educators then to create schools that are equitable and serve literally each child well (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003).

The next section reviews the literature on equity as it relates equal access to educational programs. It is divided into three sections: (a) Students in special and academically gifted programs; (b) Inequities in discipline; and (c) Access to a rigorous curriculum.

Programmatic Equity

Students in Special and Academically Gifted Programs

The two largest programs that schools offer to students include special education and academically gifted education. Both programs tend to label and exclude students in different ways. Special education has historically excluded students in a negative way by grouping struggling students together, excluding them from their non-disabled peers, and giving them limited access to the regular and advanced curriculum. In contrast, students who are selected for academically gifted education have had a more positive experience being grouped with other students of high ability and given access to the most advanced
curriculum. In terms of programmatic equity, it is essential that all students be equally represented in both of these programs.

However, it has been documented that African American and Hispanic students are over-represented in special education classes and under-represented in academically gifted classes (Donovan & Cross, 2002; Ford, 1998; Ford & Harris, 1999; Obiakor, 2007; Patton, 1998; U.S. Department of Education, 2001). For example, according to a 2001 U.S. Department of Education report, White students make up 67% of the general population but only 43% of the special education population. While White students are under-represented, African American and Hispanic students are over-represented. African American students make up 16% of the general education population but that percentage climbs to 20% of the special education population. The numbers for Hispanic students are more inequitable with Hispanics making up only 4% of the general education population but 14% of the special education population.

Donovan and Cross (2002) further illustrate these inequities in their analysis of data taken from a 1998 Civil Rights Compliance report. Donovan and Cross found that African American students were more than twice as likely to be identified as mentally retarded than their White and Hispanic peers. Inequities in the identification of students as emotionally disabled also existed. The percentages were approximately 1/2, 1, and 1.5 for Hispanic, White, and African American students respectively. If the system were equitable, enrollment numbers for general education and special education would be equal.

Donovan and Cross (2002) also found inequities in the percentage of students in academically gifted programs. While 6.2% of the overall student population is identified
as academically gifted, White students are over-represented at 7.47%, and African American (3.04%) and Hispanic students (3.57%) are under-represented in the academically gifted population. This disproportionate representation has led to inequitable access to curriculum. Students in academically gifted classes are held to high standards, while students in special education classes are held to much lower standards. Logically, this contributes to inequity in schools. However, it is not necessarily the intelligence of the students that places them in academically gifted education or special education.

Davis and Rimm (1997) report that 90% of schools continue to use intelligence or achievement tests as the sole measure of “giftedness.” Since these tests can be culturally biased, fewer African American students are selected for gifted programs. Another reason for the disproportionately low numbers of African American students in academically gifted programs is the teacher referral practice. Ford (1996) found that even African American students who had high test scores were not referred for screening. Since the teacher is often the only referral point, this severely limits the number of African American students being referred for academically gifted programs.

In order to increase the number of students in academically gifted programs, Harris, Brown, Ford, and Richardson (2004) recommend two critical changes. First, the authors recommend using a more culturally sensitive instrument by which to identify students. Tests such as the Naglieri Non-Verbal Abilities Test and Raven’s Matrix Analogies Tests, are considered to be less culturally biased than traditional tests like the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R). The authors also recommend greater multi-cultural preparation for all school personnel. As teachers learn
to implement multicultural strategies, all minority students will have a greater
opportunity to be successful, which will make them less likely to be identified for special
education classes and more likely to be selected for academically gifted classes.

Although curricular opportunities are limited in the special education classroom
and abundant in academically gifted classrooms, the opportunities within regular
education classrooms are also inequitable. The next session will focus on the literature
surrounding inequities in discipline.

Discipline

In response to recent acts of violence in schools, many schools and systems have
become focused on creating a safe and orderly school culture. One example is the
implementation of zero-tolerance policies. Verdugo (2002) contends that such policies,
however, have a profound implication in our schools, especially with regard to race and
social class relations. It is also noted that zero-tolerance policies are more prevalent in
minority and poor communities. In fact, little research exists to support the
implementation of these policies. Although these policies are implemented with the
intention of creating a safer learning community, Verdugo concludes that zero-tolerance
policies result in an overwhelmingly disproportionate number of minority suspensions
and seemingly appear to be “inequitably directed at ethnic/racial minority students”
(p.59). In addition to the disproportionate number of minority suspensions, this study also
revealed that minority students are suspended for ambiguous reasons such as threatening
appearance or disrespect, whereas White students are suspended for clear violations such
as guns, weapons, or drugs. Verdugo concludes his study by calling for more equitable,
culturally responsive, and child-centered ways of achieving safety in our schools.
Scheurich, Skrla, Garcia, and Nolly (2005), conducted a study in 2001-2002 to analyze discipline referrals in a small-town high school of 1,300 students. It was concluded that African-American males were disciplined at a rate nearly three times their proportional representation in the student population and that for Latino males the rate was nearly four times disproportionate. As the authors point out, this school, like many others nation-wide, is characterized by a glaring inequity with regard to student discipline.

Watts and Erevelles (2004) argue that school violence stems from socially unjust social conditions that perpetuate individual blame rather than address the inequitable social context of our schools that are rooted in oppressive beliefs and practices. The authors contend that the social context of our schools “normalize structural violence in the daily lives of oppressed peoples” (p.294). We must, according to the authors, address the system, rather than place blame on individuals who are merely victims of an oppressive social context. Watts and Erevelles call for schools to “define alternative modes of practice that will enable both students and their communities to advocate for social transformation and social justice” (p.294).

Scheurich and Skrla (2003) promote the use of equity audits to ensure systemic equity within schools. This process involves gathering and analyzing data to identify inequities that serve as barriers to academic achievement. Equity audits can be implemented to address issues of discipline and identification for services such as special and gifted education. With regard to discipline, Skrla and Scheurich (2001) conducted a number of studies highlighting a disproportionate number of referrals for minority students and argue that rather than blame the students for their behavior, we must seek to
understand our minority students’ cultures and must acknowledge that disproportionalities in discipline are directly related to inequities in student achievement. Students who spend less time learning in the classroom are not afforded an equitable opportunity to learn.

Another important aspect of programmatic equity is the availability and access to a rigorous curriculum. In other words, it is essential that all students, regardless of their NCLB sub-group, have equal opportunities to learn.

*Rigorous Curriculum*

Our country has a history of tracking students by perceived ability. These practices have resulted in the racial and socioeconomic segregation of students (Oakes, 1985). In other words, the majority of students identified in the NCLB subgroups of African American, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged have been disproportionately represented in the lower track classes where they cannot access higher-level courses. This has helped create inequity in schools. This inequity is reflected in racially separate programs that provide minority children with restricted educational opportunities and outcomes (Oakes, 1995). Recent research indicates that as schools enroll more students in rigorous courses, the percentage of students passing state exams and entering college will increase (Gamoran & Hannigan, 2000; Luce & Thompson, 2005). Although definitions of academic rigor vary, for the purpose of this study, academic rigor will be defined as the most challenging courses a school has to offer. Specifically, this usually means honors and advanced placement courses.

According to a 1997 report published by the North Carolina Manpower Development Center (MDC), a group that has launched several projects to assist middle
and high schools increase educational and career options for low-income minority youth, a more rigorous curriculum will lead to higher achievement on test scores. MDC developed a project entitled Alliance for Achievement. The Alliance project is an effort to improve the academic preparation of all students. The report describes a Louisville middle school where only 2% of its students were achieving “proficient” or “distinguished” on state math tests in 1992. At the same time, only 25% of eighth graders studied algebra. By 1995, all of the eighth grade students studied algebra. As a result of providing access to a rigorous curriculum for all students, the percentage of students scoring “proficient” or “distinguished” increased from 2% to 18%.

Stone High School, located in Stone County Mississippi, experienced similar results when a team decided to allow most of its students to enroll in Algebra in eighth grade. In the same previously mentioned report, the MDC (1997) found that the number of students scoring in the top two quartiles of state math tests increased from 52% in 1992 to 77% in 1995 for White students and from 22% to 62% for African-American students. These increases in test scores corresponded with the increase in access to rigorous courses. This finding is particularly significant in that gains achieved by African-American students doubled that of their White peers. If schools are looking to reduce the achievement gap and provide a more equitable education, providing all students with access to rigorous curriculum appears to be a useful strategy.

In a different report, Bottoms and Carpenter (2003) found the same correlation between the access to higher levels of mathematics and higher standardized test scores. According to the authors, “Access to rigorous mathematics coursework in the middle grades is measured by whether or not students take algebra—the gateway to higher
mathematics” (p.4). In their study, Bottoms and Carpenter found that students who took at least one semester of algebra in the middle grades scored a 160—the midpoint of the Basic range. However, students who did not take algebra scored a mean of 141—two points below the Basic level.

Although much of the research on the effects of rigorous courses is measured by math achievement, Carbonaro and Gamoran (2002) found improvements in English achievement data as well. Using the National Longitudinal Survey of 1988 (NELS), the authors looked at over 8,000 students in various academic tracks named general, academic and honors. They found that, “students who have more intellectually challenging content in their English classes tend to have higher levels of achievement” (p.819).

Recent reform literature (Anfara & Waks, 2000) focuses on the need for increasing academic rigor in the middle schools. A 1998 article in *Education Week* characterized middle schools as “the wasteland of our primary and secondary landscape” (Bradley, 1998 as cited in Anfara & Waks, p.47). In order to improve that wasteland, reformers recommend following the suggestions in *Turning Points* (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989). Although less of the research focuses on the updated version, *Turning Points 2000*, school leaders should consider the recommendations in this revised edition. These recommendations include using instructional methods designed to prepare all students to achieve higher standards, staffing middle grades schools with teachers who are experts at teaching young adolescents, organizing relationships for learning to create a climate of intellectual development, governing
democratically, providing a safe and healthy school environment, and including parents and communities in supporting student learning.

*Turning Points 2000* emphasizes the untracking of students. The book cites numerous studies that point to repeated overrepresentation of minority and economically disadvantaged students in lower tracks. As Oakes (1995) has found, this overrepresentation is flawed. Even when students of varying ethnic backgrounds score the same on placement tests, minority students are less likely to be placed in higher-track classes. Specifically, Oakes found that while only 56 percent of Latinos scoring between 90 and 99 on placement exams were placed in accelerated classes, 93 percent of White students gained admission to these classes. Jackson and Davis (2000) also cite research that instruction in the low track classes is far from excellent and causes gaps in achievement between the two groups to widen. However, schools that implement *Turning Points* seem to diminish these achievement gaps. Felner and Jackson (1997) studied 93 schools and over 15,000 students who attended schools that implemented the *Turning Points* recommendations. When analyzing achievement test scores for schools with “full implementation,” the authors found scores of 298, 315, and 275 on mathematics, language, and reading tests. These scores compared favorably with students from non-implemented schools, who earned scores of 248, 254, and 247 on the same tests.

Although programmatic equity and achievement equity are strong beginnings to improving equity in our schools, they alone are not sufficient. In addition to establishing systems that give all students an equitable opportunity to learn, all students must be
afforded that opportunity to learn from high quality teachers. The next section concludes systemic equity by reviewing the literature related to Teacher Quality Equity.

Teacher Quality Equity

Research has shown that teacher quality is a strong predictor of student achievement. This data should be encouraging in terms of improving systemic equity in our nation’s public schools. If stronger teachers taught students who have been historically marginalized by our public schools (e.g., minority students and students living in poverty) then the achievement of those students should increase. The research tends to view stronger teachers as those who are traditionally and fully certified, experienced, and score higher on teacher quality formulas. Alarmingly, however, recent research has indicated that less competent teachers are more likely to teach minority students and students living in poverty (Borman & Kimball, 2005; Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002; Shen, Mansberger, & Yang, 2004). The following section reviews the extent to which different indicators of teacher quality impact student achievement, as well as the distribution of quality teachers to students of varying characteristics. The indicators include certification, years of experience, National Board Certification, teacher quality formulas, and other related studies.

Certification

The literature suggests that teacher certification is a significant predictor of student achievement (Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000; Felter, 2001; Lazco-Kerr & Berliner, 2002; Wayne and Youngs, 2003; Fuller & Alexander, 2004; and Croninger, Rice, Rathbun, & Nishio, 2007). Although research shows this strong link between teacher certification and student achievement, our country’s most impoverished schools are
populated by an alarming percentage of under-certified teachers. States such as Arizona, California and New York report under-certified teacher rates of 20-50%. The percentages of under-certified teachers are typically higher in impoverished and urban schools (Go, 2002; Lankford, Loeb and Wycoff, 2002). As a result, the students who have historically underachieved have the least access to certified teachers.

Goldhaber and Brewer (2000), using data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988, found that the certification status of teachers impacted achievement in 12th grade math scores. The mean score for students who were taught by a traditionally certified teacher was 51.52 compared to only 41.93 for students of probationally-certified teachers and 43.74 for students with emergency-certified teachers.

Felter (2001) also found that students who were taught by teachers with emergency certification scored lower on standardized tests. Felter analyzed student data (approximately 300,000 students in grades 9-11) from California’s Stanford 9 Math Achievement Test. The data showed a statistically significant negative correlation between teachers with emergency certifications and lower student test scores. Felter’s findings are consistent with the other studies regarding teacher certification and emphasize the findings that students who are taught by fully-certified teachers outperform students who are not. An underlying reason behind the success of traditionally-certified teachers is the emphasis of content specific course work. In California, as in many other states, one can earn an emergency certification as few as nine content-specific graduate hours. A traditionally-certified teacher will earn many more credits in addition to receiving specific pedagogical training.
Lazco-Kerr and Beliner (2002) also studied the achievement differences between students of certified teachers and students of under-certified teachers. The authors defined under-certification as an emergency or temporary certification given by the state of Arizona (with requirements similar to that of California). The study included 293 certified and under-certified teachers from five low-income districts in Arizona. After comparing students’ scores on the SAT 9, Lazco-Kerr and Berliner found that students of certified teachers significantly outperformed students of under-certified teachers. As an example, the mean score of the reading section of the SAT 9 for students of certified teachers was 36.52, in comparison to 30.67 for students of under-certified teachers. While the mean difference in math scores was not statistically significant, it followed a similar trend with students of certified teachers outperforming students of under-certified teachers (38.8 v. 35.82). It is important to note that the study was replicated the following year. In addition to finding similar results, the researchers also found the scores on the math section to be statistically significant. As Fuller and Alexander (2004) concluded, the data are similar for non-certified teachers.

Fuller and Alexander (2004) performed multiple regressions on data from four Texas districts (including 578,123 students). The researchers found that students with certified teachers performed better than students who were taught by non-certified teachers on the 1999 TAAS (Texas’ standardized math test).

Analyzing 1998 data from the National Center for Education Statistics, Croninger et. al. (2007) found a statistically significant positive correlation (.078) between a teacher’s type of degree and students’ cognitive reading achievement score. Specifically, the researchers found that the students of teachers who held an elementary degree
outperformed other students. Although this finding does not specifically address certification, one could make the connection that teachers with an elementary education degree typically earn a traditional certification. However, students in poverty tend to be exposed to more uncertified teachers than the rest of the student population. Using data from the Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study 1993-1997, Shen, Mansberger and Yang (2004) found that in schools where 20-49% of the students were living in poverty, only 8.5% of the teachers were non-certified. However, the number nearly doubles to 16.9% when over 50% of the students attending the school live in poverty.

Knoeppel (2007) also found inequities in teacher resource distribution. Even after the state of Kentucky reformed their finance system to focus on vertical equity, “the least experienced teachers with the least training are found in schools with greater student need” (p.437).

**Years of Experience**

Research indicates that novice teachers are less effective than experienced teachers (Felter, 2001; Hanushek, Kain, O’Brien, & Rivkin, 2005; Clotfelter, Ladd, and Vigdor, 2006; Croninger et. al., 2007). In a previously mentioned article, Felter (2001) studied the impact of teachers’ years of experience in addition to certification. Felter analyzed the impact that years of experience has on mathematics achievement as well as student dropout rates. Using data from the Stanford Nine, Felter found a positive correlation (.36-.39 depending on the grade level) between test scores and years of experience. That is, more experienced teachers had higher passing rates on standardized tests than less experienced teachers.
Using statistics from the California Basic Education Data System, Felter (2001) also concluded that, “The average number of years of teacher education and experience are negatively correlated with the dropout rate” (p.162). Of particular note is the finding that years of teaching experience had a stronger correlation (.20) than the poverty level of the student (.13), a reminder that the school system’s response to family background is more powerful than the background alone.

For example, Clotfelter, Ladd, and Vigdor (2006) found that highly experienced teachers increase student achievement in math by close to a tenth of a standard deviation when compared to novice teachers. With half of the achievement effect being attributable to teachers in their first few years, the authors conclude, “Regardless of how effective (first year teachers) may eventually become, during their first year of teaching they are clearly less effective than more experienced teachers” (p.18).

Results achieved in a study by Hanushek, Kain, O’brien, and Rivkin (2005) were similar to Clotfelter, Ladd, and Vigdor (2006). Using teacher data from the Texas Schools Microdata Panel data from 1989-2002 and student data from the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills, Hanushek et. al. found that a new teacher lowers student achievement growth by .12-.16 standard deviations. The authors’ findings are significant when coupled with the fact that African American students are more likely than their White peers to encounter first-year teachers. Using 2001 data from 7th grade teachers across North Carolina, Clotfelter, Ladd and Vigdor (2005) found that African-American students were 54% more likely to have a novice math teacher than their white peers. The authors also found that African-American 7th grade students across North Carolina were 38% more likely to have a novice English teacher.
The research on National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) impacting student achievement is sparse. In a recent review of the literature, Goldhaber and Anthony (2005) find only four studies (Bond, Smith, Baker, & Hattie, 2000; Cavalluzzo, 2004; Stone, 2002; & Vandevoort, Amrein-Beardsley, & Berliner, 2004) that investigate the effectiveness of NBCTs in comparison to non-NBCTs.

Stone (2002) studied the 16 of Tennessee’s 40 NBCTs who had value-added teacher reports. A value-added teacher report is a summary of annual achievement gains exhibited by each teacher’s students. Student achievement is estimated on the basis of how much students gain in comparison to their achievement increases in previous years. Stone defined exceptional teaching as that which brings about an improvement in student achievement equal to 115% of one year’s academic growth in the local school system (Stone). When taken collectively, the 16 teachers received 123 teacher-effect scores as a result of multiple subjects taught over multiple years. Only 18 of these scores, or 15%, reach the exemplary level and 13 of the scores would be designated as “deficient.” In summary, Stone’s study did not find that NBCTs had a positive impact on student achievement.

In contrast to Stone (2002), Bond, Smith, Baker, and Hattie (2000) did find that NBCTs taught students who “differ in profound and important ways from those taught by less proficient teachers” (p.x). The study included a 65-teacher comparison of 31 teachers who earned National Board Certification and 34 teachers who attempted but did not earn National Board Certification. The teachers were analyzed on 15 dimensions of teaching. Most of the 15 dimensions were literature-based attributes of excellent teachers. The
evidence of these dimensions was gathered through reviewing lesson plans, student work, observational visits and scripted interviews. Although this study appears encouraging, it is important to note that the authors did not take measures to ensure that students in the study all entered at the same ability level. The absence of the data calls into question the validity of the study, especially since other studies have already indicated that higher performing students tend to be assigned to NBCTs more than lower performing students.

Cavalluzzo (2004) also found that students with NBCTs outperformed students who did not have NBCTs. Using data that included 108,000 individual student records from the Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Cavalluzzo’s results indicated that students with NBCTs “gained 12 percent of a standard deviation more than others on the end-of-grade exam in mathematics, all else equal” (p.25). However, to the author’s own acknowledgement, all else is not equal. The students in Cavalluzzo’s study are not distributed equitably among teachers. She found that NBCTs were less likely to teach students who receive subsidized lunches, were minority, had attendance problems, and were suspended throughout the year. These are all characteristics of students who have historically underperformed in schools. This is a significant limitation, since it is unclear whether the gains these students are making are a result of the certification status of their teachers or other factors. It is also important to note that Cavalluzzo’s study was funded by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

Vandevoort, Amrein-Beardsley, and Berliner (2004) studied 35 NBCTs from 14 Arizona school districts. They analyzed four years of results from the Stanford Achievement Tests in reading, mathematics, and language arts in grades 3-6. In the 48 comparisons based on this data, the researchers found that students in the classes of
NBCTs surpassed students in the classrooms of non NBCTs (to a statistically significant level) in almost one-third of the comparisons. Although Vandevoort, Amrein-Beardsley and Berliner use their findings in support of NBCTs, it is important to note that, in almost 67% of the comparisons, no statistically significant difference between NBCTs and non-NBCTs was found. Another limitation includes the small sample size of the study. The authors only included 35 of the 80 available NBCTs in the 14 Arizona school districts.

To date, Goldhaber and Anthony (2005) present the most comprehensive study of the effectiveness of NBCTs. Using teacher records from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction from the years 1996-1999, the sample included 390,449 students and over 300 NBCTs. The authors found that while the NBCT process is successful in identifying effective teachers, the process itself does not increase teacher effectiveness. Related to systemic equity, Goldhaber and Anthony found, “that schools with NBCTs receive substantially more educational benefits from having their NBCTs teach low-income students in earlier grades” (p.26). Cavalluzzo (2004) reported a similar finding in her study in Miami-Dade. However, within North Carolina schools, Clotfelter, Ladd, and Vigdor (2006) found the more privileged students (defined by the authors as not receiving subsidized lunches and whose parents are college graduates) have more access to Nationally Board Certified teachers than less-privileged students.

Teacher Quality Formulas

Characteristics of good teachers, such as certification, years of experience, National Board Certification and type of degree earned, are all important factors when attempting to quantify good teaching. Additional research has been done that attempts to combine these qualities into one teacher quality variable.
For example, Provasnik and Young (2003) created a teacher quality variable that consisted of a teacher’s college degree, area of certification, and years of experience. Using 8th grade mathematics data from the 2000 administration of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the authors found that students from schools that had high concentrations of special programs students, American Indian students, and high poverty students were less likely to be taught by high quality teachers.

In another study, Borman and Kimball (2005) attempted to determine the extent to which teachers with higher standards-based evaluation ratings close student achievement gaps. After rating teachers based on classroom observations conducted by school administrators, Borman and Kimball found mixed results. For example, fourth-grade teachers with higher ratings made progress in closing the achievement gap, but in other grade levels the progress was not statistically significant.

Milanowski (2004) used a Cincinnati district’s teacher performance score to analyze the relationship between teacher performance and student achievement. The district’s teacher performance score is comprised of scores on four domains: planning and preparation, classroom management, teaching for learning, and professionalism. Milanowski combined those scores to create a composite evaluation score. Student achievement was measured by district and state tests in reading, mathematics and science. Results indicated a substantial test score variance at the teacher level. The variance ranged from 6% to 28%, with an average variance of 16.3%. In addition, the teachers with higher composite evaluation scores correlated with higher student achievement. In other words, Milanowski findings suggest that good teachers make a positive difference in student achievement.
Other Studies

Nye, Konstantopoulos, and Hedges (2004) studied the impact of teachers on student achievement through a unique perspective. Instead of attempting to identify the qualities of a good teacher or study what specific teacher characteristic impacts student achievement, the authors investigated the degree to which a teacher in general impacted student achievement gains, using data from the Student-Teacher Achievement Ration (Project STAR). Project STAR involved students in 79 elementary schools in 42 different districts in Tennessee. Participating districts allowed the researchers to randomly assign students to different kindergarten classes and randomly assign teachers to those classes. The cohorts of kindergarten classes moved together through the third grade, where they received a randomly assigned teacher at each grade. Since the classes were initially equivalent, the authors argue that differences in achievement must be due to teacher effectiveness.

Variance component estimates indicated no statistically significant differences for achievement within classrooms. However, for both between classrooms and between schools, achievement differences in each grade level for both mathematics and reading showed a statistically significant difference in achievement. In summary, Nye, Konstantopoulos, and Hedges (2004), found that teachers make a difference in student achievement. Even more profound is the finding that the, “between-classroom-within-schools-and treatment-type variance component (the teacher effect) is always larger in the low-SES schools” (p.250). Taking into account previously mentioned research that less qualified teachers tend to populate low-SES schools, systemic equity could be improved if more qualified teachers taught in low-SES schools.
In concluding the review of systemic equity literature, it is important to emphasize that schools that are equitable for all students exist. The achievement equity section of this review documents this. These equitable schools exist as a result of equity in the programs they offer for students and the teachers who educate these students. However, systemic equity cannot be achieved in the absence of strong leadership. Effective leadership becomes paramount to schools as they answer the call for systemic equity. As such, the next section emphasizes the critical role of principal leadership in creating schools that are excellent, achieving both social justice and systemic equity.

Leadership for Excellence and Equity

The Principal's Role in Promoting Student Achievement

According to ERS (1998), the United States is experiencing a dearth of interested, willing and qualified school leader candidates because the principal today is confronted with a job filled with conflict, ambiguity, and work overload. Given this, it is understandable that fewer and fewer qualified people aspire to the principalship, that good people are becoming increasingly harder to find, and that “bright, young administrators aren’t appearing on the horizon” (McCormick, 1987, p.4). What are the realities of the job? Charged with the mission of improving education for all children (i.e. universal proficiency embodied most recently by the No Child Left Behind Act), the principalship has become progressively more and more demanding and fraught with fragmentation, variety, and brevity (Petersen, 1982). The role of school leadership has broadened from performing customary administrative and managerial duties—such as budget oversight, operations and discipline—to include emphasis on other responsibilities such as curriculum development, data analysis, and instructional leadership. According to
Murphy and Beck (1994), principals fill a role replete with contradictory demands. They are expected to “work actively to transform, restructure and redefine schools while they hold organizational positions historically and traditionally committed to resisting change and maintaining stability” (p.3).

Although current school reform efforts use different approaches to improve teaching and learning, all depend for their success on the motivation and capacities of local leadership. According to Fullan (2003), “Leadership is to the current decade what standards were to the 1990s for those interested in large scale reform. Standards, even when well implemented, can take us only part way to successful large-scale reform. It is only leadership that can take us all the way” (p.16). A review of the literature on school reform and restructuring confirms the notion that the school principal is indeed the key player in all successful school reform efforts and that good teaching is not the only predictor of student success—leadership becomes an important lever for improving student achievement.

The belief in the principal’s influence on student achievement goes back to the research of the 1970s and early 1980s. Two decades ago, A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Educational Excellence, 1983) specifically recommended strong leadership as a means for school improvement. Effective schools research also recognized the importance of quality leadership by consistently identifying strong instructional leadership as instrumental in creating a positive school climate and as a correlate of high-achieving schools (Edmonds, 1979). In schools where students performed better than expected based on poverty and other demographic characteristics, a “dynamic” principal was at the helm. These studies suggested that specific actions by
principals could directly influence student achievement. Even though this is an assumption, there is little evidence to support the idea that student achievement has increased as the result of principals’ direct actions in instructional supervision. Current theory and research evidence points toward principals affecting student achievement indirectly, through teachers and staff members. As with any manager or leader, principals influence performance through others, and the influence includes a broad spectrum of behaviors.

*Characteristics of Effective School Leaders*

Although it is difficult to demonstrate a direct link between school leadership and student achievement (the most tangible and publicly accepted measure of school success), a model of what makes a good leader is emerging. A recent forum of the National Institute on Educational Governance, Finance, Policymaking, and Management (1999) developed a comprehensive description of an effective school leader. Consistent with the observation that the job of a school leader is multidimensional, the forum identified areas in which school leaders must have skills: instructional leadership; management; communication, collaboration, and community building; vision development, risk taking, and change management.

In other studies that document the importance of strong building leadership (Designs for Change, 1998; Lein, et al., 1997; Puma, et al., 1997), principals worked to redirect people’s time and energy, to develop a collective sense of responsibility for school improvement, to secure resources and training, to provide opportunities for collaboration, to create additional time for instruction, and to help the school staff persist in spite of difficulties. While their style and roles may be different, effective leaders
create a culture for school improvement. They understand that “although leadership can be a powerful force toward school reform, the notion that an individual can effect change by sheer will and personality is simply not supported by research” (Marzano, 2003, p.174). As a result, they promote the involvement of teachers and parents in the decision-making process and are not threatened by, but rather welcome, this empowerment.

Research conducted by Andrews and Soder (1987), Bender Sebring and Bryk (2000), and Hallinger, Bickman, and Davis (1996) found that high-performing schools that demonstrate better student achievement possess a climate that focuses on student learning. Principals in these schools provide clarity to the school’s mission, which influences everyone’s expectations. Such leaders (a) have a vision that they allow staff and parents to shape; (b) hold teachers and themselves to high standards; (c) recognize student achievement; (d) communicate academic achievements to the community; and (e) encourage teachers to take risks in trying new methods and programs. They also found that schools with effective principals exhibit a sense of teamwork and inclusiveness in planning, enabling, and assessing instruction. Principals in these schools (a) involve teachers in instructional decisions; (b) provide opportunities for staff members and parents to assume leadership roles in charting instructional improvement; (c) protect staff members from the community and central office; (d) act as facilitators for the instructional staff, helping staff members succeed; (e) serve as an instructional resource for staff members; and (f) create a feeling of trust through cooperative working relationships among the staff in the school. And, according to these research studies, staff members must receive the necessary materials, equipment, and opportunities to learn in order to be successful. Principals in these schools get things done by providing the
resources and staff development needed to support the staff’s efforts to improve. These leaders are visible in classrooms, departmental or grade-level meetings, and in the building. They readily provide the social support needed by students so that class time is devoted to learning (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Bender Sebring & Bryk, 2000; Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996).

Since 1998, Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) researchers have been engaged in what they refer to as “third generation” effective schools research, distinguishing it from the efforts during the 1980s to implement the research findings of the 1970s (see Waters & Grubb, 2004). Recently, they reviewed over 5,000 studies through a series of meta-analyses of research on the student characteristics, school practices, and teacher practices associated with student achievement. The third meta-analysis focused on the effects of principal leadership on student achievement and involved 70 empirically-sound research studies, 2,894 schools, over one million students, and 14,000 teachers, representing the largest sample of principals, teachers, and student achievement scores ever used to analyze the effects of educational leadership. The results show a significant, positive impact of instructional leadership on student achievement (i.e. the study found the average effect size, expressed as a correlation, between leadership and student achievement is .25). The analysis also identified 66 leadership practices embedded in 21 leadership responsibilities, each with statistically significant relationship to student achievement (see Table 2.1 for the top ten principal responsibilities).

Therefore, leadership not only matters, but according to the Wallace Foundation’s
Table 2.1: Top Ten Principal Leadership Responsibilities: Average $r$ and Associated Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Avg $r$</th>
<th>Associated Practices</th>
<th>N schools</th>
<th>N studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Situational awareness   | … is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems. | .33     | ▪ Is aware of informal groups and relationships among teachers and staff  
▪ Is aware of issues in the school that have not surfaced but could create discord  
▪ Can predict what could go wrong from day to day | 91        | 5                     |
| Intellectual stimulation| … ensures that faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and makes the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school’s culture. | .32     | ▪ Stays informed about current research and theory regarding effective schooling  
▪ Continually exposes teachers and staff to cutting edge ideas about how to be effective  
▪ Systematically engages teachers and staff in discussions about current research and theory  
▪ Continually involves teachers and staff in reading articles and books about effective practices | 321       | 5                     |
| Change agent            | … is willing to and actively challenges the status quo.                      | .30     | ▪ Consciously challenges the status quo  
▪ Is comfortable leading change initiatives with uncertain outcomes  
▪ Systematically considers new and better ways of doing things | 479       | 7                     |
| Input                   | … involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies | .30     | ▪ Provides opportunities for input from teachers and staff on all important decisions  
▪ Provides opportunities for teachers and staff to be involved in policy development  
▪ Involves the school leadership team in decision making | 504       | 13                    |
| Culture                 | … fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation            | .29     | ▪ Promotes cooperation among teachers and staff  
▪ Promotes a sense of well-being  
▪ Promotes cohesion among teachers and staff  
▪ Develops an understanding of purpose  
▪ Develops a shared vision of what | 709       | 13                    |
| Monitors/evaluates | ... monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning. | .28 | ▪ Monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the curriculum  
▪ Monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of instruction  
▪ Monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of assessment | 1071 | 30 |
| Outreach | ... is an advocate or spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders. | .28 | ▪ Advocates on behalf of the school in the community  
▪ Interacts with parents in ways that enhance their support for the school  
▪ Ensures that the central office is aware of the school’s accomplishments | 478 | 14 |
| Order | ... establishes a set of standard operating principles and procedures. | .26 | ▪ Provides and enforces clear structures, rules, and procedures for teachers, staff, and students  
▪ Establishes routines regarding the running of the school that teachers and staff understand and follow  
▪ Ensures that the school is in compliance with district and state mandates | 456 | 17 |
| Resources | ... provides teachers with the material and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their jobs. | .26 | ▪ Ensures that teachers and staff have necessary materials and equipment  
▪ Ensures that teachers have necessary professional development opportunities that directly enhance their teaching | 570 | 17 |
| Ideals/beliefs | ... communicates and operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling | .25 | ▪ Holds strong professional ideals and beliefs about schooling, teaching, and learning  
▪ Shares ideals and beliefs about schooling, teaching, and learning with teachers, staff, and parents  
▪ Demonstrates behaviors that are consistent with ideals and beliefs | 526 | 8 |

Note. From “Balanced Leadership: What 30 Years of Research Tells Us About the Effect of Leadership on Student Achievement,” by T. Waters, R.J. Marzano, and B. McNulty.

Copyright 2003 by Mid-continent Reseach for Education and Learning.
“Learning from Leadership Project” (Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2005), school leadership is second only to teacher quality among school-related factors that effect student learning. In a five-year study involving 180 schools, in 45 districts and nine states, this study attempts to clearly understand the links between student outcomes and the work of principals and other educational leaders. As a precursor to the project, a publication entitled “How Leadership Influences Student Learning” has been produced. The authors provide an overview of existing research and present the basics of successful leadership. They suggest that, across many different settings, three sets of practices make up the basic core of successful leadership: (1) setting direction; (2) developing people; and (3) redesigning the organization. These authors conclude that “The total (direct and indirect) effects of leadership on student learning account for about a quarter of the total school effects” (Leithwood et al., 2005, p.3). They also found that leadership’s demonstrated impact tends to be considerably greater in schools where the learning needs are most acute. In essence, the greater the challenge, the greater the impact of a leader’s actions on learning.

Reminded by Crawford (1998) that “almost all educational reform efforts have come to the conclusion that the nation cannot attain excellence in education without effective school leadership” (p.8), principals automatically become essential figures in terms of schoolwide change, priorities, and vision (Blackmore, 2002; Fullan, 1993; Riester et al., 2002; Shields, Larocque, & Oberg, 2002). Strong, outstanding leadership is necessary for any significant transformation of any organization, schools included (Glickman, 2002). As such, exemplary leadership helps point to the necessity for change and helps make the realities of change happen (Bell, Jones, & Johnson 2002; Bogotch,
Leaders for excellence and equity leverage changes in daily practice, making small changes in the structure that begin to transform the system.

*Leadership for Social Justice, Equity and Excellence*

Leaders committed to excellence find a way “for all students to achieve high levels of academic success, regardless of any student’s race, ethnicity, culture, neighborhood, income of parents, or home language” (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003, p.3). In their schools, there is no discernable difference in academic success and treatment among different groups of students. Leaders committed to excellence insist upon both social justice and systemic equity. Bogotch (2005) suggests that the beliefs and values of our school leaders serve as an impetus to support and advance social justice. We cannot, as Bogotch (2002) boldly reminds us, “separate educational theories and practice from social justice… the leadership task is to make these connections transparent and tangible to all” (p.141). Bogotch (2002) contends that, “[Here] social justice emerges from the heroic (capital H or small h) efforts of an individual – someone with a vision and a willingness to take risks to see that vision enacted. It is the responsibility of educational leadership to translate visions into socially and educationally just actions” (p.142). In this context, it is clear that the school leader’s role must be socially constructed and must extend beyond the traditional, managerial tasks associated with school leadership that simply perpetuate the status quo. Research also emphasizes that leaders for social justice have deeply embedded belief and value systems that serve to inform the leader’s actions. Riester, Pursch and Skrla (2002), for instance, state that the leadership of the school principal is “paramount in creating the conditions for success in schools that serve
children predominantly from low-income homes” (p.283), and attribute the success in these schools to the principal’s belief and value system. In both contexts, these principals are aware of current social, political and economic factors that contribute to hegemony, understand the danger of perpetuating that injustice in our schools, and are therefore committed to school leadership that advocates social change. The next section of the literature review highlights qualities of leaders for both social justice and systemic equity.

Challenging the Status Quo

Rather than accept the status quo and allow schools to mirror social injustices, leaders for social justice advance change, often times in situations that are politically and professionally charged, resulting in personal and/or professional ramifications. Research suggests that leaders who are successfully advocating social justice can be characterized by an insistent disposition (Garcia & Guerra, 2004; Rapp, 2002; Riester, Pursch & Skrla, 2002; Scheurich, 1998; Solomon, 2002; Theoharis, 2004; Valencia, 1997). Riester, Pursch and Skrla (2002) refer to this mentality as a “stubborn persistence” (p.292), while Rapp (2002), acknowledging that these leaders are often recognized as “mavericks,” credits these leaders for their “oppositional, rebellious imaginations” (p.226). “These leaders,” according to Rapp, “resist, dissent, rebel, subvert, possess oppositional imaginations, and are committed to transforming oppressive and exploitative social relations in and out of schools (p.226).

Scheurich (1998) applies this insistent disposition in the context of the all too familiar rhetoric, “all kids can learn” and argues that leaders for social justice “are fiercely committed, not just to holding out high expectations for all children but for achieving high levels of success with all children” (p.461). According to Scheurich
these leaders, for example, “disposed of the bell or normal curve as a guiding principle for academic success and replaced it with what statistics calls an extremely negatively skewed distribution, meaning many scores are near the high end” (p.461). These leaders achieved this, however, not by lowering standards or watering down the curriculum, but by “reconceptualizing what is possible for all children and by refusing any other result” (p.461). These leaders know that in addition to believing that all children can learn, they must also insist upon it and obtain the necessary resources to ensure that rhetoric becomes a reality.

Understanding Policy

School leaders for social justice must have an understanding of how policy impacts education and, furthermore, must exercise their voices in the political arena. As stated earlier, Skrla et al. (2004) promote the use of equity audits in schools and suggest that these audits are “vital in linking accountability policy intent to equity outcomes in local contexts…” (p.134). In a 2001 study conducted in Texas, Scheurich, Skrla and Johnson (2001) reported that the Texas Assessment of Skills (TAAS) accountability system was successful in “driving significant improvements in academic achievement for children of color and low income children, and thus these systems are increasing equity” (p.296). As Valencia, Valenzuela, Sloan, and Foley (2001) point out, however, although the Aldine, TX district (one of the four in the Scheurich et al. study) TAAS pass rates increased for all students from 1994-1999, data from the U.S. Department of Education reveals that, in 1997-1998, Aldine had one of the lowest graduation rates in the state and in the nation (p.320). The research by Valencia et al. (2001) refutes Scheurich et al.’s (2000) previous claim that accountability in the name of high stakes tests results in equity
and, more importantly, is another reminder that school leaders should be wary of using test score data as a sole determinant of systemic equity. Instead, school leaders must utilize an accountability model that accounts for “input (the adequacy of resources), process (the quality of instruction) and output (what students have learned as measured by tests or other indicators)” (Valencia et al., p.321).

School leaders that are knowledgeable about policy are more effectively able to collaborate with various stakeholders in the school community and are less likely to be blinded by political mandates that undermine the pursuit of social justice. All too often, policy such as NCLB is offered (mainly by politicians with little or no educational experience) as a method for reducing inequities and therefore “leveling the playing field.” In the meantime, such policy in effect ignores the systemic equities that have perpetuated the historical marginalization of students who live in the shadows cast by those who are privileged. School leaders cannot simply succumb to policy that reinforces the status quo and ignores the social injustices that permeate our society, leaving many of our children behind. In fact, Marshall and Oliva (2006) state that leaders for social justice must be able to “argue and demand that inadequate policies and programs be reframed… and must be able to present arguments that educational excellence means moving beyond test scores and working with parents and communities to build inclusive, safe and trusting spaces” (p.196). It is unfair to assume and misleading to suggest that a school’s scores on standardized tests reflect systemic equity.

**Resisting Deficit Thinking**

Another challenge that leaders for social justice are faced with is what Valencia (1997) refers to as *deficit thinking*, the “dominant paradigm that shapes U.S. educators
explanations for widespread and persistent school failure among children from low-income homes and children of color” (p.235). This paradigm falsely suggests that students who fail in school are victims of internal cognitive or emotional deficiencies or social or economic shortcomings. “The popular ‘at risk’ construct, now entrenched in educational circles, views poor and working class children and their families (typically of color) as predominantly responsible for school failure (p.235). McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) share this belief about deficit thinking and expanded upon it by coining the term “equity trap,” which they describe as “the conscious and unconscious thinking patterns and behaviors that trap teachers, administrators and others, preventing them from creating schools that are equitable, particularly for students of color. According to McKenzie and Scheurich (2004), a common result of deficit thinking (and equity traps) in schools is that an inordinate number of minority students are overidentified for special education, are subjected to segregation because of language barriers, receive stricter disciplinary actions, drop out of school, and are “immersed in negative and ‘subtractive’ school climates” (p.236).

A number of studies have been conducted to further explore deficit thinking as well as to determine the principal’s role in confronting and replacing this mindset. Skrla and Scheurich (2001) conducted a study of four high-achieving districts in Texas to analyze the displacement of deficit thinking. Their findings uncovered five ways that accountability displaces deficit thinking, therefore suggesting that decreased deficit thinking can be linked to state and national accountability systems and implying that school leaders can use disaggregated data to expose and address areas of inequity.
McKenzie and Scheurich’s (2004) equity trap study proposed a number of strategies for removing equity traps, including: helping teachers reframe their thinking by engaging in neighborhood walks or by collecting oral histories; engaging in dialogue to address the notion that racism would cease to exist if everyone would just forget about race and see one another as human beings; expose situations in which teachers conceal deficit thinking and/or try to norm other teachers who disagree with child-negative views; and have teachers visit classrooms and schools where teachers are successful with a similar demographic of students. Finally, Garcia and Guerra (2004) present a conceptual framework for the deconstruction of deficit thinking through staff development and illustrate how deficit thinking can be challenged and reframed. The authors suggest that staff development aimed to unravel deficit thinking forces participants to grapple with and often reject their previously held deficit views and to acknowledge their personal role in student achievement, therefore leading to more culturally responsive and respectful instructional practices (p.164).

Research clearly suggests that a substantial amount of inequity in our schools is linked to the assumptions, beliefs, and behaviors of teachers and administrators. The research also suggests, however, that deficit thinking and/or equity traps can be deconstructed by systematically exploring, exposing and addressing commonly held assumptions. According to McKenzie and Scheurich (2004), “The best route to influence current teachers is through the principal, who, research repeatedly shows, is the key to school change” (p.628). For a principal to change not only her or his own beliefs and assumptions, but also those of the staff, it is imperative that the principal be able to understand, expose and address issues and beliefs that serve as barriers to equity.
**Moral Leadership**

Leaders who promote and support social justice and systemic equity are keenly aware of their beliefs and values and thoughtfully explore and expose these ideologies as they advocate change and challenge the status quo. Research suggests that these principals espouse beliefs and values that are tied to moral leadership. Dantley (2005) states, “The whole notion of moral leadership moves educational administration from the realm of minimum competencies and high stakes testing, which are grounded in a modernist frame, to a position of influence where the broader society is concerned” (p.40). This postmodern view of education reinforces the need for leaders to stop looking for one-shot answers, and instead, to begin asking questions that will uncover the hegemonic practices that leave our schools morally bankrupt, socially unjust, and politically corrupt. Dantley, in his essay entitled “Moral Leadership,” supports this postmodern framework of school leadership by stating that, “It is actively immoral for school leaders to attempt to embrace any genre of administration without first grappling with the social, political, and cultural contexts in which their schools exist” (p.40). It is unacceptable for school leaders to turn a blind eye to internal or external practices, policies or mandates that perpetuate hegemony. School leadership for social justice requires leaders who are deeply committed to repairing the social injustice that permeates our society. Educational leaders must consistently uncover, question, and challenge the status quo in pursuit of equality and excellence for all of our children; to not do so would be immoral.
Critical Reflection

In writing about developing an alternative pedagogy aimed at developing transformative leaders for social justice, Brown (2004) explains that learners must engage in critical self-reflection in order to change their learning schemes. The aim of this type of reflection is to “externalize and investigate power relationships and to uncover hegemonic assumptions” (p.84). Kose (2005), in his study of the principal’s role in advocating social justice through professional development, supports Brown’s (2004) argument for on-going learning, grounded in critical reflection, and further emphasizes that the principal’s commitment to learning is paramount. Kose calls for principals to continuously “deconstruct and reconstruct” their educational philosophy as it relates to student learning” (p.33). It is important to note here that the principal’s learning must be an ongoing, discursive process that begins with higher education institutions and continues contingent upon the school leader’s willingness to grapple with tough questions regarding one’s own cultural identity and to influence and inspire teaching practices and beliefs that lead to equitable learning outcomes for all students. Dantley (2005) expands on this notion of critical reflection, stating that leaders must “grapple with meanings of what is just and right” (p.42). This development of an idiographic morality stems from how leaders “personally see or evaluate themselves in actualizing those definitions” (p.42). Leaders that undergo the process of “critical reflection” and develop an “idiographic morality” are better equipped to clearly and consistently articulate and enact a vision for learning that responds justly and accordingly when confronted with situations that perpetuate hegemony, preserve the status quo and threaten democracy.
“There is significant research that indicates there is a positive relationship between leadership and student achievement” (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004, p.603), and many scholars have conducted empirical and theoretical research about the principal’s role in supporting and advancing social justice. Shields (2004), in her research on leadership for social justice, links moral leadership with transformative leadership.

“Transformative educational leaders, as described by Astin and Astin, believe that the value ends of leadership should be to enhance equity, social justice and the quality of life” (p.123). Shields draws from Bogotch’s definition of educational leadership as “a deliberate intervention that requires the moral use of power” and insists that these deliberate interventions of educational leaders must “develop meaning that is socially just, build a deeper understanding of dialogue, and help educators to critically examine their practices” (p.110). Shields elaborates by stating that, “Rather than trying to balance numerous competing programs and demands, one of the central interventions of school leaders must be the facilitation of moral dialogue… transformative leadership based on dialogue and strong relationships, can provide opportunities for all children to learn in school communities that are socially just and deeply democratic” (p.110). Inspired by the school leader, it is this co-construction of knowledge that unites the entire school community in pursuing the common goal of ensuring that all children receive equal access to an excellent education.

Community and social activism are essential components of transformative leadership for social justice. Furman and Gruenewald (2004), believe that “… the entire community must be seen as central to the school’s curriculum” (p.70) and propose a
pedagogy of place in which educators work with the community members to conduct a needs-assessment, to gather support, and to, for instance, “identify individuals who could serve as curricular resources, providing oral histories of the community…” (p.70).

Scheurich (1998), in his study of the HiPass model, states that the fifth core belief essential for socially just schooling is the belief that the school exists for and serves the community. The HiPass schools, according to Scheurich, erased the traditional separation between school and its community and replaced it with “a community of commitment” (p.466). These schools have creatively woven the school and the community; they “experience themselves as being in union with the community -- the community’s needs and dreams are their needs and dreams and vice versa” (p.466). Scheurich cites examples of school practices that promote community and social activism: parents working with teachers in the classrooms, school meetings that take place at community sites, teachers riding buses to meet and greet families at the beginning of the school year, and schools that serve as community centers to incorporate non-school related activities that support the community. “Consequently, these schools have developed the six qualities that Raywid contends are key features of building community: respect, caring, inclusiveness, trust, empowerment, and commitment” (p.467).

Another key component with regard to community and social activism is inherent within school practices that promote and support a collaborative school climate, reflected by the staff members’ willingness to learn with and from one another. Meier (2002), reflecting on her service as a principal, emphasized the importance of shared decision making. As a result, Meier established a supportive structure at Mission Hill that provided built in time for peer planning and observation and, most importantly, centered
on “particular students, student work, and curriculum” (p.68). Furthermore, “regular
House meetings, involving the four or five adults who shared responsibility for the
approximately eighty kids belonging to the House, became an instrument for pushing the
issues of feedback and accountability” (p.67). Scheurich and Skrla (2003) also argue
the importance of community and collegiality and suggest forging networks with other
schools and systems that are accomplishing success in achieving both excellence and
equity.

Instructional Leadership

Many studies on leadership for social justice and systemic equity emphasize that
the principal must serve as an instructional leader who promotes an empowering school
culture, uses disaggregated data to drive decision-making and advocates best practice
instruction and policies for all students. The research reveals, for instance, a need for a
postmodern perspective and approach regarding school size and scheduling. Meier
(1995), founder and former principal (lead teacher) of several alternative public schools
in New York and Boston, for instance, advocates for smaller, self-governing
(autonomous) schools. According to Meier, “It doesn’t depend on new buildings, just
using the ones we have differently” (p.107). Meier gives six reasons that small schools
are essential for “ensuring that all children can and shall learn to use their minds in ways
once reserved for a small elite” (p.107). These reasons include: an opportunity for deep,
ongoing discussion; accessibility to one another’s work (accountability); knowing one’s
students – especially those who are the hardest to know; physical safety; increased
accountability for student learning; and a school culture that is compassionate. “In short,
smallness makes democracy feasible in schools, and without democracy we won’t be able
to create the kind of profound rethinking the times demand” (p.110). Scheurich and Skrla (2003) also advocate for an alternative approach when grappling with how to meet the needs of every student. If, for instance, data reveal that “33% of students do not meet expectations for success, it may even require after-school or Saturday work, or it may require changing the structure of the day to serve this final 33% of students” (p.70).

Research also highlights the importance of opposing the traditional structure as it relates to the process of teaching and learning. With regard to an alternative structure for staff development, Kose (2005), in his dissertation entitled “Differentiating Professional Development for Social Justice,” proposes that, in order to surmount oppressive practices in schools, the leader must: differentiate professional learning opportunities; explore his/her own identity and be able to relate to other’s struggles with this concept; and must consider non-traditional school resources and structures. Finally, with regard to a postmodern view of curriculum, Shields (2004) argues that,

We need to open our curriculum (formal, informal and hidden) and create spaces in which all children’s lived experiences may be both reflected and critiqued in the context of learning. Over-coming the silence about class differences is a way of ensuring that our schools and classrooms are more inclusive, enabling fuller and more democratic participation by people. It helps to legitimize and validate the realities of more students and hence to provide a basis for the development of more meaningful relationships and deeper sense making. When we engage in conversations in our schools and classrooms, they must not be based solely on middle-class experiences and continue to exclude or pathologize the lived experiences of the rest of society. (p.123)

Riester, Pursch and Skrla (2002), in a study that examined the role of principals in highly successful elementary schools serving primarily students from low-income homes, identified two factors considered essential for a socially just school: (1) development of an early literacy program, and (2) avoidance of over-identification and inappropriate placement in special education classes. These researchers concluded that the development
of literacy skills prepares students to be successful in a democratic society, serves as a tool for emancipating the oppressed by building critical awareness and leads to cultural empowerment and economic survival. Another conclusion drawn from this study was that school leaders must “create school cultures that serve to empower teachers to enact specific practices that lead to learning for all” (p.283); this means that the school leader must hire teachers who are competent, reflective and culturally responsive practitioners. McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) suggest that principals devote a significant amount of time to recruiting and hiring teachers and recommend forming a hiring committee to develop and implement a hiring protocol for interviewing teacher candidates.

Furthermore, Meier (1995), with regard to hiring, states five qualities to look for in prospective teachers:

1. a self-conscious reflectiveness about how they themselves learn and (maybe even more) about how and when they don’t learn;
2. a sympathy toward others, an appreciation of differences, an ability to imagine one’s own “otherness”;
3. a willingness, better yet a taste, for working collaboratively;
4. a passion for having others share some of one’s own interests; and
5. a lot of perseverance, energy, and devotion to getting things right. (p.142)

“There is growing consensus among researchers and practitioners that teacher quality is the prime determinant of students’ opportunities for academic success” (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003, p.95), and the principal therefore plays an essential role in ensuring that our students are taught by culturally responsive, competent, caring teachers.

In closing, the principal’s role in leading for social justice, equity, and excellence is multi-faceted and includes key characteristics such as: challenging the status quo, understanding policy, resisting deficit thinking, reflecting critically and providing moral, transformative, and instructional leadership. Perhaps these qualifications explain why our educational system as a whole remains an inequitable institution. However, the
research continues to point to the reality that equity exists in many schools, and the common denominator in all of these schools is a strong leader.

Conceptual Framework: Academic Optimism

The researchers will utilize the latent concept of academic optimism as a theoretical framework by which to analyze the data. Academic optimism is comprised of three interrelated components: (a) academic emphasis; (b) collective efficacy; and (c) faculty trust (Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2006). Although the three components are interrelated, each of these three areas is specifically defined and grounded in theory and research. Each researcher chose a different one of these three interrelated components through which to analyze the data.

Academic emphasis, the first of the three sub-components of Hoy’s academic optimism construct, has been examined extensively as a factor that contributes to student achievement (Goddard, Sweetland, & Hoy, 2000; Hoy et al., 2006, Lee and Byrck, 1989; Murphy, Weil, Hallinger, & Mitman, 1982; Shouse, 1996). Other terms in the literature for academic emphasis include: academic rigor, academic push, academic excellence, and environmental press. For this research study, academic emphasis is defined as “the extent to which a school is characterized by a press for academic achievement (Hoy, Tarter, & Hoy, 2006).

Collective efficacy is grounded in social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986, 1997) and self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is an individual’s belief about his or her capacity to execute the actions required to produce a given level of attainment (Bandura, 1997). Building on self-efficacy, collective efficacy is, “the judgment of teachers that the faculty as a whole can organize and execute the actions required to have positive effects on
students” (Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2006). Collective efficacy contains four components: (1) mastery experience, (2) vicarious experience, (3) social persuasion, and (4) affective state. Research has shown that collective efficacy is the key variable in explaining student achievement—even more so than socioeconomic status (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000; Hoy, Sweetland, & Smith, 2002).

The last component of academic optimism is the faculty’s trust in parents and students. Just as academic emphasis and collective efficacy have been found to be positively related to student achievement, faculty trust has also been found to be related to student achievement (Hoy, 2002). Hoy, Tarter, and Woolfolk Hoy (2006) define faculty trust as “a willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that that party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open” (p.429).

The importance of academic optimism as a theoretical framework is its inclusion of cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains. According to Hoy, Tarter, and Woolfolk Hoy (2006), “Collective efficacy is a group belief or expectation, it is cognitive. Faculty trust in parents and students is an affective response. Academic emphasis is the push for particular behaviors in the school” (p.431). These three domains will serve as a useful tool in exploring the academic achievement in the schools in this study.

**Academic Emphasis**

As mentioned earlier, academic emphasis has been researched and studied extensively as a major factor contributing to increased student achievement (Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2006). In schools with high academic emphasis “teachers set high but achievable goals, they believe in the capability of the students to achieve, the school environment is orderly and serious, and, students, as well as teachers and principals,
pursue and respect academic success” (Goddard et al., 2000, p.684). Academic emphasis therefore becomes a way of characterizing the instructional climate and culture of the school. While climate characterizes the school’s impact on students, culture refers more to the manner in which the teachers and other staff members work together (McBrien & Brandt, 1997). Schools characterized by academic emphasis focus on and insist upon student achievement.

Research demonstrates that academic emphasis is positively related to student achievement even after controlling for the socioeconomic status of students (Hoy, Tarter, & Kottcamp, 1991; Lee & Bryk, 1989). Shouse (1996) concludes that “all schools, particularly low-SES schools – can increase student achievement by placing their academic mission at center stage and allowing their social mission to play a supporting role” (p.18). Shouse further argues that educational equity can be attained in low-SES schools by utilizing both “human and social capital in more academically focused ways” (p.19). A school culture and climate that espouses these beliefs sends a consistent message to the school community conveying that the academic success of all students is both possible and critical. Instead, for instance, of offering minority students a watered down version of the curriculum, all students would be afforded equal access to a rigorous, challenging, and authentic course of study. Schools with high academic emphasis have equally high demands for all of their students and offer strong, individualized support in ensuring that every student achieves at a high level.

Murphy, Weil, Hallinger, and Mittman (1982) researched policies and practices that influence academic press. The authors distinguish between school-level policies and classroom level practices and behaviors, and suggest that, “academic press can be
maximized when school level policies and enforcement practices form the framework for classroom-level activity” (p.26). According to the authors, school policies that maximize academic press include policies that communicate high expectations, offer clear and measurable goals, promote the belief that all students can achieve grade-level standards, protect instructional time, foster an orderly and safe environment, emphasize mastery of grade-level skills, and closely monitor student performance. The authors also identified five categories of teacher practices that contribute to academic press:

(1) establishing an academically demanding climate; (2) conducting an orderly, well managed classroom; (3) ensuring student academic success; (4) implementing instructional practices that promote student achievement; and (5) providing opportunities for student responsibility and leadership (p.25).

It is important to note here that the authors emphasize the importance of relationships with regard to the above policies and practices. The authors emphasize that academic press is futile if teachers do not show a genuine interest in the students’ lives and if teachers, themselves, do not model behaviors that support and reflect academic emphasis.

Hoy, Tarter and Kottkamp (1991) developed a tool known as the Organizational Health Inventory (OHI) and used this tool as a method for measuring a school’s level of academic emphasis. The elementary school OHI consists of eight scale items (see Table 2.2) and, for the purpose of Goddard, Sweetland, and Hoy’s study (2000), was analyzed using a 6-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. In the analysis of their data, Goddard and colleagues concluded that academic emphasis was a significant predictor of student achievement in reading and in math for poor and minority
Table 2.2: Academic Emphasis Scale Items

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Students respect others who get good grades</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students try hard to improve on previous work</td>
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<tr>
<td>The learning environment is orderly and serious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers in this school believe that their students have the ability to achieve academically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student neglect to complete homework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students make provisions to acquire extra help from teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students seek extra work so they can get good grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academically oriented students are not ridiculed by their peers</td>
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students. It was noted, for instance, that “an increase in academic emphasis of 1 standard deviation is associated with a gain of nearly 40% of a standard deviation in student achievement in math and more than one third of a standard deviation in reading achievement” (p.698). The researchers were able to conclude from their study that schools with a higher academic emphasis had higher levels of student achievement. To support this statement, it is worthy to note, for instance, that, “Although students receiving a free or reduced-price lunch scored on average 2.41 points below their schools’ mean reading scores, the school means averaged 11.39 points higher where there was a strong academic emphasis” (p.698). The analysis of this research clearly emphasizes that a school climate and culture characterized by high levels of academic emphasis results in high, more equitable levels of student achievement regardless of the
students’ race, gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. It is therefore important to emphasize that academic emphasis must be synonymous with the school’s climate and culture. The norms (practices, policies, structures, etc.) of a school with high levels of academic emphasis should support, reflect, and foster a collective effort to focus on student achievement.

Shouse (1996), in a study of 398 schools, offers a framework for academic emphasis that highlights the separate and collective effects of academic emphasis and school community. He introduces three separate components, each contributing to the academic emphasis of the school: (1) academic climate; (2) disciplinary climate; and (3) teachers’ instructional practices and emphasis. The first component, Academic Climate, refers to the school’s emphasis on offering students access to a rigorous curriculum as well as an emphasis on recognizing and honoring outstanding performance. The second component, Disciplinary Climate, refers to the school’s emphasis on establishing appropriate and effective attendance and discipline policies. In explaining the third component, Teachers’ Instructional Practices and Emphasis, Shouse expresses the need for teachers to “establish objective and challenging standards for student performance” (p.4), that they assign work that is authentic and relevant, and that they provide frequent, purposeful, ongoing feedback for students and parents. Shouse’s study suggests that the most successful schools are those in which “a sense of community emerges as a positive result of a strong sense of academic purpose…” (p.19).

As this research seeks to explore the achievement gap from the perspective of what school leaders can do to achieve equity and excellence, a focus on academic emphasis could be a promising strategy. As Goddard, Sweetland, and Hoy (2000) note,
“The greater the academic emphasis of a school, the more capable is the school of facilitating student learning” (p.687). The review of the literature regarding academic emphasis reveals a common thread of the importance that policies, practices, and beliefs have upon student achievement. Using the principal as the unit of analysis, academic emphasis will be utilized as a theoretical framework (see Figure 2.1) to explore leadership strategies that promote and support social justice and systemic equity.

Figure 2.1: Academic Emphasis Framework

ACADEMIC EMPHASIS

THAT RESULTS IN LEADERSHIP FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND SYSTEMIC EQUITY

Leadership for social justice and systemic equity:
- High standards for all students
- All students achieve at high levels
- Équitable performance across sub-groups

Collective Efficacy

Roots

As previously noted, the collective efficacy component of academic emphasis is grounded in Bandura’s (1993) notion of self-efficacy. He postulates that self-efficacy is a mechanism of personal agency by which people make causal contributions to their own functioning. According to Bandura, “Among the mechanisms of agency, none is more
central or pervasive than people’s beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over their own level of functioning and over events that affect their lives” (p.118). Self-efficacy beliefs influence how people think, feel, and act through four different processes: (a) cognitive; (b) motivational; (c) affective; and (d) selection processes.

According to Bandura (1993), human behavior, which is purposeful, is regulated by cognitive processes. As he stated, “The stronger the perceived self-efficacy, the higher the goal challenges people set for themselves and the firmer is their commitment to them” (p.118). This commitment tends to beget positive results. Collins (1982) confirms this theory in her study of students of varying mathematical abilities and different perceived self-efficacy. She found that within similar ability levels, students with stronger perceived mathematical self-efficacy outperformed students with weaker perceived mathematical self-efficacy. Also of note, Collins found that positive attitudes toward mathematics were better predictors of mathematics achievement than actual ability. Bandura (1993) would explain this by theorizing that, “those who have a firm belief in their efficacy, through ingenuity and perseverance, figure out ways of exercising some control, even in environments containing limited opportunities and many constraints” (p.125).

The second process of self-efficacy is motivational. According to Bandura (1993), motivation is governed by expectations that behaviors will lead to outcomes of performance. In other words, people are more motivated to complete a certain task if their self-efficacy beliefs are higher. Although motivation and self-efficacy are personal beliefs, leadership can impact teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs and motivation. In their study of 218 schools in two large districts in Canada, Ross and Gray (2006) found that
transformational leadership (fostering growth and enhancing organizational commitment in teachers) has a positive statistically significant impact on teacher’s sense of efficacy. Recent empirical evidence also links motivation to student achievement on tests (Brookhart, Walsh, & Zientarski, 2006). In their study of 8th grade students, the researchers found that motivational variables positively correlated with student performance on classroom assessments.

Bandura’s (1993) third process is affective. Naturally, beliefs in self-efficacy impact how much stress is experienced in threatening or difficult situations. People with stronger perceived self-efficacy beliefs exercise more control over the stress, giving them a better opportunity to be successful. Conversely, people with weaker perceived self-efficacy beliefs feel they cannot exercise control over the stress associated with difficult tasks. Stipek, Salmon, Vinnin, Kazemi, Saxe, & Macgyvers (1998) linked affect with math achievement and found that a positive affective classroom climate is a powerful predictor of student motivation and self-efficacy. The study conducted by Stipek, et. al has implications for practice as the researchers found that teachers can impact students’ affect by expressing positive emotions and enjoyment of their subject matter, showing sensitivity and kindness towards students, and utilizing humor.

These three previous processes lead to the most influential process of self-efficacy—selection processes. While cognitive, motivational, and affective processes create the conditions for a beneficial environment, selection process is the component through which people make the decision to undertake a challenging activity. According to Bandura (1993), “People avoid activities and situations they believe exceed their coping capabilities. But they readily undertake challenging activities and select situations
they judge themselves capable of handling” (p.135). Simply put, an individual will undertake and persevere through a task they perceive they are capable of handling. Most of the research in this area focuses on student selection processes. For example, Dalgety and Coll (2006) studied 126 first-year chemistry students and found a statistically significant difference in chemistry self-efficacy between students intending to enroll in a second-year chemistry course. In other words, students with higher self-efficacy beliefs chose to continue their chemistry education. This finding should be applicable to K-12 education. As students advance through secondary school, they begin to have more choices to make about their education. If their self-efficacy beliefs are stronger, they may tend to choose a more academically rigorous class.

Theoretical Background

The remainder of this literature review will focus on the research surrounding collective efficacy. Although distinct from self-efficacy, collective efficacy is related as it also has underpinnings in social cognitive theory. Goddard and Goddard (2001) also linked self and collective efficacy empirically as they found that collective efficacy was a significant predictor of differences in teacher efficacy. The authors found that teacher efficacy was higher in schools where collective efficacy was higher. Goddard, Hoy and Woolfolk Hoy (2004) define collective efficacy in schools as, “the judgment of teachers in a school that the faculty as a whole can organize and execute the courses of action required to have a positive effect on students” (p.4). It is important to highlight collective efficacy as it relates to a positive effect on students. Continued discussions of collective efficacy will be framed in terms of positively effecting student achievement. Members of a school can be self-efficacious about other things; however, this study
focused on a staff’s collective efficacy regarding their ability to positively impact student achievement.

It is also important to discuss the relationship between self-efficacy and collective efficacy. In other words, at what point does a building of individual teachers with self-efficacy become a group of teachers with collective efficacy? The literature does not address a specific percentage or number of teachers it takes to attain collective efficacy. Collective efficacy has as much to do with degree as it does with quantity. If the majority of the teachers (and specifically teacher-leaders) are efficacious about their ability to positively impact student achievement, then collective efficacy will counteract the beliefs of others who do not think their actions can positively impact student achievement.

Schools also display collective efficacy by continuing to improve upon it. When administrators and teacher-leaders actively build upon existing collective efficacy by talking about it and trying to persuade others that their actions impact student achievement, schools can be collectively efficacious. Bandura (1986, 1997) conceptualized four sources of collective efficacy: (a) mastery experience; (b) vicarious experience; (c) social persuasion; and (d) affective state.

For mastery experience, when the group perceives that a performance has been successful, efficacy beliefs tend to raise (Goddard, Hoy, Woolfolk Hoy, 2004). Goddard and Goddard (2001) found that past school achievement was a stronger predictor of perceived collective efficacy than race and socioeconomic status. Britner and Pajares (2006) also found that mastery experience was a strong predictor of student self-efficacy. In their study of science students in grades 5-8, Britner and Pajares found a statistically significant correlation (.49) between mastery experiences and self-efficacy. This finding
has important pedagogical implications for teachers. Teachers can impact student self-efficacy by providing mastery experiences such as authentic inquiry-oriented science investigations based on students’ developing abilities. Additionally, it is important to provide novice teachers with opportunities for mastery experiences. Mulholland and Wallace (2001) noted that achieving mastery experiences while teaching is an important source of self-efficacy. The researchers found, “the experience of teaching science a powerful influence on (a teacher’s) confidence and perception of confidence. When mastery experiences occurred in the form of successful lessons they seemed an important source of science teaching efficacy belief” (p.258).

Vicarious experience refers to skill modeling by another person. According to Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk Hoy (2004), “When a model with whom the observer identifies performs well, the efficacy beliefs of the observer are most likely advanced” (p.5). According to Brand and Wilkins (2007), vicarious experiences exist when, “individuals are inspired by the success of individuals with whom they personally identify” (p.304). Although there is limited research documenting the impact that vicarious experiences have on self-efficacy and teacher effectiveness, Brand and Wilkins suggest that vicarious experiences (as well as social persuasion and affective status) impact mastery experiences, which does significantly impact self-efficacy.

In explaining social persuasion, Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk Hoy (2004) cite examples such as encouragement or specific performance feedback, discussions in a teachers’ lounge, or community discussions. Although social persuasion is important for all staff members, the authors note that social persuasion is essential when assimilating new teachers. Even if a school has a strong sense of collective efficacy, a culture focused
on student achievement and a positive climate, new teachers are likely to encounter teachers who will socially persuade them in a negative way. It is important for school leaders to talk with new teachers and socially persuade them that the administration and teachers are focused on achievement for all students, regardless of their background. With positive social persuasion, new teachers learn that extra effort and a focus on high achievement for all students is the norm. Social persuasion is also important in terms of encouragement and specific feedback. Hoy and Spero (2005) found that efficacy rises during teacher preparation and student teaching, but tends to fall during a teacher’s first year of actual experience. The authors link this finding to a lack of perceived support compared to the university and student teacher experience.

The final source of collective efficacy—affective state—refers to the level of excitement or anxiety that adds to the organization’s sense of collective efficacy (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2004). An example of this stress might include the pressure from high stakes accountability testing. Schools with high collective efficacy are able to channel this anxiety and focus on the academic achievement of students. Brand and Wilkins (2007), in a study of pre-service teachers, found approximately one-third of the participants indicated that sources of stress reduction impacted their ability to effectively teach math and science.

The Significance of Collective Efficacy

As Gibson and Dembo (1984) found, teachers who have a high sense of instructional efficacy devote more classroom time to academic learning, help students who are struggling, and praise them for their accomplishments. Of particular importance
for our study, Bandura (1993) linked schools where all kids are successful with schools that have a high sense of perceived collective efficacy. Specifically, Bandura found:

… with staffs who firmly believe that, by their determined efforts, students are motivatable and teachable whatever their background, schools heavily populated with minority students of low socioeconomic status achieve at the highest percentile ranks based on national norms of language and mathematical competencies (p.143).

As this study began to explore the achievement gap from the perspective of what leaders can do, a focus on collective efficacy was seen as a promising strategy.

In a study of 97 diverse high schools in Ohio, Hoy, Sweetland, and Smith (2002) found a positive correlation between the collective efficacy of the school and school achievement in mathematics. Not only was there a positive correlation, but the authors also found that collective efficacy was more important than socioeconomic factors in explaining school achievement.

It is important to note that collective efficacy is not a variable dependent solely on school-context and teacher-demographic variables. In a recent study of diverse K-8 schools (student demographics averaging 88% minority and 76% economically disadvantaged), school-context and teacher-demographic variables only explained 46% of the variance in collective efficacy (Goddard & Skrla, 2006). This finding led the authors to suggest that, “There is more to perceived collective efficacy than the social demographics and contextual conditions that characterize organizations” (p.229). In other words, although it would be unlikely to change the student and teacher demographics of a
school, it is possible to improve upon collective efficacy since demographics comprise less than half of a school’s collective efficacy.

In closing, there has been a call (Goddard, Logerfo, & Hoy, 2004) for more research regarding collective efficacy and the extent to which teachers believe their work can achieve goals for social justice. The authors go so far as to say that efforts to expand the base of knowledge of collective efficacy “might be quite useful to understanding how schools meet challenging goals for educational equity” (p.420). By using collective efficacy as a theoretical framework for this current study, the researchers will be able to explore the discrepancies in systemic equity and add to the body of research on collective efficacy. The following section of this literature review focuses on Faculty Trust, the third component of Hoy’s Academic Optimism framework.

**Faculty Trust**

As stated previously, the final component to academic optimism is faculty trust, which is defined by Hoy, Tarter, and Woolfolk Hoy (2006) as “a willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that that party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open” (p.429). Faculty trust is an essential ingredient to create the culture necessary to initiate, implement, and institutionalize long-lasting change designed to promote excellence and equity throughout the walls of a school. For it is within trusting relationships that collaboration and problem solving can yield creative solutions. If the achievement gap is the largest problem facing the American educational system, then creative solutions will come through meaningful collaboration, and collaboration requires trust. When the faculty trusts parents, teachers can insist on higher academic standards with confidence that they will not be undermined by parents; and high
academic standards, in turn, reinforce faculty trust (Hoy et al., 2006). Faculty trust can turn the most toxic of school cultures into that of academic optimism, radiating a belief that all students can learn, and teachers and parents can make a difference.

As previously stated, faculty trust (the extent that a faculty as a group is willing to risk vulnerability) is a collective property. The definition that Hoy, Tarter, and Woolfolk Hoy (2006) provides readers (and the definition that the researcher will also use) to assist in clarifying this complex term is multi faceted.

1. Benevolence—the confidence that the one’s wellbeing will be protected by the trusted party.

2. Reliability—the extent to which one can count on another person or group.

3. Competency—the extent to which the trusted party has knowledge and skill.

4. Honesty—the character, integrity, and authenticity of the trusted party.

5. Openness—the extent to which there is no withholding of information from others.

This type of trust is thought to be cultivated through meaningful relationships and a common commitment. The principal has the power to create the conditions necessary to support the five facets of faculty trust.

Many studies have concluded that it is in the student's best interest to establish a strong link between home and school. Numerous child development, social work, psychology, and education studies have provided empirical evidence that supports the notion that parent-school partnerships are a determining factor in a student's cognitive and psychosocial development. Epstein (1994) states, “student learning, development, and success, broadly defined, not just achievement test scores, are the main reasons for school and family partnerships” (p.42). Brofenbrenner has urged educators and policy
makers since 1979 to create these links and metaphorical bridges throughout all levels of
a student's perceived world to have the greatest impact on his or her human development.

Perhaps the largest and best-known current study of trust in schools is Bryk’s and
Schneider’s (2002) analysis of the relationships between trust and student achievement.
Based on a 10-year case study of more than 400 Chicago elementary schools, Bryk and
Schneider's data provide the first evidence directly linking the development of relational
trust in a school community and long-term improvements in academic learning. The
researchers concluded “trust fosters a set of organizational conditions, some structural
and others social-psychological, that make it more conducive for individuals to initiate
and sustain the kinds of activities necessary to affect productivity improvements” (p.116).
Trust and cooperation among students, teachers, and parents influence regular student
attendance, persistent learning, and faculty experimentation with new practices.

Hoy and Tschannen-Moran developed a Trust Scale to measure the level of trust
in schools and examined the interrelationships of faculty trust in students, teachers,
principals, and parents (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). Following development, their
Trust Scales were used and tested in three large-scale studies in elementary, middle, and
high schools in Ohio and Virginia. Findings suggested that a greater perceived level of
trust in a school also indicated a greater sense of teacher efficacy (i.e., teachers' belief in
their ability to affect actions leading to success). Hoy and Tschannen-Moran's studies
also suggest that faculty trust in parents predicts a strong degree of parent-teacher
collaboration. Distrust, on the other hand, causes people to feel uncomfortable and ill at
ease, provoking them to expend energy on assessing the actions and potential actions of
others (Fuller, 1996).
When social exchanges and experiences between and within role groups are supportive and mutually beneficial, individuals and groups are willing to risk vulnerability and to work together to achieve desired outcomes (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Effective collaboration between parent, teacher, and student cannot exist without trust and respect. Friend and Cook (1990) write, “collaboration is a style of interaction between at least two co-equal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision-making as they work toward a common goal” (p.72). Perhaps this type of collaboration was best explained by Henry’s (1996) empirical study in which one teacher referred to this relationship as a metaphorical dance, where the individual must be conscious to the most subtle of communications that lets the other know what his or her needs are and how he or she can also help. Research also reveals that it is essential for the teacher to work towards developing this type of relationship because “teachers are really the glue that hold the home/school partnerships together” (Patrikakou & Weissberg, 1999, p.36).

Collaboration within a social system is not feasible without two unifying processes of decision-making: involvement and influence (Tschannen-Moran, 2001). “Mutually responsive relationships seem more likely to flourish if such efforts focus more on the interconnectedness of parents and teachers through their mutual commitment to children and on exploring ways to enhance and celebrate this connectedness” (Sumsion, 1999, p.11). Figure 2.2 displays the simple yet powerful blueprint for constructing trusting relationships between teacher and parent. Regularly engaging in a dialog, which focuses on their shared wants for the child/student allow for both parties to recognize the dedication and obligation associated with both roles. One must also recognize and respect differences in either party's culture and values (including their
backgrounds, race, ethnic group, socioeconomic class and educational level and communication style) when attempting to build such a relationship (Keyes, 2002).

Trust among parent, student, and teachers has also been linked to increasing the achievement of “at-risk” students. The term “at risk” is as complex as searching for the solution to assist these students. There are several definitions, perspectives, and identified risk factors. Davis (2004) states that contemporary research is now focused on the student in context, “conditions both in the child, and in the nature of the environments in which the child lives” (p.6). Environmental factors are linked to substantial risk to drop out of high school, i.e., the school context, family conditions, SES, and educational attainment of parents (Davis, 2004; NCES, 2004). Thus, in order to increase achievement in at-risk students one must take a systemic approach and involve the home environment in the remedy.

Educational research has also documented that ‘teachers' collaborative relations with parents and work in a family context do not come about naturally or easily (Powell, 1998, p.66). Many teachers find themselves struggling in working with families. Some have ethical concerns; others just lack knowledge, skills and strategies (Powell, 1998; Keyes, 2002). Professional stakeholders have repeatedly challenged the field to provide
both teacher and administrator training in working with parents (Epstein, 1989; Powell, 1998). This professional request to learn how to construct relationships with parents, supports the notion that trust is essential in raising student achievement and success. Faculty trust helps instill a universal belief that all students can learn and teachers and parents can make a difference.

Systems can devote much of their budget to improving achievement for minority students and helping bridge the gap between majority and non-majority students. Systems can create new curriculum manuals, provide staff development opportunities that address minority achievement, and bureaucratic improvement goals. However, this will have little to no effect on minority achievement unless teachers recognize that there is a problem in their individual classrooms and understand that they have the power to fix the inequities that are plaguing our schools. However, they cannot do this on their own. School leaders must involve both the parent and student, and he or she must openly provide them with the data to fully understand the complex and ugly truths about inequities in our schools.

“When people of good faith see disparities in outcomes for learners, they immediately desire and do undertake to correct the deficiencies in systems and in individuals who operate those systems, as well as the practices those systems and individuals produce” (Scott, 2001, p.6).

Conclusion

There are principals who are striving for social justice and systemic equity every day. Despite countervailing pressures, they resist, survive, and transform schools (Riester, et al, 2002; Scheurich, 1998). They enact resistance against the historic marginalization of particular students and resist the pressures pushing schools toward a
deceptive caring versus academic culture, or possibly a defeatist apathetic culture. These leaders, according to Rapp (2002), are willing and able to “leave the comforts and confines of professional codes and state mandates for the riskier waters of higher moral callings” (p.233). They understand that “Leadership is the enactment of values” (Miron, 1996), that leadership depends upon relationships and shared values between leaders and followers (Burns, 1978). They also understand that not reflecting on, discussing, and/or addressing issues of race, poverty and disability only further perpetuates the safeguarding of power and the status quo (Larson & Murtadha, 2002; Larson & Ovando, 2001).

Given the strong connection between quality principals and high-performing schools, Scheurich and Skrla (2003) claim that “good leadership, the bodies and spirits of our leadership, is crucial to the justice of our cause for equity and excellence in schooling” (p.99). Effective instructional and administrative leadership helps point to the necessity for change and is required to implement the change processes (Blackmore, 2002; Bogotch, 2002; Fullan, 1993; Rapp, 2002). Effective leaders are reflective, proactive and seek the help that is needed. They nurture an instructional program and school culture conducive to learning and professional growth. They model the values and beliefs important to the institution, hire compatible staff, and face conflict rather than avoid it (Deal & Petersen, 1994). They make the shift from personal awareness to social action (Freire, 1973), realizing that respect for diversity entails advocacy, solidarity, an awareness of societal structures of oppression, and critical social consciousness.

Leaders committed to this agenda decide they can create both excellent and equitable schools and then use their time and energy to figure out how to do so. They find a way “for all students to achieve high levels of academic success, regardless of any
student’s race, ethnicity, culture, neighborhood, income of parents, or home language” (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003, p.3). In their schools, there is no discernible difference in academic success and treatment among different groups of students. They believe that excellence and equity are the same.

Although studies have examined schools that make a difference in the lives of marginalized children (Oakes, Quartz, Ryan & Lipton, 2000; Riester, Pursch & Skrla, 2002), there is an absence of literature regarding principals as the unit of analysis and the process of actually leading for social justice. Related to this is an absence of documented strategies that principals who are leading for excellence and equity use to advance their work in the face of countervailing pressures in public schools. The purpose of this study was to examine how K-5 principals, who are dedicated to and passionate about social justice and equity, actually carry out their work in the face of resistance. This research studied principals who lead schools that are both excellent and equitable; principals who create schools in which the dream of equity comes alive on an every day basis through the work of ordinary, everyday people; principals who have narrowed and will eventually eliminate the achievement gaps; principals who create schools, educational methods, programs, and expectations that have significantly advanced the educational achievements of all students; principals who study and challenge the very beliefs, attitudes, and practices that keep all children from learning; principals who no longer tolerate inequities of achievement in their schools.

Scheurich and Skrla (2003) promote the use of data to uncover and erase systemic inequities. Rather than focus on external causes of the achievement gap, Scheurich and Skrla suggest that school leaders focus on internal or systemic inequities “because they
are built into the processes and procedures of the system that is the school” (p.80). Scott, (2001), as cited in Scheurich and Skrla (2003) defines systemic equity by stating,

Systemic equity is defined as the transformed ways in which systems and individuals habitually operate to ensure that every learner – in whatever learning environment that learner is found -- has the greatest opportunity to learn enhanced by the resources and supports necessary to achieve competence, excellence, independence, responsibility, and self-sufficiency for school and for life. (p.6)

Scheurich and Skrla (2001) recommend conducting equity audits “to identify patterns of inequity for the purpose of addressing those patterns and creating new patterns of equity” (p.80). Equity audits are a tool that can be used to address inequities surrounding teacher quality, program accessibility (which includes teacher attitudes, assumptions and practices) and, finally, student achievement. The notion of systemic equity is important because it reinforces the need for a more holistic approach to identifying and addressing internal inequities and the equity audit can be used to determine “whether all student groups are represented in reasonably proportionate percentages (p.146).

For the purposes of this study, data were analyzed from one component of academic optimism: collective efficacy. Collective efficacy is defined as, “the judgment of teachers in a school that the faculty as a whole can organize and execute the courses of action required to have a positive effect on students” (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2004, p.4). Chapter 3 describes the research design for this study, including equity audits, site visits, and semi-structured interviews.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design and methods used throughout this study. It begins with a summary of the research purpose and theoretical lens. It then identifies the rationale for a mixed methods design, role of the researchers, the protocol used for site selection, and procedures used for data collection.

Research Purpose

Today’s schools are currently subjected to an onslaught of high-stake tests at the federal, state and local levels. One may hear parents, students, and teachers complain about these new testing procedures and requirements, which are designed to hold teachers and school leaders accountable for student learning. However, no one can dispute that these tests are not initiating reform and change in the American educational system. No Child Left Behind and the accountability tests designed by the states have alerted the public to the unfortunate truth that our schools are failing to meet the needs of our non-majority population. High-stake testing illuminated the massive gaps between middle-to-upper income White students and students of color and poverty. In America, we boast “all men are created equal,” but things change quickly when these Americans become students in our schools.

The massive gaps between majority and non-majority students are great cause for alarm because they reveal that our schools appear to be racist institutions. It is hard to
dispute this observation when sixty percent of Black males in the United States fail to graduate from high school (Sturgeon, 2005). In order for schools to receive positive recognition, under the No Child Left Behind and North Carolina’s ABC Program, school leaders must address the lack of success experienced by non-majority students. Systems/schools that fail to change to accommodate the diversity within their classrooms will soon be branded as failing along with their teachers and students. This pressure is fueling reform. Without this pressure, many of these school systems would effortlessly continue to manage the status quo and continue to fail to meet the needs of students of color and students from a lower socio-economic status.

Some schools have experienced considerably more success than others in reducing the achievement gaps between majority and non-majority students. The purpose of this study was to ascertain/explore how K-5 elementary principals of state recognized “Schools of Excellence” are (or are not) promoting and supporting both excellence and systemic equity in their schools. Principals, assistant principals, teachers, and parent leaders were interviewed and the specific strategies that principals use to advance their work in the face of countervailing pressures of public schools were documented. Under North Carolina’s system of accountability (i.e., ABCs), “Honor Schools of Excellence” have 90-100 percent of students score at or above Achievement Level III (score needed to be considered proficient), make expected or high growth, and satisfy all Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) indicators required by the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. The research group selected these state recognized elementary schools with a traditional calendar from the largest and fastest growing school system in North Carolina.
An achievement gap existed between majority and non-majority students in all but two of this county’s thirty-three elementary schools that were recognized by the state as an “Honor School of Excellence” during the 2004-2005 academic year. However, less than twelve percent of the students in these two schools were of color, thus lacking critical minority mass. Some of the other award-winning schools actually had achievement gaps as large as thirty percentage points. If the “best schools” are evidencing obvious achievement differences between majority and non-majority students, one can only imagine the enormous inconsistencies in student performance in the schools that did not achieve this top honor by the state. This study also supported the researchers’ assumption that the state’s formula to identify the “best schools” is institutionally flawed. Sixteen of these distinguished schools may boast 90% of their student population is considered proficient, but their students of color performed considerably lower than their White counterparts.

Rationale for Mixed Methods Research Design

A dominant-less dominant mixed method research design is the most appropriate approach for attempting to reveal how leaders can successfully promote equity and excellence in today’s schools. This research design refers to research in which "one paradigm and its methods predominate, with a smaller component of the overall study being drawn from an alternative design" (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, p.44). The dominant-less dominant is the most popular mixed method designed utilized by researchers in fields where purist approaches to positivist and/or naturalistic forms of research predominate and where criticisms about the absence of paradigmatic and theoretical grounding persist (Morse, 1991). This study predominately utilized
qualitative data gathered through semi-structured interviews (the dominant design) and the researchers, armed with the quantitative data collected through equity audits (the less-dominant design), scrutinized these results.

Studies that utilize the dominant-less dominant design allow for qualitative and quantitative data to be collected, analyzed (qualitatively and quantitatively), and reported. These procedures are often used sequentially to: (a) triangulate or seek convergent findings; (b) provide insights that will inform subsequent data collection and analyses; and (c) enable expansion of the breadth and scope of the research (Greene et al., 1989). Mixed methods offers researchers alternative study designs that can leverage the strengths of the various methods and apply the findings appropriately within their respective fields (Mactavish & Scleien, 2000). “Qualitative researchers believe that rich descriptions of the social world are valuable, whereas quantitative researchers, with their etic, nomothetic commitments, are less concerned with such detail” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p.10). Quantitative assessment will, by nature of its goal for increased precision, continue to overlook potentially meaningful explanatory constructs. By combining both quantitative and qualitative designs for both the independent and dependent variables, and integrating those findings during some specific, deliberate stage, researchers will increase both precision and discovery in the field (Mactavish & Scleien, 2000). Mixed methods designs can and often do expand content-based theories addressing both generalizability (best achieved through quantitative assessments and analyses) and discovery (best achieved through qualitative strategies). “Mixed methods designs provide logical options for creative approaches in all areas of management research by combining
the best that each has to offer in terms of depth and breadth, and in terms of precision and discovery” (Mactavish & Scleien, 2000 p.158).

As Denzin and Lincoln (1998) point out, “researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (p.8). Qualitative researchers also look for “answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p.8). Looking for answers regarding social experiences is accomplished by gathering thick, rich description from the participants, which is not a goal of the quantitative researcher. By utilizing a mixed methods research design, the researchers can provide this rich descriptive detail and subtle nuances and examine this information with the quantitative results gathered through equity audits. This mixed methods design makes this goal plausible because it enables the researchers to triangulate or validate the findings, which will ultimately allow one to expand the breadth and scope of the research (Greene et al., 1989).

Role of the Researchers

The purpose of this study was to ascertain/explore how K-5 elementary principals of state recognized “Honor Schools of Excellence” are (or are not) promoting and supporting both excellence and systemic equity in their schools. The research team consisted of three University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill doctoral candidates in the Educational Leadership Department, along with their advisor. Two of the four members of the research team are current administrators in North Carolina’s public schools. Another member is a former administrator in North Carolina’s public schools, and the final member is a former principal and current chair of the Educational Leadership
department at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The researchers have not worked in any of the schools selected for this study. However, two of the members are current employees of the school district selected and these professional relationships enabled the researchers to gain access to the schools and members of the learning community. This access allowed the team to conduct a series of semi-structured interviews with principals, assistant principals, teachers, and parent leaders, in an attempt to locate/examine specific strategies that principals use to advance their work in the face of countervailing pressures of public schools. These professional relationships and familiarity with the district have the potential to make the researchers appear biased to present the data in a more than favorable manner. One may also argue that the two researchers working within the district were likely to yield guarded responses from their interviewees. The researchers were committed to remain unbiased in nature and reported their findings in the most accurate manner possible. Informal, collective cross-analysis of the data helped insure an unbiased analysis. Fortunately, the district leaders supported this research project fully and were eager to be provided with an impartial and objective look into their “Honor Schools of Excellence” and their corresponding leaders to see if they are truly excellent in nature.

Data Collection Procedures

Numerous studies reveal that the principal/leader is one of the most important factors in introducing, implementing, and institutionalizing positive school reform. “Almost all educational reform efforts have come to the conclusion that the nation cannot attain excellence in education without effective school leadership” (Crawford, 1998, p.8). Given this strong connection between quality principals and high-performing schools, it
is critically important to research, study, and document "good" leadership at the site level.
“We all know that good leadership, the bodies and spirits of our leadership, is crucial to
the justice of our cause for equity and excellence in schooling” (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003, p.99). In fact, many would say that strong, outstanding leadership is necessary to any
significant transformation of any organization, schools included (Glickman, 2002). After
all, we have evidence of programs that, either in part or in their entirety, are working for
diverse learners. The greater challenge, however, is to reproduce these successes in a
nation full of millions of learners, on hundreds of thousands of school campuses, in
thousands of school districts (Scott, 1998).

Although studies have examined schools that make a difference in the lives of
marginalized children (Oakes, Quartz, Ryan & Lipton, 2000; Riester, Pursch & Skrla,
2002), there is an absence of literature regarding principals as the unit of analysis and the
process of actually leading for excellence and equity. The rationale of this two-phase
empirical inquiry of leadership for excellence and systemic equity was to document how
schools, and leaders in particular, can and are pursuing, supporting, and achieving both
goals. They decide they can create both equitable and excellent schools and then use their
time and energy to figure out how to do so.

Federal, state, and local mandates are now charging schools and their leaders to
ensure the academic success of all students. This paradigm shift in the way schools and
leaders are measured has resulted in the realization and the empirical evidence that there
are alarming gaps in achievement throughout the student body. Leaders committed to
excellence and equity find a way “for all students to achieve high levels of academic
success, regardless of any student’s race, ethnicity, culture, neighborhood, income of

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parents, or home language” (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003, p.1). The purpose of this two-phase empirical inquiry of “good” schools was to research and document leadership practices that are contributing to schools of excellence and equity.

**Research Questions**

The following question focused the research study: How are principals of K-5 public “Honor Schools of Excellence” pursuing, supporting and advancing social justice, excellence, and systemic equity in a suburban southeastern county? The sub-questions include the following: a) What are principals of K-5 “Honor Schools of Excellence” doing to ensure the success of all of their students? (b) What similarities do school leaders, which are successful in creating equity and excellence, have in common? (c) What findings can connect to and build upon the literature related to leadership for social justice and systemic equity? and (d) What can be learned from “Honor Schools of Excellence” that could benefit other schools with similar demographics?

**Two-Phase Research Design**

The purpose of Phase One was to look, not just at test scores, but to delve more deeply into the data associated with state recognized “Schools of Excellence.” How is “excellence” defined and operationalized in these schools? Are these schools “excellent” for ALL students? Can a school be “excellent” and still have significant “gaps” and disparities? Through the use of equity audits, these and similar such questions were explored. School data was used to identify systemic patterns of equity or inequity internal to the school (e.g., patterns that promote, prevent, or form barriers to schools being equally successful with all student groups).

The purpose of Phase Two was to explore “how” principals are (or aren’t)
promoting and supporting both excellence and systemic equity in their schools. What are leaders who are committed to excellence and equity actually “doing” to ensure the success of ALL their students? How do these findings connect to and build upon the literature related to leadership for social justice and equity? Through the use of semi-structured interviews with principals, assistant principals, teachers, and parent leaders, the specific strategies that principals use to advance their work in the face of countervailing pressures of public schools were documented.

This mixed method (dominant-less dominant) study was conducted using qualitative research methods with a grounded theory approach along with quantitative equity audits from each school. Procedures for a grounded theory approach outlined by Creswell (2002) include collecting interview data, developing and relating themes of information and constructing a visual model that portrays a general explanation. Using this approach, the explanation was “grounded” in the data from the participants. Since the purpose of this study was to examine the process of how principals facilitate excellence and equity, it closely matches the methodology offered by Creswell, which is used to explain, “an educational process of events, activities, actions, and interactions that occur over time” (p.396). This study looked at the actions of the principals, as well as the interactions between several groups of people, such as principals, teachers, students, and their families. Several other studies have been successful in utilizing qualitative methods to study equity in schools (Johnson & Asera, 1999; Ragland, Clubine, Constable, & Smith, 2002; Skrla & Scheurich, 2001). Johnson and Asera (1999) were able to interview school administrators, teachers, parents and other personnel at nine different schools. From there, the researchers looked at how these schools were able to transform
themselves into excellent and equitable schools. By using similar methods, the researchers added to the literature on equity in schools successfully. The goal of this study was to focus on how principals are facilitating excellence and equity in their schools.

Site Selection

“The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth” (Patton, 1990, p.169). For the 2004-2005 school year, the state of North Carolina awarded over 50 schools in one large school district with the title “Honor School of Excellence.” Through purposeful sampling, twenty-four (24) elementary schools were eventually selected from this list using the following predetermined criteria:

(1) K-5 “Honor School of Excellence” during the 2004-05 school year (no middle schools or high schools included);

(2) Regular, traditional calendar school (no magnet, charter, or year-round schools included);

(3) Principal has been in place for at least three years (no school with a new principal included); and

(4) A student population in which at least 18% of the total school population is comprised of “minority” students.

For this study, minority is defined as those students who fall under the NCLB subgroups of African-American students, Hispanic American students, Native American students, and multiracial students. The researcher’s rationale for selecting schools with at least 18% minority population was to ensure that the data gathered were from a large enough sample size to ensure statistical validity to reveal a true pattern of achievement.
The majority of social scientists, educators, and policy makers recognize 22% as an accepted benchmark for achieving “critical mass” for the effective integration of schools (Hawley, Crain, Rossell, Smylie, Fernandez, Schofield, Tompkins, Trent, & Zlotnik; Schofield, 2001). In order to have a large enough sample size for this research study, the researchers agreed to lower the benchmark to 18%.

All 24 traditional K-5 “Honor Schools of Excellence” identified during the 2004-05 academic year recorded proficiency rates of achievement (i.e., scoring at or above a level three on the state’s end-of-grade test) of 95% or above for all of their White and Asian American students. The proficiency rates for minority students in these same schools ranged from 64.6% to 87.1%. Based solely on minority achievement, the schools were rank ordered and then separated into two types of schools. The twelve more equitable schools that recorded achievement gaps of 15% or less between their White students and their minority students were labeled SGS for “smaller gap schools.” The twelve less equitable schools that recorded achievement gaps of 15% or more between their White students and their minority students were labeled LGS for “larger gap schools” (see Table 3.1 for demographic data for SGS and LGS). While any gap, especially a gap of 15%, still indicates inequity, it also illustrates the need for this research and the importance of learning from and building on the success of the more equitable schools in the district.

The district involved is unique in its focus to keep most schools balanced by subgroups of students identified under NCLB. Around twenty years ago, the school board modified its racial-desegregation plan by replacing racial considerations with a new

Table 3.1: Demographic Data for Smaller Gap Schools (SGS) and Larger Gap Schools (LGS) – Complete data set for 2004-05
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th># of students</th>
<th># tests taken</th>
<th>% of minority students</th>
<th>% of F&amp;R students</th>
<th>% of L.E.P. students</th>
<th>% of students w/disability</th>
<th># of AYP Goals (100% met)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SG1</td>
<td>777</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG2</td>
<td>836</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG3</td>
<td>673</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG4</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG5</td>
<td>1061</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG6</td>
<td>601</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG7</td>
<td>765</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG8</td>
<td>860</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG9</td>
<td>777</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG10</td>
<td>576</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG11</td>
<td>642</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>6%</td>
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student assignment plan based on a combination of socioeconomic status and academic performance. Accordingly, no school may have more than 40 percent of its children
eligible for subsidized lunches or more than 25 percent of its students scoring below
grade level on standardized tests. This approach actively resists the demographic trends
toward high-poverty and low-performing schools by making decisions based on students’
need rather than their race.

As a result, the schools in this study had a population of minority students that
ranged from 18% to 60% of the total school population. While this demographic trend is
not representative of many districts or many schools in districts that essentially remain
segregated, it did provide a unique opportunity to study and compare what is actually
happening (or not happening) in schools that are similar demographically. This study’s
findings could be deemed as essential data to either support or dispute the need for school
leaders to take into consideration balancing socio-economic status when drawing
attendance lines for schools within a district.

Many people, including educators, still believe that factors such as genetic
deficiency, class differences, families and access to learning opportunities at home are the
most reliable predictors of school achievement. With this view, schools excuse
themselves from any accountability for inequities among student subgroups. However,
with this study of schools that teach similar populations of students from the same
geographical region, it is impossible to ignore the importance and impact of schools. This
study provides leaders with data to support the notion that the school plays a significant
role in the achievement of all students. More importantly, educational leaders who read
this study will learn strategies that facilitate excellence and equity from the “good
leaders” who lead the truly “good schools” in this district (i.e., the most excellent AND
equitable schools).
For Phase Two (i.e., qualitative data collection), the researchers gained access into two-thirds (i.e., 16 of 24) of these “Honor Schools of Excellence.” Four of the twenty four schools were eliminated because the socio-economic status of the students did not meet the equity audit criteria, and four schools were eliminated when a fifth researcher withdrew from the study. Multisite qualitative research studies address the same research questions in a number of settings using similar data collection and analysis procedures in each setting. The intent was to optimize description utilizing cross-site comparisons and increase the potential for generalizing findings beyond a particular case.

Data Collection

Phase One: Equity Audits

Through the use of equity audits, quantitative data was collected to scan for and then document systemic patterns of equity and inequity across multiple domains of student learning and activities within the selected twenty-four “Honor Schools of Excellence” (i.e., patterns embedded within the many assumptions, beliefs, practices, procedures, and policies of schools themselves that promote, prevent, or form barriers to schools being equally successful with all student groups). All of the data collected for these audits is public knowledge provided by the state department of instruction and posted on the district’s website.

The data provided by the North Carolina Department of Instruction allowed the researchers to analyze information in regards to testing performance according to race, gender, economic status, disability, language proficiency, and parents’ educational status. Teachers, administrators, school board members, community members, and policy makers may be aware of inequities in various aspects of their schools, but they rarely
have systematically examined these areas and then devised ways to eliminate the inequities. To achieve social justice and systemic equity and have a more productive orientation, one that is not deficit based or focused on issues external to schools, educators need practical tools in recognizing that there are substantial and persistent patterns of inequity internal to schools (i.e., embedded within the many assumptions, beliefs, practices, procedures, and policies of schools themselves). In response to these daunting challenges, practical tools that make intuitive sense to educators and are easy to apply, while getting beyond old biases, can be highly useful.

The research questions and interview protocols for this study of twenty-four state recognized “Honor Schools of Excellence” were modified from goal four of Scott’s (2001) Equity Audit, which deals with equitable opportunity to learn. Equity audits are a research tool that can (and will) be used to guide schools in working toward equity and excellence. Equity auditing is a concept with a respected history in civil rights, in curriculum auditing (English & Steffy, 2001), and in some state accountability systems (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). Equity audits utilize district, school, and classroom data to identify (uncover) and address (understand) systemic patterns of equity or inequity internal to the school (e.g., patterns that promote, prevent, or form barriers to schools being equally successful with all student groups). The goal is to create “challenging learning opportunities such that every child, regardless of characteristics and educational needs, is given the requisite pedagogical, social, emotional, psychological and material supports to achieve the high academic standards of excellence that are established.” The qualitative data collected during Phase Two of the study (i.e., over sixty-four in-depth, semi-structured interviews with multiple sources including principals, assistant
principals, teachers, and parent leaders) served to “supplement, validate, explain, illuminate, or reinterpret” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.10) the quantitative data gathered via equity audits from the same “Honor Schools of Excellence” during Phase One of the study.

In this study, the researchers began with a manageable set of demographic, teacher quality, programmatic, and student achievement indicators that together form a straightforward, delimited audit of equity. Demographic equity for each of the SGS and LGS was explored by means of the following descriptive statistics:

(a) number of students;
(b) number of 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders who took the reading and math tests;
   percentage of minority students (defined for this study as African-American, Hispanic, Native American, and multiracial students);
(c) percentage of economically disadvantaged students (defined for this study as students eligible for free or reduced lunch);
(d) percentage of limited English proficiency (L.E.P.) students;
(e) percentage of students with disabilities (tested and labeled);
(f) number of AYP goals (subgroups identified under the federal NCLB Act), and
(g) actual geographic location.

Because high quality teachers are key determinants of students’ opportunities to be academically successful, evidence of teacher quality equity in each of the SGS and LGS involved four variables:

(a) teacher education (percentage of teachers holding an advanced degree at the master’s or doctoral level);
(b) teacher credentials (percentage of fully licensed teachers, percentage of classes taught by highly qualified teachers, and percentage of teachers with national board certification);
(c) teacher experience (number of years as a teacher; 0 to 3 years, 4 to 9 years, or 10+ years of experience); and
(d) teacher mobility (percentage of teachers leaving or not leaving a campus on an annual basis).

Equally as important as teacher quality is the quality of the programs in which students are placed (or from which they are excluded) and in which teachers work. Because there are large variations of quality among different placements and working conditions within schools and school districts, indicators of programmatic equity for this study involved data gathered on the following resources:
(a) student space (percentage of school crowding and number of mobile units); 
(b) student discipline (number of acts of violence and number of student suspensions per 100 students per school year);
(c) student access to books and technology (number of library books per student, number of students per computer, and number of students per Internet connection);
(d) teachers’ time;
(e) facilities and resources;
(f) teachers’ empowerment;
(g) school leadership; and
(h) opportunities for professional development
Indicators of achievement equity in each of the SGS and LGS expanded the traditional attention on nationally normed achievement test results and included such evidence of student attainment as growth rates, academic levels, parent education, and AYP goals met. Adequate Yearly Progress standards are used to determine success under the federal No Child Left Behind legislation involving incremental growth from certain starting points in reading and mathematics. With a goal of closing achievement gaps, there are nine categories of students that are potentially identified as subgroups. They are: (1) White; (2) Black; (3) Hispanic; (4) Native American; (5) Asian/Pacific Islander; (6) Multiracial; (7) Economically Disadvantaged; (8) Limited English Proficient; and (9) Students with Disabilities. A school must achieve 100 percent of its targets (subgroups) in order to be deemed to have made Annual Yearly Progress. In each of the twenty schools, 95% or more of the White and Asian/Pacific Islander students were proficient on the End-of-Grade reading and mathematics tests. The achievement audit for this study disaggregated the following available data based on the NCLB subgroups:

(a) state achievement test results (from a state accountability program, focused primarily on average growth, designed to improve student achievement, reward excellence, and provide assistance to schools that need extra help);
(b) growth rates;
(c) academic levels;
(d) parent education (proficiency rate of students whose parents do not have a college education);
(e) number of AYP goals met

Phase Two: Semi-Structured Interviews

108
Qualitative data was collected by the researchers through a variety of methods (including in-depth semi-structured interviews, site visits, informal observations, document analyses, and field notes) and from multiple sources (school principals, assistant principals, teachers, and parents). The intent was to optimize description utilizing cross-site comparisons and increase the potential for generalizing findings beyond a particular case. According to Glesne (1999), the special strength of interviewing is that it allows the researcher to “learn about what you cannot see and to explore alternative explanations of what you do see” (p.69). Since it would have been impractical to log enough observation days to “see” what goes on in a school throughout the course of a year or more, interviewing provided rich data from a span of several years. It also provided alternative explanations of the persistence of inequitable schools.

Within each of the 16 schools, five semi-structured interviews lasting approximately one hour each were conducted—one with the principal, an assistant principal, two teachers and one parent (see Appendices A,B,C, and D for a copy of the Interview Questions). Each of the four researchers conducted all five interviews at two small gap schools and all five interviews at two large gap schools. The principal was selected as a participant because he or she served as the unit of analysis, while the other members of the school and community offered valuable information regarding the impact of the principal’s leadership on excellence and equity in the school. Two teachers from each school were interviewed (teacher 1 was an Initially Licensed Teacher in year 2, 3 or 4 of service and teacher 2 was a teacher leader, as determined by the principal, with preferably more than seven years of experience and above standard evaluations). The researchers also interviewed a parent leader that was actively involved in the Site Based
Management Team, school improvement team, or a parent organization (see Table 3.2 for the participants’ demographic information). The research questions, which served as the foundation on which the protocols were formulated, also served as the cornerstone for the data analysis. It should be mentioned that the principal selected the four other individuals that the researchers had access to interview, thus allowing the principal to select individuals that are more like to speak in a favorable manner (the researchers acknowledge that this was a limitation). However, for the results from the two groups to remain equal.

The researchers divided the schools to allow each researcher to enter 4 schools total (2 LGS and 2 SGS) and conduct all 5 interviews. Equally dividing the LGS and the SGS was a conscious effort to assist in keeping the collected data impartial in nature. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed for purposes of analysis. The researchers shared all transcripts to allow each researcher the opportunity to analyze each and every interview through his or her specific lens of academic optimism. Each of the four researchers then generated a separate and individual chapter that detailed his or her findings after applying his or her specific lens of the framework (academic emphasis, collective efficiency, and faculty trust) to the collected data generated from this collaborative effort.

Methods of Verification

The study utilized a concurrent triangulation approach, which uses two complementary

<table>
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<th>Years at School</th>
<th>Years of Educational Experience</th>
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Table 3.2: Principals’ Demographic Information
research methods to confirm, cross-validate, or corroborate findings within one study (Creswell, 2002; Greene et al., 1989). According to Greene et al. (1989), “[W]hen two or more methods that have offsetting biases are used to assess a given phenomenon, and the results of these methods converge or corroborate one another, then the validity of inquiry findings is enhanced” (p.256). During the data analysis and interpretations stages, data from the interviews were recorded and transcribed, and results were then compared using

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informal, collective cross-analysis as a strategy to further reliability and validity of findings (see Figure 3.1). Because of the interpretive and descriptive nature of the study, coupled with the intent to identify school-wide relationships, a mixed-methods (dominant-less dominant) approach was preferable to a single methodology. The use of interview data from all principals, assistant principals, teachers, and parent leaders coupled with the data obtained through equity audits supported the identification of generalizeable trends across the organization (i.e., broad relationships that are true at aggregate organizational and sub-group levels), while interview data allowed for the identification of individual experiences within the larger organizational context.

This mixed method approach provided the researchers with the opportunity to Figure 3.1: Concurrent Triangulation Research Design (Creswell, 2002, p.214)

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<th>QUALITATIVE</th>
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- Quantitative Data Collection
- Qualitative Data Collection

- Quantitative Data Analysis
- Qualitative Data Analysis

Data Results

Compared

confidently and accurately address the research questions at both the macro (i.e., organizational) and micro (i.e., individual) levels, drawing a conclusion that was both valid in its interpretations and rich in its descriptions (Graham, 2006). To ensure trustworthiness for this study, triangulation was used to incorporate multiple methods
sources, investigators and theories to interpret the data and peer debriefing was implemented to guard against bias and to review and discuss the interpretation of the data (Glesne, 1999).

**Limitations of the Study**

In addition to the previously mentioned possible limitations (2 of the 4 researchers actively working within the district and the principals selecting the other participants), there are two other limitations to this study. Focusing exclusively on elementary schools prohibits the researchers’ findings to offer conclusive evidence that could be used to assist the reform efforts in middle and high schools, which are sadly the areas that many researchers report in need of the most reform and plagued with the most inequities. The decision to focus on elementary schools was a conscious attempt to retrieve results on student performance and achievement, as it relates to school leadership, as pure in nature as possible. These students have limited experiences and their successes cannot typically be attributed to different schools and leadership. Many researchers conclude that reform efforts are most successful at the elementary level for the same reason (Murphy & Datnow, 2003).

This study is missing the insight from some great principals leading for excellence and equity as a result from the researcher’s limited and highly structured selection process. The researchers acknowledge that much could and should be learned from these leaders.

Finally, while conducting a group analysis allowed the researchers to compare and contrast strategies across 16 schools, an individual school level analysis may have
allowed for a more in-depth analysis of the implemented practices at a single school through artifact collection and on-going observations.

 Outcome of the Study

 Many people, including educators, still believe that factors such as genetic deficiency, class differences, families and access to learning opportunities at home are the most reliable predictors of school achievement. With this view, schools excuse themselves from any accountability for inequities among student subgroups. However, with this study of schools that teach similar populations of students from the same geographical region, it is impossible to ignore the importance and impact of schools. This study provides leaders with data to support the notion that the school plays a significant role in the achievement of all students. More importantly, educational leaders who read this study will learn strategies that facilitate excellence and equity from the “good leaders” who lead the truly “good schools” in this district (i.e., the most excellent AND equitable schools).
Audit Findings

Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia, and Nolly (2004) proposed the simple formula of teacher quality equity plus programmatic equity equals achievement equity. In part, this study began to test that assumption. According to Scott (2001), a school cannot have systemic equity if even one part of the system is inequitable. For example, offering a high quality and challenging curriculum is not effective if the staff does not have high expectations that all students will be successful with that curriculum. The following findings seem to raise more questions than answers.

Audit of Demographics in Small Gap Schools (SGS) and Large Gap Schools (LGS)

Demographically speaking, the schools involved in this research study are very similar. All twenty-four are regular K-5, traditional calendar “Honor Schools of Excellence” in the same large school district of over 128,000 students. All twenty-four schools are located within a twelve mile radius of each other, house an average of 722 students, and boast an average daily attendance figure of 95 to 97%. Approximately one-third of the student population in both the SGS and LGS is comprised of minority students (defined as Black, Hispanic, Native American, and Mixed-Race students for this study). The SGS and LGS also both serve approximately the same number of economically disadvantaged students (@ 29.5% for SGS and LGS), same number of limited English proficiency students (@ 7% for SGS and LGS), and same percentage of
students with disabilities (@ 16.5% for SGS and LGS). As a result, both sets of schools also have the exact same number of AYP goals to meet (i.e., 20). See Table 4.1 for a snapshot of the demographic data for SGS and LGS.

Table 4.1: Demographic Data for Small Gap Schools (SGS) and Large Gap Schools (LGS) – Average data set for 2004-05

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th># of students</th>
<th># of tests taken by 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students</th>
<th>% of minority students</th>
<th>% of F&amp;R students</th>
<th>% of L.E.P. students</th>
<th>% of students w/disability</th>
<th># of AYP Goals (100% met)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SGS</strong> Range</td>
<td>728</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>LGS</strong> Range</td>
<td>716</td>
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<td>29%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<td>District</td>
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<td>38%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Note. National experts report that about 10% to 12% of a school’s student population probably requires special education designations. Both types of schools in this study report higher than average classifications resulting in over-assignment (Artiles, 1998).]

Audit of Teacher Quality in Small Gap Schools (SGS) and Large Gap Schools (LGS)

Although defining teacher quality and then measuring it is a complicated task (Rowan, Correnti, & Miller, 2002), pursuing it is vitally important in raising student achievement. Research indicates that having a critical mass of licensed, experienced teachers with advanced degrees is directly correlated with students’ academic success (Darling-Hammond, 1999). An audit of teacher quality revealed that teachers’ credentials, education, experience, and mobility are also very similar in both the SGS and the LGS. For this study, fully licensed teachers means the percentage of classroom teachers with clear initial or clear continuing licenses in all license areas (@ 90% for SGS
and LGS). Classes taught by “highly qualified” teachers involves the percentage of classes taught by "highly qualified" teachers as defined by federal law (@ 89.5% for SGS and LGS). Teachers with advanced degrees includes the percentage of teachers who have completed an advanced college degree, including a master's or doctoral degree (@ 25% for SGS and LGS). National Board Certified teachers is the average number of school staff, including teachers, administrators and guidance counselors, who have received National Board Certification (@ 8.5% for SGS and LGS). Years of teaching experience delineates the percentage of teachers who have taught for 0 to 3 years, 4 to 10 years, or over 10 years. Although small, an interesting difference was noted in that half (51%) of the teachers in the SGS had 10+ years of experience compared to 43% of the teachers in the LGS. The LGS schools seem to employ more teachers in the 4 to 9 year range of experience (34%) compared to the SGS (29%). Overall, both types of schools seem to employ an appropriate balance of new teachers, mid-career teachers, and very experienced veteran teachers. Lastly, teacher turnover rate is defined as the percentage of classroom teachers who left their school staff from the start of the prior year to the start of the current year (@ 19% for SGS and LGS). See Table 4.2 for a snapshot of the teacher quality data for SGS and LGS.

Audit of Programmatic Issues in Small Gap Schools (SGS) and Large Gap Schools (LGS)

Programmatic issues involve a number of concerns including resources, physical space, student discipline, and access to books and technology. Once again, an audit of the SGS and LGS revealed some striking similarities. For example, while the SGS are 5% over capacity and the LGS are 10% over capacity with regard to school crowding and both sets of schools have approximately 7 mobile units on their properties, the average
Table 4.2: Teacher Quality Data for Small Gap Schools (SGS) and Large Gap Schools (LGS) – Average data set for 2004-05

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th># of teachers</th>
<th>% of teachers fully licensed</th>
<th>% of classes taught by highly qual</th>
<th>% of teachers with advance degree</th>
<th>% of teachers with national board certif</th>
<th>% of teachers with 0 to 3 years exper</th>
<th>% of teachers with 4 to 9 years exper</th>
<th>% of teachers with 10+ years exper</th>
<th>% of teachers who turnover</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SGS Range</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>42-66</td>
<td>85-98</td>
<td>72-97</td>
<td>17-38</td>
<td>2-21</td>
<td>6-32</td>
<td>21-41</td>
<td>33-71</td>
<td>6-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGS Range</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>38-66</td>
<td>87-94</td>
<td>77-100</td>
<td>7-38</td>
<td>3-28</td>
<td>9-37</td>
<td>26-45</td>
<td>24-56</td>
<td>7-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

class size for all twenty-four schools involved is still 21 students. School safety issues involve the number of acts of crime or violence per 100 students, which includes all acts occurring in school, at a bus stop, on a school bus, on school grounds, or during off-campus, school-sponsored activities. While the LGS reported one more act per 100 students than the SGS, the SGS reported one more short-term (10 days or less) or long-term (more than 10 days) out-of-school suspension or expulsion per 100 students than the LGS. Students in both the SGS and LGS have access to approximately the same number of library and media center books (@ 17 books for SGS and LGS) and the same number of Internet-connected computers (@ 4 to 1 student/computer ratio for SGS and LGS).

Another way to assess programmatic equity is to examine the results of the governor’s Teacher Working Conditions survey. The goals of the survey are to (1) hear from teachers and administrators about what they identify as areas in need of improvement; (2) understand what school characteristics appear to affect those perceptions; and (3) provide data on working conditions to local school leaders and state
policymakers. Research and focus groups with teachers were conducted to develop 30 statistically sound working conditions standards for schools in five broad categories — time, empowerment, professional development, leadership, and facilities and resources. The online survey sent to every licensed public educator in the state solicits responses on 72 statements regarding working conditions in these five domains. Educators are asked to respond to each of the statements with a value of “1” through “6” with “1” representing “Strongly Disagree” and “6” representing “Strongly Agree.” All statements are written to indicate a positive description of the school environment (e.g., “The principal is a strong, supportive leader” and “Adequate and appropriate time is provided for professional development”). Therefore, higher scores always indicate a more positive opinion of the school environment. In 2004-05, surveys were completed and returned voluntarily by 42,209 educators from 1,471 schools in 115 of the state’s 117 school districts. Seventy-six percent (76%) of the schools had a response rate of 50% or higher.

The domain of time ensures that teachers can work collaboratively and focus on teaching all students. Empowerment is meant to ensure that those who are closest to students are involved in making decisions that affect them. Facilities and resources ensure teachers have the resources to help all children learn. Leadership ensures schools have strong leaders who support teaching and learning. And, opportunities for professional development ensure teachers can continually enhance their knowledge and skills. The Southeast Center for Teacher Quality (see Jacobson, 2005) found all five variables to be significant and meaningful predictors of student achievement.

Interesting findings emerged regarding the return rate, range of returns, and actual ratings on the surveys. First, 20% more of the teachers in the SGS actually completed the
survey (total of 88%) compared to teachers in the LGS (total of 68%). Second, the range of returns for the SGS was considerably smaller at 29 (between 71% and 100%) versus the LGS at 65 (between 35% and 100%). And third, the teachers in the LGS actually rated each of their working conditions slightly higher than the teachers in the SGS (the SGS responses were more aligned with the district average). See Table 4.3 for a snapshot of the programmatic data and Table 4.4 for a snapshot of teacher working condition data for SGS and LGS. These differences certainly speak to different cultures within each of the schools and may be explained in a variety of ways (positive and/or negative). Unfortunately, without more data (qualitative and/or quantititative), it is difficult to identify precise reasons for these results (e.g., culture on non-participation in some schools, pressure from the leadership to close gaps in other schools, only contented teachers completed the survey, etc.). Likewise, information needed to disaggregate the exceptional children’s classifications, including cognitive and behavioral disabilities and gifted and talented, by race and income was not readily available. The researchers intend to continue to mine for this data and the possibility of unequal representation in certain programs.

Audit of Achievement in Small Gap Schools (SGS) and Large Gap Schools (LGS)

According to Scott (2001), achievement equity means having comparably high performance for all groups of learners when academic achievement data are disaggregated and analyzed. Although demographic, teacher quality, and programmatic audits all indicated a fair amount of equity between SGS and LGS, the achievement audit between both types of schools indicated great disparities. Across the board, at-risk students in the SGS outperformed their LGS counterparts (and the district for that
Table 4.3: Programmatic Data for Small Gap Schools (SGS) and Large Gap Schools (LGS) – Average data set for 2004-05

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% of crowding</th>
<th># of mobile units</th>
<th># of acts of violence (per 100 students)</th>
<th># of student suspensions (per 100 students)</th>
<th># of books per student</th>
<th># of students per computer</th>
<th># of students per Internet connection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SGS</strong></td>
<td><strong>105%</strong></td>
<td><strong>7.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.4</strong></td>
<td><strong>6.8</strong></td>
<td><strong>16.78</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.82</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.89</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>92-132</td>
<td>0-21</td>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>0-17</td>
<td>8.94-27.77</td>
<td>2.09-6.89</td>
<td>2.33-6.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LGS</strong></td>
<td><strong>110%</strong></td>
<td><strong>6.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.3</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.3</strong></td>
<td><strong>17.65</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.01</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.21</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>90-132</td>
<td>0-16</td>
<td>0-9</td>
<td>0-12</td>
<td>11.28-23.28</td>
<td>2.31-6.54</td>
<td>2.31-8.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td><strong>105%</strong></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>14.47</td>
<td><strong>3.09</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.15</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4: Working Condition Data for Smaller Gap Schools (SGS) and Larger Gap Schools (LGS) – Average data set for 2004-05

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th># of surveys completed</th>
<th>% of surveys completed</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Facilities and Resources</th>
<th>Empowerment</th>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>Professional Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SGS</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
<td><strong>88%</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.92</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.69</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.45</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.59</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.33</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>30-74</td>
<td>71-100</td>
<td>2.5-3.18</td>
<td>3.18-4.27</td>
<td>2.68-4.09</td>
<td>2.66-4.33</td>
<td>2.79-4.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LGS</strong></td>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
<td><strong>68%</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.22</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.94</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.73</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.90</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.51</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td><strong>76%</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.05</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.74</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.45</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.58</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.36</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

matter). The 11.2% difference between minority student proficiency was used to separate the schools initially. Interestingly, the trend continued for disadvantaged students (9.4% difference), limited English proficiency students (7.2% difference), students with disabilities (4.9%), and students of parents with no college education (13.3%). Even though 95% of all students were tested in all twenty-four schools and each school noted some growth, a six-year analysis of growth indicated a greater difference of 6.3 percentage points for students in the SGS versus the LGS. 9% of the students in the LGS
scored below proficiency at a level one or two, while only 6% of the students in the SGS scored at a level one or two. See Table 4.5 for a snapshot of the achievement data for SGS and LGS.

Table 4.5: Achievement Equity Data for Small Gap Schools (SGS) and Large Gap Schools (LGS) – Average data set for 2004-05

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% of minority students proficient</th>
<th>% of F&amp;R students proficient</th>
<th>% of L.E.P. students proficient</th>
<th>% of students w/disab proficient</th>
<th>% of all students proficient in 2000</th>
<th>% of all students proficient in 2005</th>
<th>Growth from 2000 to 2005 (6 years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SGS Range</strong></td>
<td><strong>83.2%</strong> (80.5-87.1)</td>
<td><strong>80.1%</strong> (65.0-85.7)</td>
<td><strong>72.1%</strong> (42.9-91.7)</td>
<td><strong>72.8%</strong> (54.3-91.8)</td>
<td><strong>75.1%</strong> (57.1-90.0)</td>
<td><strong>82.3%</strong> (70.5-89.4)</td>
<td>+ <strong>11.8</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LGS Range</strong></td>
<td><strong>72.0%</strong> (64.6-78.4)</td>
<td><strong>70.7%</strong> (59.2-82.2)</td>
<td><strong>64.9%</strong> (28.6-93.2)</td>
<td><strong>67.9%</strong> (59.0-79.1)</td>
<td><strong>61.8%</strong> (42.9-93.3)</td>
<td><strong>86.6%</strong> (80.5-91.5)</td>
<td>+ <strong>5.5</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GAPS</strong></td>
<td><strong>11.2%</strong></td>
<td><strong>9.4%</strong></td>
<td><strong>7.2%</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.9%</strong></td>
<td><strong>13.3%</strong></td>
<td><strong>NA</strong></td>
<td>+ <strong>6.3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>District</strong></td>
<td><strong>76.9%</strong></td>
<td><strong>68.8%</strong></td>
<td><strong>56.2%</strong></td>
<td><strong>61.1%</strong></td>
<td><strong>NA</strong></td>
<td><strong>NA</strong></td>
<td><strong>90.4%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Note. 95% of all students in all twenty-four schools were tested.]

Concluding Discussion

By controlling for and/or eliminating some of the external variables (e.g., demographics) and internal factors (e.g., teacher quality and programmatic issues) often cited for the achievement gaps between White middle-class children and children of color or children from low-income families, the findings from this study raise more questions than answers. Do the principals and teachers who work in Larger Gap Schools (LGS) truly believe that all students can be successful? If so, why do equity audits in these schools reveal significant achievement gaps across multiple subgroups of students? If not, what are the reasons behind and/or the causes of these beliefs? Conversely, do the principals and teachers who work in Smaller Gap Schools (SGS) truly believe that all
students can be successful? If so, what are the reasons behind and/or the causes of these beliefs?

Although improving teacher quality continues to be a leading national priority, “the fact that, broadly speaking, our children experience differential levels of success in school that is distributed along race and social class lines continues to be the overriding central problem of education” (Skrla, Scheurich, Johnson, & Koschoreck, 2001, p.239). Changing demographics of the student population in the nation’s schools, the stable demographics of the teaching force (i.e., White, middle class, females), and the growing contrast between the two sets of demographics support the need for all educators to increase their knowledge and social responsibility toward diversity and equity related issues. In serving increasingly diverse student populations from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, many of whom experience poverty, neglect, or other negative situations that can seriously affect their physical, cognitive, and emotional development, Villegas (1992) argued that educators in a multicultural society need the following: (1) an attitude of respect for cultural differences; (2) knowledge of the cultural resources their students possess, and skills in tapping these resources in the teaching-learning process; (3) a belief that all students are capable of learning, evidenced in an enriched curriculum for all pupils; and (4) a strong sense of professional efficacy when evaluating students. Unfortunately, beliefs, attitudes, and mindsets do no not lend themselves easily to empirical investigation (Pajares, 1992).

As the results from Phase One of this research indicate, equity audits are a practical, easy to apply tool that educators can use to objectively identify educational inequalities. By studying schools that teach similar populations of students from the same
geographical region, it is impossible to ignore the impact that schools play in the achievement of all students. Data is powerful; it separates personal agendas from organizational necessities. By collecting, analyzing, and then exhibiting data in a transparent way, it is difficult for teachers, parents, and even school board members to deny certain disparities in practices, certain deficiencies in systems, and certain gaps in outcomes.

Actually addressing and then removing such systemic patterns of inequity requires more than awareness though, it requires action. Igniting reform for true excellence necessitates the will to do so; it requires both a close examination of personal beliefs coupled with a critical analysis of professional behavior. While convincing research suggests that beliefs are the best predictors of individual behavior and that educators’ beliefs influence their perceptions, judgments, and practices, research also states that beliefs are hardy and highly resistant to change (Bandura, 1986; Dewey, 1933; Pajares, 1992; Rokeach, 1968). Understanding the nature of beliefs, attitudes, and values is essential to understanding educators’ choices, decisions, and effectiveness regarding issues of diversity, social justice, and equity. Assessing beliefs in an effort to make them known and subject to critical analysis is an important initial step in the process (see Brown, 2004 for a review of measures, instruments, inventories, and studies that assess educators’ personal and professional beliefs, attitudes, perceptions and preconceptions.). For, it is assumed that, the more critically conscious educators become, the more prone they are to behave appropriately and constructively in actual educational situations involving students of diverse cultures, ethnic groups, backgrounds, abilities, economic levels, etc. and the more attentive they will become to redressing social injustices and
developing enduring educational practices embodying equity. According to Scheurich and Skrla (2003), “The success of our society will soon be directly dependent on our ability as educators to be successful with children of color, with whom we have not been very successful in the past” (p.5). These alarming gaps challenge us to dig deeper inside the schools for more subtle causes. Scott (2001) calls these internal causes of inequity systemic inequities because they are built systematically into the processes and procedures of the system that is the school. A school culture that perpetuates the status quo and turns a blind eye to the social injustices that permeate our schools is not really “excellent.” As such, excellence and equity must be pursued concurrently to assure that all students are served well and that all are encouraged to perform at their highest level. Excellence without equity is not excellence—it is hypocrisy. Phase Two of this research was needed to document the specific strategies that principals of “excellent, equitable schools” use to confront and change past practices anchored in open and residual racism and class discrimination.
CHAPTER 5
QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The data from this study were analyzed using the framework of collective efficacy (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000, 2004). Collective efficacy is defined as, “the judgment of teachers in a school that the faculty as a whole can organize and execute the courses of action required to have a positive effect on students” (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2004, p.4). Collective efficacy is important to this study as research has shown a positive correlation between the collective efficacy of the school and school achievement (Hoy, Sweetland, & Smith, 2002). More importantly, the authors found that collective efficacy was more important than socioeconomic factors in explaining school achievement. As such, this framework is useful in exploring how principals of K-5 public “Honor Schools of Excellence” are pursuing, supporting and advancing social justice, excellence, and systemic equity.

Using collective efficacy as a framework, the data are organized into the four components of collective efficacy: mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and affective states. Within each of the four components, several themes emerged. These themes are specifically explained as they relate to both small gap and large gap schools. See Tables 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3 for a summary and verification of findings. For each of the sixteen schools, findings were characterized as Strong (S), Moderate (M), None (0), or Negative (N). Findings were delineated based upon quantity
Table 5.1: Collective Efficacy Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collective Efficacy Framework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mastery Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Principals Helping Teachers Achieve Success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers Helping Students Achieve Success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicarious Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learning Through Staff Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learning Through Observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Persuasion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Not a Bunch of Independent Contractors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Feedback on Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Verbal Persuasion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Caring About Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Caring About Students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and degree across multiple interviews. Schools were characterized as strong, for instance, if three or more interviewees in the respective school spoke in depth with regard to a particular sub-theme. Anything less, however, was marked as moderate, while schools that made no mention of a sub-theme were marked as none. A negative ranking was reserved for data that refuted the sub-themes. While these sub-themes apply to both small gap and large gap schools, it is important for the reader to note the differences in application that are highlighted in the following analysis and highlighted in Chapter Six.
5.2: Template Analysis of Small Gap Schools (SGS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COLLECTIVE EFFICACY IN SMALL GAP SCHOOLS</th>
<th>SGS 1</th>
<th>SGS 2</th>
<th>SGS 3</th>
<th>SGS 4</th>
<th>SGS 5</th>
<th>SGS 6</th>
<th>SGS 7</th>
<th>SGS 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Mastery Experience**

- Principals Helping Teachers Achieve Success
  - S  S  S  0  S  M  M  S

- Teachers Helping Students Achieve Success
  - S  S  M  M  S  S  S  S

**Vicarious Experience**

- Learning Through Staff Development
  - 0  M  0  M  M  M  O  O

- Learning Through Observation
  - 0  0  M  0  0  M  0  0

**Social Persuasion**

- Not a Bunch of Independent Contractors
  - S  M  M  M  S  M  M  M

- Feedback on Instruction
  - S  M  M  0  S  M  M  M

- Verbal Persuasion
  - M  M  S  M  S  S  M  S

**Affective State**

- Caring About Teachers
  - M  S  S  S  M  S  S  S

- Caring About Students
  - M  S  M  S  M  S  S  S

S = Strong  M = Moderate  0 = No Evidence  N = Negative Evidence
Table 5.3: Template Analysis of Large Gap Schools (LGS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COLLECTIVE EFFICACY</th>
<th>LGS 1</th>
<th>LGS 2</th>
<th>LGS 3</th>
<th>LGS 4</th>
<th>LGS 5</th>
<th>LGS 6</th>
<th>LGS 7</th>
<th>LGS 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IN LARGE GAP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCHOOLS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mastery Experience**
- Principals Helping Teachers Achieve Success
  - LGS: M M M 0 0 0 M 0
- Teachers Helping Students Achieve Success
  - LGS: S 0 0 M 0 0 M 0

**Vicarious Experience**
- Learning Through Staff Development
  - LGS: 0 0 0 S 0 0 M 0
- Learning Through Observation
  - LGS: 0 M M S 0 0 M 0

**Social Persuasion**
- Not a Bunch of Independent Contractors
  - LGS: S S S M S M M M
- Feedback on Instruction
  - LGS: N N N 0 M N S N
- Verbal Persuasion
  - LGS: M M M 0 M 0 S 0

**Affective State**
- Caring About Teachers
  - LGS: M S S S S S S S
- Caring About Students
  - LGS: M S M S S S S S

*S = Strong    M = Moderate    0 = No Evidence    N = Negative Evidence*
Mastery Experience

The first component of collective efficacy is mastery experience. To review, master experience is the notion that, when a person or group perceives that a performance has been successful, efficacy beliefs tend to increase (Goddard, Hoy, Woolfolk Hoy, 2004). In both the small and large gap schools, mastery experience surfaced in teachers and students. For students, it was important that they experienced academic success. For teachers, it was important that they planned and implemented successful lessons. As such, two themes emerged. First, principals helped teachers experience success in the classroom through instructional leadership. Second, teachers helped students experience success in the classroom through individualization.

Principals Helping Teachers Achieve Success

Small Gap Schools

In examining small gap schools as a group, five of the principals demonstrated strong levels of helping teachers achieve success in the classroom. Of the three remaining principals, two principals showed moderate levels and one principal did not provide any evidence of helping teachers achieve success in the classroom.

For the principals who consistently helped teachers achieve mastery experience, they were first clear on, “what I think good instruction looks like” (SGS2-P). Although good instruction might have looked different for each of the principals, they all shared their vision of good instruction. For example, good instruction for the principal of SGS2 looked like this:

I walked into the classroom, and it was completely dark. The shades are turned down, and it’s dark in the room, and as my eyes were adjusting, I see all these sleeping bags. I see sleeping bags all around the room, and everybody lying down
like this. And I see this little flashlight that is passed from student to student and they’re reading their story. That’s instruction. (SGS2-P)

The principal of SGS1 was able to articulate that her vision of good instruction was also student-centered as opposed to teacher-centered. She looked for:

Are the children engaged, that groups are going on, that it’s not teacher driven from in front of the classroom, but that it’s student centered in that they are active learners and as engaged in the process that’s occurring as the teacher is. (SGS1-P)

Being able to communicate this vision of good instruction was the first key to helping teachers achieve success in the classroom. At a simple level, a teacher cannot rise to the principal’s expectations if the expectations are not clearly stated. In addition to setting the vision, the principals in these small gap schools consistently demonstrated knowledge of best practices in curriculum and pedagogy. For example, the principals of SGS3 and SGS5 talked about the need for teachers to be involved in curriculum mapping. The principal of SGS3 explained how the map was a working document that was constantly modified and redistributed.

We also did our critical mapping … And the other thing that we do that I think is really good, is if we make changes in the map, those changes are made in red, on the map … So our curriculum map gets updated every year, and we’re constantly tweaking it and making it better, and changes in the curriculum, all those changers are made, and then at the very beginning of the year everybody in this building gets a notebook, so everybody knows what everybody else is doing. (SGS3-P)

The administration at SGS8 focused on vertical teaming and consistent standards-based grading throughout the grade levels. In the words of the assistant principal:

Articulation … she’s big on making sure that from one grade level to the next, that the skills and the objectives are aligned … Today, the school’s engaged in looking at standards-based grading to make sure there is consistency across the grade levels, but more than that they are interested in vertical teaming. (SGS8-AP)
Throughout the interviews, different best practices in curriculum and pedagogy emerged. Some schools focused on vertical teaming, others on curriculum mapping, while others focused on student-centered instructional approaches. The specific type of instructional strategy was not as important as the fact that these principals were knowledgeable about different instructional strategies. The commonality was that the participants in these schools talked a lot about supporting teachers and best practices.

It should be noted that one small gap school, SGS4, did not demonstrate any level of helping teachers in the classroom. To the principal’s acknowledgement, “I give teachers leeway to be professional in terms of how they teach that, and then I really … sometimes I worry that I might be a little too lax with that … I’m not going to tell them how to teach” (SGS4-P).

*Large Gap Schools*

In comparison to the small gap schools, principals of large gap schools as a whole provided less evidence of helping teachers achieve success in the classroom. Four of the principals demonstrated moderate levels, while the other four principals did not talk about helping teachers at all.

One of the principals helped teachers by communicating to the parents that she protects instructional time.

We don’t do holiday celebrations … the parents had a hard time with that when we opened. We’re about learning. You know, these people that work here, they’re professionals—reading, writing, math, science—you don’t want them doing birthday parties. You all can do that. (LGS3-P)

The protection of instructional time was a first step. However, she had a broad vision of what good instruction looks like. The staff at this school only stated that they were expected to teach the curriculum. Many other large gap schools stated the same
thing in that they were merely expected to teach the objectives in the Standard Course of Study. These principals struggled to explain any clear vision of instruction other than an expectation to teach the curriculum. They almost seemed uncomfortable when the topic of curriculum was raised. They paused more often and used unclear expressions like “um, you know, and whatnot.” Examples include the following.

For the curriculum, um, I guess what we are looking for is those … of course I mean when you look at the Standard Course of Study the state sets the goals and objectives and our job is to provide an instructional program that supports those goals and objectives. (LGS1-P)

Basically, we want to make sure that we are following the Standard Course of Study and using our pacing guides. Every year we make sure our grade level is updated, as well as specialists so we can tweak it if need be and continue to follow it so that by the time we get to the end of the year we know we have covered it. (LGS2-AP)

We expect them to follow the Standard Course of Study you know, but also to do what they have to for the children. You know? Teachers do a lot of hands-on and whatnot. We try to, well, like I said, we try to get them what they need. (LGS5-AP)

The absence of a clear vision of good instruction emerged in the data on large gap schools. Another common thread was principals acknowledging a lack of helping teachers achieve success in the classroom. The following quotes are indicative of a lack of instructional leadership:

This is an area that I have honestly delegated more to my Instructional Resource Teacher and my Assistant Principal, because I don’t have a background in elementary teaching. (LGS4-P)

Well, curriculum our Instructional Resource Teacher, her main role is to support the classroom teachers. (LSG5-P)

She (the IRT) really does wonderful things for people like me, because I don’t have to be that up-to-date (on curriculum). (LGS6-P)

I think it’s laid back, which is good for me. She does not get on top of running your classroom. (LGS6-NT)
I’m not on the school improvement plan … this is not about what I want, this is about what you want. (LGS8-P)

These quotes also indicate a tendency of the principals to quickly delegate the role of instructional leadership and supporting teachers in the classroom to another member of their staff.

In general the principals in the small gap schools demonstrated a consistent focus on helping teachers achieve success in the classroom. This focus showed in the communication of a specific vision for instruction. Although the vision varied, it was clear and student-focused. In contrast, the principals of large gap schools lacked a clear vision for instruction and often expected teachers to merely teach the Standard Course of Study. The principals of small gap schools often referred to their own lack of instructional leadership and their propensity to delegate it to other staff members.

**Teachers Helping Students Achieve Success**

*Small Gap Schools*

As one principal in this study stated, “I don’t think it’s right to talk about kids in groups because I don’t think it matters what group you’re in if you’re not achieving. You’re not achieving as an individual” (SGS7-P). The principals and other staff members of small gap schools consistently focused on the achievement of individual students as opposed to merely stopping at subgroups of students. Or as one principal stated, “You have to look at every group that comes to the school, but then you have to look beyond the groups at individuals to see what individuals accomplish” (SGS1-P). This consistent focus on individual students achieving success in the classroom was a significant difference between small and large gap schools.
Using the same scale of strong, moderate, and no occurrences of data, all of the small gap schools showed either strong or moderate amounts of individualization. Specifically, six schools showed strong amounts and two schools showed moderate amounts. Schools seem to look at individualization via the use of student data. Examples include the following. Of particular note to this study is the last example where one of the teachers specifically pushes students of varying backgrounds to show growth.

They give special attention to your children … if your child has a problem, they’re going to let you know it. They just seem so willing to work with each individual child. (SGS4-PL)

Pinpointing kids and saying, “Now look at this kid. How are they doing? And what can we do to help them?” (SGS6-AP)

We’re looking for each child, regardless of what their background is, to show growth, and that would be academically and emotionally and you know interactive, socially, across the divide. (SGS4-ET)

As one principal stated, focusing on the needs of individual students often comes at the expense of the convenience of staff members, “The child comes first no matter what. That’s why we’re here, so as long as we continue to focus on student success … I feel like we’re going in the right direction … I have no problem putting aside your needs or my needs or anybody else’s, as the students come first” (SGS5-P).

Two schools were more specific in how they looked at each student individually. One school remarked how its principal looked at every child’s reading level by getting their teachers to turn in a monthly report on each child’s reading progress” (SGS1-AP). An experienced teacher at another school noted how her principal, “looks at every student on every grade level when she sits in her office and goes through those things” (SGS6-ET).
Any educator can talk about treating students as individuals. It actually has become cliché. What is remarkable about most of these small gap schools is how they respond to individual students with specific strategies. For example at SGS5, before the writing test, the IRT will take the students who are struggling, “out of our classroom individually or in pairs and go and sit with them and help them with their writing and critiquing and making suggestions and everything” (SGS5-ET). This type of individual support for struggling students consistently emerged in the interviews with small gap schools. A different school had an accelerated learning program both during school and after school where the students were provided with individual tutors (SGS6-ET). SGS7 does something similar where each day students either go to remediation or enrichment based on their mastery of skills. All of these strategies ensure that students don’t “fall through the cracks” (SGS8-P).

Large Gap Schools

In stark contrast to the small gap schools, large gap schools seemed to focus on individual students significantly less. Only LGS1 demonstrated strong amounts of individualization. Of the remaining schools, two showed moderate amounts of individualization and five schools showed almost no focus on individualizing for students.

When the schools did mention individualization, it was in isolated or general terms like this one teacher from LGS1, “It’s individualized. My instruction is how you individualize. I have children come to me as non-readers and some very proficient readers, you know some second and third grade levels and some even higher. I assess them and start with where they are and where they need to go. Same with writing
instruction, everybody is writing, but they are writing on their own individual levels” (LGS1-ET). A few other general comments about individualization were made.

Oh, I think that every child is looked at individually, and worked with, you know, if they need to be, you know, a different way, or a more individual, to get everybody up to speed, and in learning, and I think the teachers and you know everybody looks at that. (LGS4-PL)

At each differentiation you’ve got to know where they are, and just kind of know exactly the next level to keep them challenged and keep them right there on the edge, and that’s easy to say and very hard to do when you sometimes have 22 and they’re all at a different edge (LGS3-P)

Although these schools mentioned individualization, the key component that is missing is the reference to specific strategies. One of the few staff members at a large gap school to point out something specific was the principal of LGS5. That principal looked at reading scores and noted the specific students who weren’t passing their End-of-Grade tests and “started looking at making sure that those students had tutors, that parents volunteered to tutor a student, that’s who we assigned them to so they could be pulled out one-on-one” (LGS5-P).

In addition to the lack of specific strategies mentioned by large gap schools, three of the schools made comments that were clearly anti-individualization. For example, one participant stated to a teacher at the school, “We are seeing that your black pupils are not doing well and this is the second year or third year” (LGS2-AP). This may sound like encouraging rhetoric in addressing the achievement gap. However, going back to what one of the principals from the small gap schools stated, “They are not achieving as individuals.” We need to go beyond subgroups of students.

The assistant principal at LGS8 allocated resources based on a group of second graders when the school “targeted every 2nd grader in the school” for FastForward (a
remedial reading program). Once again, the resources are intended for a group of
students instead of individual students. It would be reasonable to assume that not every
2nd grader needed help in reading.

Yet another participant of a large gap school noted the absence of a coordinated
effort to focus on individual students when she talked about how one of her former
schools did a lot with data notebooks and student-led conferencing and communicating
with students about their individual level of performance and goal setting. She noted
that, “There are a couple of classes here … but it’s not something that’s particularly
widespread” (LGS5-AP).

In comparing mastery experience in small gap and large gap schools, several
differences emerged throughout the data. Principals of small gap schools tended to be
more articulate about communicating their specific vision of good instruction. Their
visions were different, but they were well communicated. Principals of large gap
schools, however, had a much more general vision of good instruction. Many times, it
did not go beyond the expectation that teachers follow the Standard Course of Study.
Differences in the small gap schools and large gap schools were also documented in
relation to a focus on individual children. The small gap schools were more likely to
look at individual student data and respond with specific strategies to address individual
areas of need. In contrast, the large gap schools were not as individualized and looked at
groups of students instead. Their use of strategies was also more focused on small to
large groups of students instead of individual students. These differences in mastery
experience are significant in that mastery experience is the largest predictor of overall
collective efficacy (Britner & Pajares, 2006).
Vicarious Experience

Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk Hoy’s (2004) second source of collective efficacy is vicarious experience. The authors state that vicarious experience exists “when a model with whom the observer identifies performs well” (p.5). In other words, when one person sees another person succeed, their efficacy beliefs tend to rise because they also feel like they can be successful. Interestingly, this source of collective efficacy was barely mentioned across the interviews. Of the sixteen schools, seven schools didn’t mention it at all, and in eight schools, it was only mentioned moderately. The only school where vicarious experience was mentioned with any regularity was LGS4. This school is explained in detail towards the end of the section.

It was notable that these schools mentioned vicarious experiences so infrequently. Possible reasons may include the difficulty of structuring ways in which teachers can observe their peers. This model of staff development takes extra human resources since substitute staff will have to cover for the teacher who is doing the observing. Despite efforts over the last few years, teaching remains a relatively private practice with teachers often reluctant to open their rooms to observers. This private nature of teachers may have also limited the use of vicarious experiences in schools. In terms of staff development offered through large group presentations, the size of the district and the abundance of resources might have also limited the use of vicarious experiences. This district has a staff development department that will travel to schools to present. As a result, it is easy to call the district and request training on a myriad of topics. An unintended consequence of this resource is that schools may not look to the expertise of their own staff.
A final potential reason why vicarious experiences were not mentioned consistently throughout the data might be due to the nature of the interview process. The 80 interviews were conducted by a team of four researchers. As such, they were semi-structured to maintain consistency. Due to the structure, the interviewers may not have probed much beyond the original question that asked about staff development in general terms. Regardless of the reason, vicarious experiences just were not consistently present in the data. The few times that vicarious experiences were noted, it was noted in terms of either staff development or peer observations. The next section describes the limited data on vicarious experiences in the small and large gap schools.

Learning through Staff Development

Small Gap Schools

In terms of staff development, vicarious experience began with the principal just showing up. Several participants believed that when staff members saw their principal attending and participating in staff development opportunities, it communicated to the staff that the staff development opportunity was important. Two staff members commented on that importance.

I think when I attend a workshop that says to the staff that I think learning is important. If I participate, and I sit side by side with them and learn with them in staff development here at our school . . . I know a lot of administrators, you know they’ll have staff development at the school and they’ll go back to their office. Well, no, that’s not the answer. (SGS2-P)

She attends almost all staff development that’s done here at school. We have early release days, where the kids leave at 12:30, and then we have staff development in the afternoon. She attends every single one of those, because her belief is if we’re going to have to go through the staff development, then she needs to go through it too, so when she walks in our classroom she can have a feel of what we’re expected to be doing. (SGS5-ET)
It is interesting how the experienced teacher from SGS5 tied her principal’s presence at staff development to instructional feedback. In order for a principal to be an instructional leader and provide teachers with specific feedback, they have to not only know the curriculum but also understand the instructional methods that teachers use to ensure students are learning. It is significant that the staff members of this school also talked about the principal as an instructional leader who provides all teachers with feedback and recommendations.

Another way to include vicarious experiences in staff development is to have teachers and other staff members lead the training. This is related to the concept of vicarious experiences because the group is better able to identify with the presenter since it is someone from their own school. Two schools incorporated this type of modeling in their staff development.

We’re seen as leaders, and she told the staff to find out who the staff sees as leaders, rather than who she sees as leaders. And from that you know (she) found the subset of people that their peers see as someone who has leadership potential. And part of that is that she has pulled people within the staff to do the staff development. (SGS4-ET)

And she provides money outside for us to go as a team, or for two or three of us to go to a reading or a writing or a math workshop that’s going to be important to us to bring back to present to the staff. (SGS6-ET)

In these cases, it is not necessarily important who leads the staff development. The significance to vicarious experience is that it is someone in the building, with whom the staff can identify, that leads the session. This is one example of how teachers can learn from each other. One example was also noted in the large gap schools.

*Large Gap Schools*

The small gap schools explained internal staff development in terms of teachers
learning from other teachers. The one example that was noted in the large gap schools talked about administrators leading staff development. Although different than teachers, it is still a good example of vicarious experiences since teachers also identify with their administrators in the building.

(Our administrators) actually went and they were trained in (poverty awareness) themselves, and they presented it to the staff at LGS7, which I think it was … because I know that there are other schools that have had that training and they’ve had outside trainers come in. But I think the idea that the message was coming from our own leaders is pretty powerful. (LGS7-ET)

Learning through Observation

Small Gap Schools

Teachers in small gap schools also learned from each other by observing each other’s classrooms. When one peer can observe another peer being successful, the peer who observes can experience the success vicariously. This vicarious success increases the belief of the teacher that he or she can be effective, which leads to an increase in collective efficacy. In both cases, these experiences were provided for new teachers who were struggling.

She would provide support for that teacher and let that person go and observe another teacher that does it in a really great way, and provide a substitute teacher to watch her class so that she could have the time to go and see a person who did it in a really great way. I know she’s put people in here to do that, so that somebody could get … you know new teachers are people who need help learning … it’s always a learning experience. (SGS6-ET)

The other thing that I do is that I try to get her out to see what other teachers are doing. I think the best learning experience for teachers is to see how other teachers teach. And it may be somebody else in the county, but we have such excellent teachers here. The one thing we do offer all of our teachers anytime you want to go see another teacher on your grade level or in this building teach, all you have to do is to ask, and we’ll cover for you to do that. And we encourage that. (SGS3-P)
A new teacher in the same school echoed her principal’s comments and noted how important it was to watch other teachers teach, “And I know at the beginning it was a real struggle for me with guided reading, and they let me have my teacher assistant cover my class for forty-five minutes while I went and watched another teacher do guided reading” (SGS3-NT).

Large Gap Schools

Participants of three of the large gap schools also mentioned learning from their peers by observing classrooms.

You’ve got to have teachers in those buildings that are not assigned to classrooms who can go in and co-teach and model, so that everyone’s feeling success in what they’re doing … When that IRT is in that classroom, that accelerated learning teacher is in that classroom, and they can see the work that they are doing, and it’s evident what they’re doing, it makes a huge difference. (LGS7-P)

If you needed her (the principal) to come in and model a guided reading lesson, she was there for you. (LGS7-NT)

Just providing that staff development and giving them that option to go off campus if they need something. We have used staff development money for them to go to other schools to observe teaching particularly writing just so they can become stronger and that helps. (LGS2-AP)

Ey, you’re worried about this, then go see this teacher. If you’re worried about this, have you talked to this one? So keeping that eye on resources that are available. (LGS3-AP)

Although professional development opportunities and learning from others have been explained as two ways in which vicarious experiences emerged in the data, it is essential to remember that very few schools in the study mentioned vicarious experiences. When they were mentioned, it was only sporadically. These preceding data are not a representation of other uses of vicarious experience in the study; they are the only data on vicarious experience that was found in the study. Before concluding the
section on vicarious experience, LGS4 offers a strong model for infusing vicarious experiences into the school environment. It is strong because, unlike any other school in the study, every participant from LGS4 mentioned the use of vicarious experiences.

It starts with the principal who, “believe(s) very strongly in modeling. You’ve got to model from the top what you’re asking people to do” (LGS4-P). The assistant principal described a systemic process they are beginning to use to ensure that vicarious learning experiences through modeling is the norm:

We’re setting up a system where teachers do walk-through observations in each other’s classrooms … so practice is less private … and teachers can learn from each other. (LGS4-AP)

The system must be working in that other staff members in this school mentioned the various ways that vicarious learning experiences occur in their school. An experienced teacher in that school noted that the principal is “a big supporter of ILTs and making sure that they’re in other classrooms and get a chance to observe.” The new teacher at that school described how she was able to see another teacher leading Writer’s Workshop. SGS4-NT also mentioned a schedule where teachers are observing other teachers on a consistent basis. She added, “I’ve watched Jennifer on tape before.” Once again, this school is the exception to the norm in this study. They have also only seemed to have begun this systemic focus on vicarious learning experiences. It would be interesting to see if they are able to reduce the achievement gap in their school in the next couple of years.

Social Persuasion

The second component of collective efficacy is social persuasion. Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk Hoy (2004) explain that social persuasion consists of collaboration,
encouragement, specific performance feedback, or conversations that take place among staff and/or community members. Throughout the interview data, examples of social persuasion were found significantly more times than any other component of collective efficacy. Three themes in this section emerged. Schools worked together instead of acting like a bunch of independent contractors. In addition, principals provided feedback on instruction, and lastly, staff members spoke the language of collective efficacy through verbal persuasion.

*Not a Bunch of Independent Contractors*

In order to introduce the first theme under social persuasion, it might be easier to state what it is not. As the assistant principal at LGS4 stated, “It’s not a collection of independent contractors in the building.” All schools in this study collaborated to make curricular and procedural decisions that impacted either their grade-level or entire school. The staff members at all of the schools also collaborated to make hiring decisions. Sometimes they collaborated simply to support each other. At times, these groups could be as small as two or three teachers, and at times, larger groups worked together to make decisions that impacted the entire school. When schools excelled at collaborating, they even included parents and community members. Regardless of the context, both small-gap and large-gap schools made decisions collaboratively, with subtle differences between them.

*Small Gap Schools*

As one principal put it, “We do not make decisions in isolation. We really get teachers involved, our leadership team. We really sit down and we really talk about it and get the team feeling at grade level as well as whole school” (SGS3-P). Although
collaborative decision making appears to be the current norm in education, one principal’s response indicates it is important to note that it may not be as prevalent as it appears.

I’m really big into shared decision making. And that was something that was new for the staff too. In fact we kind of laughed. Our first leadership meeting, we were doing kind of round table, and having folks interact and share, and they all just kind of (said), ‘we never spoke before at a leadership meeting’ (SGS4-P)

The principals of SGS3 and SGS4 mentioned leadership teams. These groups typically consist of the principal and a group of teachers from different grade-levels or departments. They meet periodically (some once a month, some multiple times throughout the month) to discuss decisions that impact the entire school. These groups were most effective when they focused on issues that impacted student learning. A new teacher described how the leadership team at her school used collaboration, experience, data, and research to convince their principal to give anthology textbooks more consideration.

Even though at first she was totally against it (anthologies), she took into account our views and how we felt as a teacher … so it was great to see you know her taking into consideration to look at the anthology, and her look through it and her talking to people and doing research. (SGS3-NT)

In the end, this type of social persuasion benefited the entire school in that it led to a more balanced literacy program where teachers used the anthologies in conjunction with the leveled bookroom that the principal wanted to use as the only literacy strategy.

These leadership teams are an easy way to ensure collaboration because the principal sets the dates and attends the meetings. When teachers collaborate in small like-subject or grade-level teams, the principal is not often present. As a result, there could be a tendency for these smaller teams either not to meet, or to meet and not focus
on students. However, the participants in this study described productive Professional Learning Community meetings where instruction and student learning was the focus.

There is a real emphasis on collaboration and pinpointing so our teams plan together at least twice a week, and in that planning we recognize that every teacher won’t be doing the same thing in the same way, but they’re talking about instruction, they’re talking about lesson plans, and they’re talking about student achievement, and they’re looking for ways to help each other be successful, and to share resources, but everybody is not having to do the same work alone, because we share the instructional planning and we share looking for resources, and we share looking at assessments, then you can build on every thing. (SGS1-P)

I provide for them, and I’ve started doing it this year going to other schools a day of planning outside of the regular work day, one a quarter. And I do that for them to really lay out everything they’re going to do that quarter. (SGS3-P)

So they know that they can take a half-day as a team to sit down and do some planning, and we’ve figured out about how much that would cost us substitute-wise and have the PTA fund it this year. (SGS2-P)

And with planning we do once a week, every morning for an hour we plan in the morning as a team, and we get together and have a meeting … we’re all on the same page … we plan writing and reading. (SGS3-NT)

We collaborate on ideas and strategies that teachers can use in the classroom to make sure that those kids are learning and they are getting what they need on their level. (SGS8-NT)

A common thread that is present throughout all of these responses is that time is provided and scheduled during the school day, outside of the school day, or a combination of both. During this time, learning communities are planning writing and reading, analyzing assessments, and looking for ways to help each other be successful. In the following response, however, sometimes a learning community realizes they need to go beyond their small group for more help. One principal describes how his teachers came to him for more support.

So they came to me and they said through our conversations we realized we are not really doing a great job with teaching problem solving, can you help us? To me my eyes just lit up because that’s the power in what a professional learning
community is, is that people analyze their own needs … you know I went and did the research and called and we’ve got a staff development coming in here starting to do a problem solving staff development. (SGS7-P)

In this example, the principal has to be approachable and non-judgmental and the staff has to be willing to ask for help when they need it.

Some of the schools went beyond their organizations to include parents and community members as part of their organizations.

We came in pretty low on our writing assignment. So immediately there was a task force put in place to address the issue, how are we going to resolve this problem? We got the PTA involved in it, and asked for parent volunteers to come in and be trained. (SGS3-PL)

We do a science day with the professors at State who come and a different classroom is set up with different things with the professors in the science department at State, and they do something. We reach out into the community from the museums and they bring in, I call it “Creature Features” on my website, where the person has come in from the museum with different animals, and let kids see chinchillas and pet them. (SGS6-ET)

Whether the learning community in these schools included a small group of grade-level teachers, a larger group of staff members, or parents and community members, collaboration and shared-decision making were common threads in all of the schools in the study.

Another way members of the school collaborated was during the hiring process. The participants in this study consistently stated that just like other decisions in the school, the hiring of future staff members is a collaborative process.

What we do is interview as a team. So whoever or whatever grade level we’re interviewing for, that grade level participates in the interview. (SGS4-P)

Even when we had a year and a half ago to hire an assistant principal, you know, we used a team. You know, I interviewed first of all the folks that came in, and then dwindled it down to 4 or 5 people and then we had some team interviews, and I really took into consideration what they had to say, and what they were needing, it felt like we were needing at this school. (SGS5-P)
In these instances, the social persuasion is the interaction between the staff members who are conducting the interview. These principals value the input of their staff members. In addition to the input of the staff members, there is an aspect of social persuasion in the interaction between the interview team and the candidate. Two principals described this social persuasion.

The staff on the whole is happy here, they feel productive, and I think they feel valued. I think that they are some of our best recruiters in the school, because when we have openings, they help us recruit, and when people go to our website or check out our school, it it’s what they’re interested in, they want to come talk to us. We interview through teams. The team that has the opening is a part of the interview staff, and usually when somebody comes in and meets the team, the thing that they pick up on is the energy of and the ability of the teachers sitting in on the interview, and they want to be a part of that. (SGS1-P)

I think the key to that is to involve the staff in the hiring process. We’ve got, for instance, today we’ve got a 1st grade interview, and we’ll have two of our 1st grade (teachers) on that team, and I tell every candidate who comes in that this is a two-way interview. (SGS2-P)

These principals are smart to note that the process is a “two-way interview,” and candidates will “pick up on the energy of and the ability of the teachers sitting in on the interview” (SGS1-P). This is the school’s first opportunity to communicate their sense of collective efficacy through social persuasion. Once the candidate is chosen, the participants in this study also pointed to supporting teachers in their first years of teaching.

The shortage of teachers and the decreasing teacher retention rate is well documented. Teacher retention is also the lowest for teachers in their beginning years of teaching. Most of the principals in this study quickly pointed to their staff as the reason the school was an Honor School of Excellence. As the principal of SGS-3 stated, “We have been a School of Excellence every year we’ve been open, and I think the key to all
that has been we have focused on bringing the best staff members we could possibly find into this building.” The principal of SGS-8 agrees when she says, “We have some great teachers who are very passionate about what they do and truly believe that every kid can learn.” Most principals pointed to the importance of supporting teachers in their beginning years of teaching.

He has supported the first, second and third year teachers the best of any principal we’ve had. And I think that speaks a lot for him, and it also helps us retain teachers, because if you lose them those first few years, they’re never going to walk back in classroom. (SGS2-ET)

I meet with all the new teachers once a month and we call it our principal’s round table to answer any questions that they may have and help them with any of their concerns. (SGS8-P)

You know early on when you get a young teacher it’s important to pair them up with a buddy and mentor, and what we found is two different things there. The buddy and mentor are not always the same person. A lot of times the mentor overrides her and the buddy is just someone they can go out with on Friday night and vent with. (SGS4-P)

In addition to supporting new teachers, several teachers pointed to the importance of supporting all teachers.

I think it is the support from administration and the morale they create here. It’s more of a team versus I’m up here and you’re up here. I feel like we are all involved, our input is asked when decisions need to be made … and we’re just like one big family. (SGS3-ET)

I think when you treat them as professionals with respect, that tends to be always very high on the list for my teachers to say that they appreciate it as a professional. That’s how you retain them. And make them feel that they’ve got support, that they’re not out there on their own. (SGS6-P)

Principals can be supportive in different ways. Some may meet individually with teachers, whereas some may pair teachers up with key staff members who serve as mentors or buddies. Some may create positive morale through collaboration and reducing the hierarchy, whereas others respectfully treat staff as professionals.
Regardless of how principals show support, it is clear that teachers point to a supportive
principal as a key step in teacher retention.

Throughout the data collected from small gap schools, it is clear that all of these
schools consistently worked together to make decisions that impacted the entire school.
They collaborated as leadership teams, smaller grade-level teams, and hiring teams.
Through collaboration, they also supported each other. This collaborative culture was
also present in the large gap schools, with a few exceptions.

Large Gap Schools

As one principal stated, the general culture in the large gap schools is also one of
collaboration, just like the small gap schools. “You can’t teach in isolation, you can’t do
that. I mean you can try, but if that’s the mindset that you have in a classroom I don’t
think you are going to be very successful” (LGS1-P). Another principal echoed similar
sentiments by saying, “Working together, listening and allowing folks to bring new ideas
to the table because I think that is how we all learn and grow best is when we can all
share. I like to empower my teachers” (LGS2-P). Similar to the small gap schools, most
of the large gap schools make school-wide decisions through their leadership teams, as
evidenced by the following comments from three different large gap schools:

He’s (her grade-level chair) on the leadership committee with all the other grade
chairs, and then the principal and the assistant principal, and they discuss the big
issues, the curriculum issues, the school issues, and then he brings them back to
us at our grade-level meeting once a week. (LGS3-NT)

That’s our main decision making body. We take feedback from our team and
meet as a leadership team, each of the grade chairs, and along with those grade
chairs we have our IRT in there, our assistant principal and principal… how is it
going to best suit students because that’s always our focus. It’s the students. It’s
not about “Well, this schedule would work better for me. I really want this
schedule. No, it’s what’s going to work best for the students. (LGS4-ET)
We have a leadership team, and we have team members rotating on and off of that each year, but we try to run most decisions through the leadership team. If we’re talking about things that are more relevant to a specific grade level, then we try to involve all the teachers at that grade level. (LGS5-P)

In addition to this leadership team, the large gap schools also utilize smaller grade-level teams to plan instruction. Two large-gap schools used their grade-level teams to address some writing curriculum and assessment:

First grade has gone through the writing curriculum and they have established an incredibly sufficient benchmark for the end of each quarter where they want them to be and what it looks like. It’s much more detailed than the rubric that you might see in the county … so that’s one of the things that they have been doing as part of their professional learning communities. (LGS1-AP)

We pulled in all the 4th and 5th grade teachers, got coverage for them, and used that whole afternoon to you know number the papers and put them in folders and actually sit and pour and use the rubric and understand what was accepted, and then we even graphed and targeted it and put it on the chalkboard. (LGS5-P)

Two other large gap schools mentioned a focus on creating collaborative grade-level teams as well, while the other four large gap schools did not mention grade-level or smaller professional learning communities.

I’m team lead, so my goal for my team and myself professionally is to create a collaborative community, make sure that we’re working together to reach the same end point. (LGS4-ET)

We are trying to form more coherent and more cohesive professional learning communities so that we can examine the data and make sure that the curriculum is covered accurately. (LGS2-P)

Like the small gap schools, some of the large gap schools went beyond the staff in the building to involve parents and community members. One school used students from NC State to help spark students’ interest in science. The assistant principal at that school stated how, “We have math and science night, where we invite the parents to come in and we have students come in from State to kind of guide the students through math activities
and science activities to see how interesting they are and to get them excited about that’’
(LGS1-AP). A parent explained how the principal of her school uses the (PTA) as a
representation of the parents. She uses them for feedback, so she will usually say,
“Here’s the data, and here’s my presentation. I’m going to put it in front of you. When
I’m done, criticize it. Tell me what you think. Tell me how I can make this better. Then
she takes it in front of the general population” (LGS8-PL).

Like small gap schools, large gap schools tended to hire using interview teams.
There were, however, a few differences. In small gap schools, six of the eight schools
mentioned hiring as a collaborative team. In the other two schools, hiring just did not
come up. In the large gap schools, collaborative hiring practices did not come up as often
and in several instances it was clearly stated that some schools did not use a hiring team.
The principal and/or assistant principal made all hiring decisions without teacher input.

For the large gap schools that did use hiring teams, they were similar to the small
gap schools. As one of the new teachers at LGS3 mentioned, “She (her principal) makes
us part of the interview process, which is neat, because you know, everybody looks at
something different, and a lot of people pick up on different things” (LGS3-NT). The
assistant principal at the same school referred to looking for candidates who would fit in
with their collaborative culture. She explained, “We carefully screen when we hire
people, teachers are involved in the process. Are you a team player? No Lone Rangers.
There’s just not room for that here” (LGS3-AP). As this assistant principal alluded to, a
hiring team (as opposed to one person doing the hiring) sends a message to a candidate
that we aren’t looking for “Lone Rangers,” and all staff members are involved in
important decisions like hiring new staff. Other large gap schools reiterated the importance of using teams to hire:

I was just asked about a week ago to attend the (selected county’s) job fair with them. Having fresh teachers go with them I think is a good way to recruit other fresh teachers. (LGS2-NT)

Recruiting staff again I think it’s a team decision. I think you interview with the team, involve other people in making that decision. (LGS4-P)

It’s more of a group interview. So I know a lot of schools do that, but at least in the first interviews that I went to with other schools in the district. I only had a principal or maybe a couple of the administration people. But in my interview here it was he and (another staff member) and the team leader, and I know they did that with (another candidate) too. (LGS5-NT)

The new teacher in the last quotation points out the importance of having teachers (not just administrators) as part of the hiring team. In looking at the data from both the small gap and large gap schools, one notices similarities in the way both groups of schools use hiring teams. The difference is that two of the large gap schools clearly did not place importance on hiring teams. One principal stated how her decision to use a team to hire depended on timing. She explained:

It depends on the time of the year that I’m recruiting. Sometimes it’s just a management decision, where it’s July and everybody is on vacation, and I need to hire, and I’m the only one. The assistant principal isn’t even in the building that month. Other times I’ll have a team of folks to interview. (LGS7-P)

Although she seems to use hiring teams sometimes, if it were a priority to her, she would find a way to compensate teachers for serving on the hiring teams during the summer. At another school, an experienced teacher was asked if her principal used hiring committees. She responded with simply, “No, well (the assistant principal) I know does help her” (LGS8-ET). This is troubling combined with that principal’s admission that, “My interviews are real laid back. My interviews are real laid back” (LGS8-P). It is
interesting that the two schools who stated they didn’t use hiring committees are the two schools with the largest achievement gaps.

Large gap schools mentioned that collaboration also led to a general feeling of support just as the small gap schools. The types of support were similar. A common thread was that is started with the principal. As one parent leader noticed, “The biggest thing I think LGS5-P has done is just to come along side of parents, students, teachers, and making them feel like he’s partnering with them … he makes you feel like you’re part of the team as a parent, as a teacher, you know, and it’s really wonderful” (LGS5-PL). Other interviewees had similar comments about their principals:

She (the principal) has a great leadership style, in that you know that she cares, and that she’s there, and you always know that she supports you, no matter what you encounter you know that she supports you and your classroom. (LGS6-ET)

He really cares about each child, and he is always … for children, parents, or staff members, it seems like no matter how busy he is he always will take time to talk to you about whatever you want to talk to him about, if you’ve got a problem or something. He doesn’t say, “Well get with me in 3 days,” he’s a good listener. (LGS5-AP)

They’re (the administrators) there. When there’s a lunch duty that’s fallen short, they’re there to pick it up. When you need to step out of your room, and you can’t go make copies, and you see them walking down the hall, “Hey, I need to make 20 copies real quick. Here’s my number, can you do it? I mean they do it for you. (LGS4-NT)

When principals were collaborative and worked with people, whether it be by listening, letting people know they cared, or even making copies for a teacher in need, it seemed to lead to the staff as a whole collaborating in support of each other. As two staff members at LGS8 stated:

There’s just support here that I know other schools have, but I mean we believe in each other. If somebody is having a bad day, somebody is going to try and help them out. And I mean it’s just family. (LGS8-AP)
It is a place where the students and the staff and the parents all work together really cooperatively, just really well, better than any other place that I’ve worked at I think. And I think a lot of it comes from the leadership … having that attitude that that’s what we all need to do, we need to be a team together, and it’s not just one particular part of the team. It’s everybody, parents, students, and the teachers working together. (LGS8-ET)

Although there was a feeling of general support throughout the school, specific support was mentioned for newer teachers in the following ways:

I think what makes it a school of excellence is the people around us and being able to, like I can go to and having my mentor who is here to help me along the way … and the principal has also done a very good job at making me feel welcome and knowing that I can get to him whenever I need him. (LGS1-NT)

I think those teachers feel so supported, you know, so they know they’re not alone, and they say to them, “You can’t do all this the first year. You know, math, you’ll do it the best you can the first year. Just follow the descriptive, and it’ll be OK. You don’t have to be a math guru, but you need to start being the guided reading guru the first semester. (LGS3-P)

These comments were similar to the smaller gap schools who commented on the use of mentors and pairing beginning teachers with more experienced teachers.

In comparing the small and large gap schools, both groups demonstrated consistent utilization of social persuasion. Both groups consistently used leadership teams to make school-wide decisions. However, explanations from participants in the small gap schools tended to be more specific to curricular issues, whereas the large gap schools talked about making school-wide decisions in more general terms. Both groups also used smaller grade-level teams; however, these grade-level teams were absent in the data from four of the large gap schools. Hiring teams were also present in both the small and large gap schools, but they were more prevalent in the small gap schools. Regardless of the type of collaboration, it was present in both groups of schools but more consistent.
and focused on curriculum in the small gap schools. The next theme addresses the differences in instructional feedback between the small and large gap schools.

*Feedback on Instruction*

As referenced in the literature review for this study, teacher quality has a significant impact on student achievement (Felter, 2001; Ladd & Vigdor, 2006; Nye, Konstantopulos, & Hedges, 2004). Throughout the study, several participants commented on the feedback on instruction provided by administration. Differences emerged between small and large gap schools throughout the data.

*Small Gap Schools*

A significant amount of instructional feedback in the small gap schools was directed towards beginning teachers. As one beginning teacher noted, perhaps it was due to the sheer number of observations that are required of new teachers.

As an ILT I’ve had seems like 17 evaluations, observations every year, which I actually welcome, but it seems like every time she’s given me one, she’s very specific about the suggestions she has, and not just “this would be a good idea,” but “Here’s how you could do it,” and also very specific in her praise. You know, “You did this well, and this is why.” (SGS1-NT)

In addition to the amount of evaluations, this new teacher also references the importance of specific feedback for beginning teachers. This specific feedback is important for new teachers since they have the theoretical knowledge from teacher preparation programs but they have yet to experience some of the practical knowledge that comes with experience. Other participants mentioned the importance of specific feedback as well.

She spends a lot of time of evaluations. She makes really good comments about “this is something I think you need to see.” Like for example last year one of the teachers who is kind of new was teaching a reading lesson, and she said it was way too easy, and her suggestion was that once she figured out that they all knew how to do it, she should have moved on instead of teaching the same thing, you know. So she tries to give good advice about how to help them. (SGS1-AP)
If there are issues that she happens to see in your classroom, especially like with the first-year teachers, she will have that discussion with the mentor and the teacher, and how can we work together, and what can we do for you to help you in these areas. (SGS5-ET)

In conjunction with consistent and specific feedback, many participants also mentioned the importance of framing evaluations as a tool for reflection and continuous improvement, instead of a means of documenting bad performance and making teachers fearful of their jobs. This is especially important for beginning teachers who tend to be more insecure than experienced teachers who have successful experiences to draw upon.

Especially with young teachers, because they do come in really nervous about not meeting expectations, so we really work hard with teachers to let them know that we’re here to support them, not critique all the time, but to support and to give them any help that they need. (SGS3-P)

I felt very positive this being my first year. Last year whenever I would go in, I would kind of get a nervous feeling, you know … wondering what it was going to be that she would write on there, but I walked out feeling so much better, because I think she does use it as more of a learning tool, and just a way to really assess how we are teaching and what we are teaching, and that’s the proper way to do it. (SGS6-NT)

Although beginning teachers had the most opportunities to receive feedback, staff members in small gap schools also referenced specific feedback for all teachers. In these small gap schools, there seemed to be a general theme of continuous growth and improvement for all staff members. Similarly to beginning teachers, the feedback was presented in a non-threatening and supportive manner.

She (the principal) approaches evaluations in a very positive way. And she sees that as a learning experience. If there is something that needed to be … you know handled, and she would provide that teacher with support and let that person go and observe another teacher that does it in a really great way. (SGS6-ET)

Well, I think teacher evaluations are the one thing that probably is the most important thing that we do, because it is an indicator of how they’re going to (perform). It also gives us an opportunity to collaborate with teachers … it helps
us partner teachers with knowing somebody that a teacher might want to (partner
with). (SGS1-P)

Evaluations are a wonderful tool to assist with growth and any new ideas. I know
when I bring my teachers in I ask them, “Now look back on that lesson. Is there
something else that you could have done differently and if there was what would
that be and how would you have done that?” (SGS8-P)

She’s very into teachers performing best practice in the classroom. She looks for
that when she goes in. She’s not afraid on an observation to write down an area
of improvement. Actually I don’t know anybody who gets an observation that
doesn’t have some area in which they need to grow … This might be a suggestion
of how you can improve this. And I appreciate that, and I think a lot of teachers
do, because they can say, Oh, she’s not cracking the whip on me. (SGS5-ET)

Using language that refers to observations in a “very positive way,” where
principals are “collaborating with teachers” to assist them with “growth and new ideas”
instead of “cracking the whip” sets a tone of improvement instead of judgment. Another
way in which principals seemed to use observations was to prompt teachers to be
reflective.

When we go in to do observations, that’s the first thing, if I see something that’s
the least bit off, if I don’t know immediately if it’s there, I either go to the books
and look it up or I go … And so I am able to make that part of that evaluation, and
teachers know that I look at that, and sometimes I’ll ask them if I don’t know, I’ll
start to lean on, and say can you tell me where that is in the curriculum? (SGS3-P)

Obviously TPAI (a formal evaluation tool), which I don’t think is my favorite
choice, but I think sitting down there at least you’re establishing through a growth
plan, what do you do well … And in getting them into the practice of reflecting,
looking at themselves … What do I do well? What could I do to enhance myself?
(SGS2-P)

The principals of small gap schools consistently provided instructional feedback
that was supportive, fostered growth, and provided teachers with an opportunity to reflect
on their practice. Similar feedback was noted in the large gap schools; however, it was
not as consistent as the small gap schools and it was coupled with a clear lack of
feedback in some of the large gap schools.
Large Gap Schools

Unlike small gap schools, several of the participants in large gap schools mentioned a lack of specific feedback. Two schools did reference instructional feedback, but it was often broad. Two principals explained the ways in which they used feedback to help teachers.

I try not to make teachers feel like evaluation is a negative and that I’m using that to go after them. I want them to feel like if there’s a problem, we will address it in a positive manner with the focus being on improvement … If we don’t see the improvement that I feel is necessary, I don’t want people to be surprised when they come to the year-end evaluation and I say, “Well, you didn’t do a good job.” I want to have been working with them all along. (LGS4-P)

I think the role of evaluation is to provide them with some kind of meaningful feedback if we expect to help them improve. So I think it’s to help teachers, the purpose is to help teachers grow and improve. (LGS3-P)

When talking about their principal, two other participants commented on how she was specific and upfront in her expectations.

When someone is struggling, a teacher struggling and they’re … struggling. They’re having some difficulty in their classroom, she can be very direct as far as where they need to go and what needs to happen, but she’s also very supportive. Now she doesn’t do this, “I gotcha, kind of thing.” It’s like “How can I help you?” (LGS7-ET)

She would get involved when she was observing and really try to see what were the kids doing. And her big thing was time on task with the kids. Are your kids working? And she would tell you that up front before she came in. She said, “I’m counting heads. I’m trying to see who all is involved.” But she was very … she would meet with you after your observation, and make sure that you realized that wasn’t going to be in stone. Like let’s talk about this, how can we improve? (LGS7-NT)

In addition to the feedback being more consistent across all of the small gap schools, as opposed to the large gap schools, another difference emerged. The participants of the small gap schools did not mention a lack of feedback, whereas a lack of feedback was mentioned in the large gap schools. When one principal was asked what
type of role teacher evaluations played in her school, she responded by saying, “Not much of one, because you know why? I think teacher evaluation is about having the opportunity to tell teachers thank you and you’re doing a good job. I mean, I really, really do … let’s tell people how good they are. Don’t tell them how bad they are” (LGS8-P). An experienced teacher at her school alluded to the same perception when she commented that, “She’s never criticized and she’s never done anything to say, ‘You know, maybe there’s a better way you could teach that lesson.’ That’s never been the case. So when you don’t micro-manage your things, you have that freedom” (LGS8-ET).

LGS8 was not the only school where a specific lack of feedback was mentioned. Feedback was lacking in other large gap schools as evidenced by the following comments:

I would say he spends less of his time in the classroom than maybe some principals do. He does the evaluations as per the county requirement, but … for teachers who are doing well and we know what’s going on, he tends to not be in there very often. (LGS1-AP)

She tries, in my case it’s been really nice, she leaves me alone and let’s me do my job. She is not a micro manager by any means. In fact, I tell her every once in a while you need to get out and into the classrooms more than just observing. (LGS2-ET)

I’m not really sure (how she uses teacher evaluations) because mine have always been really good. So when I go in there to talk with her, we talk about a lot of other things. (LGS3-ET)

Her style to me, I think it’s laid back, which is good for me. She does not get on top of running your classroom. (LGS6-NT)

It is interesting that in many large gap schools, the principal or another staff member mentioned a lack of feedback. This lack of feedback was only mentioned in one of the small gap schools. When comparing the small and large gap schools, it is clear that specific instructional feedback is utilized more in the small gap schools than it is in
the large gap schools. In addition to differences in instructional feedback between small
and large gap schools, the data also showed differences in verbal persuasion.

Verbal Persuasion

Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk Hoy (2004) also describe social persuasion as
“verbal persuasion.” The authors explain that, “Coupled with models of success and
positive direct experience, it can influence the collective efficacy of a faculty. Persuasion
can also encourage a faculty to give the extra effort that leads to success; thus, persuasion
can support persistence and persistence can lead to the solution of problems” (p.484).

However, educators are not easily persuaded and certainly not persuaded by clichés. The
data showed that a distinct difference was present between small gap schools and large
gap schools when comparing the language of persuasion. Both groups of schools talked
in general terms about believing that all children can learn but only the small gap schools
went beyond that to emphasize it is the “execution of their course of action” that impacts
student achievement.

Small Gap Schools

One cannot be an educator without knowing that one is presumed to have high
 expectations for all students and say that they can all learn. As a result, the interview
data were filled with sayings that suggested all participants had high expectations for
students. As one participant stated:

The higher your expectations, the more the child’s going to rise to that. Because
if you give them just a mediocre, average expectation, and they meet it, they’re
never going to perform higher than that … It doesn’t matter where they come
from, what their background is, what their mom or dad says, it’s what each child
needs. (SGS3-NT)

Many other participants in the small gap schools mentioned high expectations when they
talked about their students (SGS1-NT, SGS2-PL, SGS8-NT, SGS8-ET, SGS8-P). Of particular note in this study are the comments that specifically mentioned student success regardless of background. These comments included:

We have a real mix, but I think there’s this feeling of striving for excellence no matter where … no matter which neighborhood. (SGS3-P)

I believe in equity. I think it’s very important for all children to have access and have the opportunity to do well in school and to just have some experiences where they might not normally have. (SGS5-AP)

It doesn’t matter where they come from. You can pull them up … You can’t look at your population and say they’re never going to get it. (SGS1-AP)

I also believe that every child can learn and I try to make sure that the opportunities are there for every student in my school and I want there to be absolute equity in those opportunities. (SGS8-P)

When talking about equity for all students, these comments indicate a sense of awareness that students should be successful regardless of their neighborhood or background.

The small gap schools did not stop at a surface level awareness that students should be successful regardless of their background. They went deeper and were consistently driven by the mission, “Whatever it takes to help the children learn, that’s what we’re here to do” (SGS5-NT). This comment expands on the notion that all kids can learn and includes the key idea that the actions of the educators in the building will lead all kids to success. When assuming the role of principal at her current school nine years ago, one principal remarked:

When I came here 9 years ago, the composite for the school was 70 something … and I spent about a week here and I said, “Oh my gosh, that’s not reasonable for this school.” The children are bright. Those parents are talented and willing to help, and it was just amazing to me that the school was that low. And the first year we brought it to 76.4 …and then above 80% for maybe one or two years, then since then, we’ve been above the 90 percentile, while taking on more Free and Reduced Lunch Kids. (SGS6-P)
This principal contradicted the misconception that an increase in students who are economically disadvantaged will lead to a decrease in student achievement. One of her teachers held the same belief when she explained:

Even (students) coming from homes that are mobile and you have one parent or no parents, and you’ve got all that’s going on at home that’s just not good. If you provide the means for success in the class, and send them home with materials or provide in the classroom for computer work, you can make it happen here. (SGS6-ET)

That same teacher continued on to say, “You’re going to have one or two that you just have to keep working with. You just can’t give up. That’s the thing. You just can’t give up on them” (SGS6-ET).

To some readers, the difference in the small gap schools and the large gap schools might seem like a mere matter of semantics. However, these passionate quotes specifically reference the staff being persistent in their education of all kids, and realizing that a lack of parents or a stable home is not an excuse for a child to fail. These schools speak the language of collective efficacy—the actions of the educators are a greater force than the background of the student. This language is absent from the larger gap schools. One just doesn’t hear quotes like this principal of SGS2:

What are we doing for that person who can’t get the light bulb on? What are we doing? Do we write them off? Or are we continually changing what we do in our school to affect that kid, and improve that kid? (SGS2-P).

The examples extend beyond the few mentioned above. Members of these small gap schools consistently mentioned modifying their actions to help all students achieve (SGS1-PL, SGS1-AP, SGS3-P, SGS6-AP, SGS9-NT, SGS8-ET, SGS8-AP). If these schools did not have collective efficacy, they wouldn’t focus on changing their actions to impact student achievement.
**Large Gap Schools**

Participants of large gap schools repeated similar clichés regarding high expectations throughout their interviews. For example, the administrators at LGS1 spoke of not putting any limitations on children regardless of what they’re labeled or their circumstances. Staff members from all other schools mentioned high expectations in general terms, but they did not talk about it to the extent that small gap schools did. For the small gap schools, four of the eight were rated strong in referencing high expectations. In the large gap schools, only one school was rated strong, four moderate, and three didn’t show any evidence. The important part of collective efficacy, however, goes beyond being able to regurgitate clichés. Schools with collective efficacy truly believe that the school is the determinant in student achievement. This belief in collective efficacy often resonates in the “verbally persuasive” language that was substantially absent in large gap schools.

To be fair, this belief of collective efficacy did appear to some extent in the large gap schools. However, aside from LGS1 and LGS7, it appeared only sporadically. For example, the principal of LGS7:

> What parent are we going to look at and say, we think we can teach every child but yours’ … So we have to constantly focus on every child … we have to have an understanding that there is economic diversity, and there is racial diversity, and we’ve got to talk about it in order to make sure that all children are successful, because none of our experiences are the same. (LGS7-P)

This type of data would normally be indicative of a small gap school. However, this principal truly operated with a sense of collective efficacy. Unfortunately, this comment was the exception for large gap schools. A few participants mentioned differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all students (LGS2-NT, LGS5-NT, LGS6-P, LGS7-AP),
however, they seemed to lack a passion and commitment to ensuring that all kids were successful.

Although small gap schools and large gap schools were similar in the ways social persuasion existed, subtle differences did exist. The use of leadership teams was consistently used in both groups of schools, but small gap schools went beyond leadership teams to also meet in smaller grade-level teams to plan for specific instruction. Both groups of schools also consistently mentioned supportive school environments. The differences in social persuasion occurred with hiring teams, instructional feedback and verbal persuasion. In terms of hiring teams, the small gap schools either used a team or didn’t mention the interview and hiring process in the data. In the large gap schools, there were more examples of schools that specifically mentioned that they did not use hiring teams at all or only used them when they were convenient. The differences in both groups of schools were similar for instructional feedback. In the small gap schools, many participants mentioned the use of instructional feedback. When they didn’t, it was just absent from the data. However in the larger gap schools, many participants mentioned a definitive lack of feedback on instruction. Lastly, the language in the large gap schools lacked rich descriptive data that would indicate these schools truly believed that all children can learn regardless of their background; thus, the large gap schools were not as “verbally persuasive.” These differences are significant in overall collective efficacy in two key areas. For one, the instructional feedback aspect of social persuasion is important in creating more mastery experiences for teachers which will also create more mastery experiences for students. Secondly, staff members often have to be taught or
reminded that all students can learn. In schools where positive verbal persuasion is more common, that cliché is more likely to lead to a higher belief in collective efficacy.

Affective State

The last component of collective efficacy is affective state, which refers to the level of excitement or anxiety that adds to the organization’s sense of collective efficacy (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2004). Both the small gap schools and large gap schools, perhaps due to their status as “Honor Schools of Excellence” with over 90% of their students achieving, exhibit great levels of excitement and low levels of anxiety. Positive affective states emerged in both small gap schools and large gap schools in a positive working environment for adults and a positive learning environment for students. Affective state is tied to collective efficacy as the principal of SGS1 states, “If it’s not a happy place to work and learn, then you’re not going to be successful” (SGS1-P).

Caring about Teachers

Small Gap Schools

All participants consistently pointed to a school environment that is caring and welcoming. The assistant principal at SGS6 described it by saying, “I think walking in you can see that people are happy, and they’re family. They are a very close group of people … She provides such a great learning atmosphere and environment in which to work, nobody wants to leave, so we don’t have the turnover rate” (SGS6-AP). Many other participants described their buildings as friendly, welcoming, caring, and nurturing (SGS3-NT, SGS4-P, SGS4-AP, SGS4-PL, SGS6-P, SGS7-NT, SGS8-ET, SGS8-AP).

It is a friendly, welcoming environment. I think there’s a mutual respect among all staff members and you can feel it. But the first and foremost thing when you walk in the front office, you know parents or visitors, new students, is just the
openness and the true, genuine friendliness that comes when you walk in. (SGS2-AP)

The thing is that they enjoy coming to work every day. That’s kind of been a strength of ours—they work together, and enjoy what they do, and I think that translates over to the kids and their learning. (SGS4-P)

This staff is one of the most caring and supportive, not that we don’t ever have our little squabbles, but everybody pulls together to try to support those people who are in need. (SGS6-P)

(We) have a standard. It’s called I care about you, you care about me and we are going to respect each other and we’re gonna have the best school in town. It’s a place where everybody is happy, everybody feels safe and everybody stays calm. (SGS8-AP)

One way in which these schools displayed a positive affective state was through recognizing the work and accomplishments of others. Recognition often begins with the principal. A parent leader said it well by remarking:

She compliments, not compliments like in a fake way, but she notices and she gives credit where credit is due. And I think that’s something that you don’t see a whole lot, but she’s quick to do that, which makes you feel like oh, she does get it. She does appreciate the effort it took to do whatever that was. (SGS1-PL)

Other participants mentioned their principals utilizing hand-written thank you notes and celebrating successes.

I think you can’t support a teacher enough, whether they’ve taught for 20 years or whether this is their first year here at your school. So I think the support and the positive comments, and the recognition … and it takes work. You know, I keep a chart, actually, and make sure that I hand-write notes to folks. Just a “Thanks, I appreciate the way you did this,” or “I enjoyed the lesson here.” (SGS5-P)

(We) always bring up the positives and to celebrate the successes, to do it at faculty meetings, to do it at grade-level meetings, to talk about what are the good things that are happening because there are a thousand more good things that are happening than bad things, but we only want to remember the bad things and that’s what rides you down. (SGS6-P)

Some of the participants of small gap schools linked the importance of having happy teachers with happy and successful students.
Often times when you have low morale, you also often have low achievement. And when you have teachers who don’t want to come to school, or teachers who are zipping out the back door during instructional time, it’s ultimately going to affect the children. (SGS4-AP)

I think they work really well together as a team. They are child centered, focused on student learning. But the thing is that they enjoy coming to work every day. That’s kind of been a strength or ours—they work well together, and enjoy what they do, and I think that translates over to the kids and their learning. (SGS4-P)

I think that just comes mainly because of the administration and staff, they they’re caring for teachers and they’re caring for their staff, which then makes the teachers happy, which makes them more involved with like helping with the students and caring for the students. (SGS3-NT)

They’re very happy there. And I think that really carries over with the children. And it’s very obvious that they’re happy there. And she gives them support and flexibility in things … and I think all those opportunities for their choice allows them to have a good experience with kids, because their mind is not on something they’re frustrated with or unhappy with. (SGS6-AP)

Teacher satisfaction can be completely distinct from student learning. Teacher satisfaction is more of an indicator of climate. However, when the participants in the small gap schools linked their own satisfaction to student learning, it showed a school culture focused on student learning. This link shows that regardless of the topic being discussed, the small gap schools always have student success at the heart of their comments.

Large Gap Schools

Participants in the large gap schools consistently mentioned being happy about coming to work. One principal explained the importance of a positive climate by saying, “I think climate in a school is probably the most critical aspect of success. There are schools where people actually go to and they hate going to work, but that’s their livelihood and they have to go. I want you to get up without a knot in your stomach and I want you to leave at the end of the day looking forward to coming back tomorrow”
Another principal said, “I make sure, or do my best to make sure that we have a positive, upbeat atmosphere in our school every day” (LGS6-P).

Like small gap schools, many other participants in the large gap schools described their schools as warm, friendly, environments in which to learn and work (LGS8-ET).

Everybody is really on board and feeling successful. And I think that’s staff as well as students—that everybody is really on board and feeling like they’re doing really, really important work, and you know they’re really excited to get up and come to work every morning. (LGS3-P)

I think it’s because the staff and the community are aligned, and really care about the kids. And there’s not a lot of turnover here. And if you spend much time at the school, you kind of get a family feeling, which I think is really valuable, and our teamwork makes all the difference, and I think overall the parents recognize that when they come in. (LGS5-AP)

I think there’s a welcoming presence and the warmth, and last year, as a first year teacher, there’s obviously a lot of things that come at you as a first year (teacher), that overwhelm you. But this year, there’s something … there’s a different vibe … it’s a safe environment here, and I really feel like everyone’s kind of embraced that, and that’s how we treat each other. (LGS7-NT)

A common theme across the participants’ responses was the importance of having a principal who showed he or she cared about teachers. As one parent noted about her principal, “(She’s) a good teacher principal … she really takes care of her teachers, and makes them happy” (LGS3-PL). An experienced teacher at LGS5 noted her principal was “very personable with his staff on a level that he has a lot of empathy for them” (LGS5-ET). Many other participants mentioned that their principal was supportive and cared about them as people (LGS6-ET, LGS7-PL, LGS8-PL). Some participants pointed to specific actions that helped create this supportive environment. For example, the principal of LGS2-P used a “bulletin board that is dedicated to staff superstars, so we have six or seven featured every month and I take their picture and they fill out a form.”
The principal of LGS8 wrote notes that would say, “Thank you so much for joining our staff. We’re so happy you’re a member of our family.”

In both the small and large gap schools, no significant differences were noted. Teachers in both groups of schools described warm and friendly environments where they enjoyed working. The teachers in these schools might have similar positive affective states because they are teaching in “Honor Schools of Excellence” where 90% of their kids are meeting state standards and the teachers receive their yearly positive reinforcement in terms of bonus money and recognition.

**Caring about Students**

*Small Gap Schools*

There is a popular book on education titled, *If You Don’t Feed the Teachers, They’ll Eat the Children*. This saying is appropriate for the next theme. When the teachers are happy, they in turn make the students happy. Across all small and large gap schools, participants mentioned that staff consistently respected students and showed that they cared about them. For example, the assistant principal noted that, “the teachers treat the children with respect, so when the children go home, they’re getting from their kids a sense of, “Oh, Ok,” and so it’s a cycle” (SGS2-AP). The principal at SGS4 also talked about parents wanting to know that teachers cared about their kids.

Although one principal worried, “at times that we’ve taken some of the fun out of learning with all the accountability” (SGS4-P), it doesn’t seem that way when you hear comments like the following:

I often tell parents if I don’t do anything else but teach these children to love to learn then I’ve done my job. (SGS7-ET)

I want them to come into my classroom and if I can get them to love school, and love coming every single day, then the academics are going to come. (SGS2-NT)
I do not believe that learning can take place in an atmosphere of fear … it’s just that there is a real pleasant feeling here. (SGS3-P)

These comments are significant because when schools create environments where students are happy and enjoy coming to school, they are more likely to be successfully academically. Several other participants talked about students being happy in the classroom, while they are learning (SGS2-AP, SGS4-PL, SGS7-P).

I think the school is a place where children want to be happy, productive learners, and they often need to be given every opportunity to feel accountability for themselves. (SGS1-P)

I have to have different goals because my kids are tested, and they have that horrible writing test, and so one of my goals really is to get my children prepared to pass that test, because whether I believe in it or not, if the child fails the test, it hurts them deeply. (SGS2-ET)

We are here to look out and care and nurture our children in a developmental way. It’s not a traditional textbook, page by page, it’s the whole child learning … we’re doing it in a supportive way, non-threatening so children are happy to be here. (SGS3-ET)

Their goal is to make school a safe place that kids come to. My philosophy has always been if my kids are happy they’re going to learn. And I really do feel that fundamentally that’s where they’re at. (SGS4-PL)

They care about the students, and we want them to meet the benchmarks and the expectations, regardless of disability or of background or of race, or whatever it may be. (SGS4-ET)

There are many possible ways to care about students and make them happy. Schools are good about celebrating character traits, rewarding students’ good behavior, or simply giving students what they want. What is interesting about the staff members in these small gap schools is they consistently talked about caring about their students in terms of learning. Examples included caring about students developmentally, preparing students for a test so they would be happy about the result, and caring about students
meeting benchmarks and expectations. Regardless of the specific ways staff members showed they cared, they always cared about the academic success of students.

*Large Gap Schools*

To borrow another saying, “You get more done with honey than vinegar. So it’s much more positive” (SGS2-PL). The large gap schools also consistently tended to be positive environments where students were happy. One principal stated, “I want them to be happy kids. I want them to like coming to school … Love coming to school” (SGS2-P). Many other participants echoed these sentiments about students being happy.

To make every child feel that this is their school, and this is home, and this is safe, and that they have ownership in the school, and that no child feels like I don’t belong here. (LGS4-P)

(If) you have children who are happy then you know you are benefiting from the experience that they get. That we build character that we build self-esteem that we build all of those things into boys and girls that will allow them to exit this elementary school and go onto a middle school or other places and be a first class citizen … (In response to expectations for success), You know as I said, character is important and good manners. (SGS1-P)

We are looking for the good in the child rather than looking for what’s wrong with them and it creates an attitude in the children that it’s ok if I screw up because I’m still an ok kid. More than anything else I think that her philosophy is that every child leaves here every single day feeling good about themselves. (LGS2-NT)

Although participants of the large gap schools consistently talked about students being happy at school, they did it slightly different than the participants in the small gap schools. The previous quotes referenced things like good manners, character traits, and feeling safe at school. However, they lack the focus on learning that the smaller gap schools referenced. Many other participants of large gap schools mentioned students being happy but left out any connection to their learning.

I want them to be happy kids. I want them to like coming to school. (LGS2-P)
I want the children to be happy when they come in here. I want them to enjoy coming in here. I want a positive atmosphere. (LGS6-P)

(We are a school of excellence) because we really care about the kids and about each and every child. We work hard to make sure there’s a buddy for every class, especially administration, office people, concerning everybody’s task. (LGS6-AP)

What is the most important thing for your children’s education? Their response to me overwhelmingly, was, “I want my kids to be happy.” They did not say anything about their child’s education. Not one thing. (LGS8-P)

They set up all these slides and dunking booths, just so the parents can come on campus, have a great time with their kids, you know, dunk the teacher, have a relay race with the teacher. It’s just to have fun and to associate with each other. (LGS4-AP)

Again, this data is lacking a focus on learning. The participants talk about students being happy and creating a positive atmosphere but there is no connection to learning. The principal of LGS8 alluded to her perception that the parents at her school would rather their students be happy than educated. Others mentioned a buddy program and dunking booths.

To be forthright, three principals of large gap schools did make the connection between students being happy and learning.

There has got to be joy in learning, I mean learning has got to be exciting. You’ve got a whole, whole lot to teach, and it’s very, very difficult, but you’ve got to do it in a way that kids get excited and get turned on. (LSGS3-P)

It’s important for you to feel good about your child’s education and that we’re working to reach his or her potential and exceed that, and that happens in a lot of ways beyond assessment. (LGS5-P)

We have to build the kind of community that I call a supportive learning environment, where the environment is such that children are free to make mistakes without humiliation. That they know we’re going to support and help them to learn, that we are encouragers instead of naggers. All of the core values about how children learn. (LGS7-P)
Instead of being a representative sample of the other participants, these principals were the exception. Although the large gap schools did not tend to connect students’ affective states with learning, they did continually demonstrate compassion for kids, as evidenced by this comment from a parent about the principal at her child’s school:

I’ve seen her take kids … to get clothing … I’ve seen her take kids by the hand and do what it takes. I even went with her one time as a chaperone to take three children up to North Raleigh. It took us all day to get them glasses … unless somebody in the school took them to get glasses, they weren’t getting glasses. (LGS8-PL)

An experienced teacher also talked about this type of caring outside of the classroom when she said about the staff at her school, “they’re ready to support in any way they can … with coats for the children, clothes, food, anything extra” (LGS5-ET).

Not all schools talked about this specific level of caring for students, but they all used a language of caring. They used phrases like “compassion for children” (LGS7-ET), “honoring the child” (LGS8-AP), “genuine care for the child” (LGS1-PL), and “going beyond for the children” (LGS3-PL).

To summarize, the affective status at both large gap schools and small gap schools was consistently positive. Perhaps it is a function of being “Honor Schools of Excellence” where over 90% of their students are on or above grade-level. Regardless of the reason, the schools, under the leadership of their principals, all created positive working conditions for teachers and positive learning environments for students. One difference is worth noting. The small gap schools were more likely to connect caring about students to learning in the classroom, whereas they appeared to be more separate in the large gap schools. This might help explain the difference in the achievement gap. In order to help struggling students be successful, learning must always be at the heart of
every decision. Caring for a kid is more than dunking booths and relay races. There are ways to show a kid you care about them through their learning. The small gap schools seemed to have figured that out better than the large gap schools.

Although differences between small gap and large gap schools emerged in nearly all four components of collective efficacy, these differences were linked by student learning. As a whole, small gap schools focused on student learning more than the large gap schools. Through mastery experience, principals of small gap schools articulated a clearer vision of the specific type of instruction that impacted student learning. In terms of social persuasion, principals of small gap schools provided more specific feedback to teachers, and teachers focused more on individual students. Even through affective states, where both groups of schools were similar, teachers in small gap schools tied their own job satisfaction to student learning. At the heart of this focus on student learning is the leadership of the principal. Chapter six will expand on the principal’s leadership.
CHAPTER 6
FACILITATING COLLECTIVE EFFICACY

Introduction

Although Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk Hoy (2000) popularized the concept of collective efficacy per se, it is important to first revisit Bandura (1993). Bandura’s notion of collective efficacy sprung from self-efficacy. Self-efficacy, according to Bandura, is people’s beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over their own level of functioning and over events that affect their lives. According to Bandura:

People who are plagued by self-doubts anticipate the futility of efforts to modify their life situation. They produce little change even in environments that provide many potential opportunities. But those who have a firm belief in their efficacy, through ingenuity and perseverance, figure out ways of exercising some control, even in environments containing limited opportunities and many constraints.

(p.125)

In attempting to build equity, it is important to understand that “many constraints” do exist. This study began with the realization that the historical marginalization of underprivileged students often results in a school culture that perpetuates the status quo and ignores the social injustices that permeate our schools. As a result, the fate of many of our students is a pre-determined mold designed for school failure and social inequality. When speaking of constraints, historical marginalization, cultures, the status quo, and social injustices and inequalities are powerful forces to overcome. In order to overcome
them, an organization would have to be filled with individuals who had a strong sense of self-efficacy. As a result, Bandura coined collective efficacy. Collective efficacy is important to this study because, as Bandura states:

With staffs who firmly believe that, by their determined efforts, students are motivatable and teachable whatever their background, schools heavily populated with minority students of low socioeconomic status achieve at the highest percentile ranks based on national norms of language and mathematical competencies. (p.143)

In light of this quote, collective efficacy proved a useful framework in analyzing the data on schools where “minority students of low socioeconomic status achieve at the highest percentile ranks” and schools where they don’t. The only difference in Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk Hoy’s (2000) collective efficacy is that they borrowed Bandura’s (1993) four components of self-efficacy and applied them to collective efficacy. However, Bandura and Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk Hoy both miss a key point—the principal’s leadership in facilitating collective efficacy in a school.

Principal as Facilitator of Collective Efficacy

Bandura (1993) uses the phrase “teacher self-efficacy” throughout his article on self-efficacy. Even when he ties it to collective efficacy, he almost ignores the role of the principal. He merely mentions, “Strong principals excel in their ability to get their staff to work together with a strong sense of purpose and to believe in their capabilities to surmount obstacles to educational attainments” (p.141). Although Bandura touches the surface of principals facilitating collective efficacy in their staffs, it is not addressed
further in the framework. Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk Hoy (2000) do not go any deeper into the notion either. They mention it once by urging:

To the extent teacher collective efficacy is positively associated with student achievement, there is strong reason to lead schools in a direction that will systematically develop teacher efficacy; such efforts may indeed be rewarded with continuous growth in not only collective teacher efficacy but also in student achievement. (p.483)

In a similar fashion to Bandura, Goddard, Hoy and Woolfolk Hoy mention that there is reason to lead schools in a direction that will develop teacher efficacy, but it is not mentioned throughout the framework. Looking at how principals might facilitate the development of the four components of collective efficacy will be useful as schools work to build excellence and equity.

Mastery Experiences

As previously stated, mastery experience is the notion that when a person or group perceives that a performance has been successful, efficacy beliefs tend to increase (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2004). The data showed that mastery experiences emerged in small gap schools first through a clear vision of good instruction. For teachers to “perform successfully,” they must know what good instruction looks like. Small gap schools also analyzed the data on individual students and responded with specific strategies to meet the academic needs of the students.

In contrast, large gap schools lacked a clear vision of good instruction. Instead, their vision of instruction was a surface level response of following the Standard Course
of Study. These schools also focused more on groups of students instead of individual students.

The differences between mastery experiences in small gap and large gap schools doesn’t lie with the teachers, it lies with the principal. The framework of collective efficacy is lacking the key role of the principal. Beginning with the vision, it is the principal who should be communicating the instructional expectations. With clear expectations of what good instruction looks like, teachers will be able to experience more success. When the vision is simply to cover the Standard Course of Study, the vision is too vague.

The principal’s role in analyzing data, focusing on individual students, and responding with strategies is also essential. All teachers are not inherently strong at using data. It ought to be the principal who models which data to use and how to use it. The principal can also identify teacher leaders who can serve as models or provide additional outside training for staff. Once again, through communicating vision, the principal also has to keep the individual needs of students at the forefront. It is easy for teachers to consume their day with whole-class lesson planning, teaching, and grading papers. Looking at reasons why individual students aren’t succeeding isn’t always in teachers’ minds. Principals are also in the best position to provide resources to put strategies in place for students who are struggling. These resources could be financial in providing additional funds. The time during the day for students to receive individual help is also a resource that the principal can provide.

Lastly, it is important to realize that the mastery experience of the teacher in performing a good lesson is directly related to the mastery experience of the students in
succeeding in class. In order for both to take place, teachers have to understand researched best practices. It is the role of the principal to provide opportunities for teachers to learn research-based strategies that will help students be successful. As teachers gain the skills and students become more academically successful, the collective efficacy of the school will increase.

*Social Persuasion*

Social Persuasion is another important area in which principals should be involved. Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk Hoy (2004) explain that social persuasion consists of collaboration, encouragement, specific performance feedback, or conversations that take place among staff and/or community members. In an earlier article, the authors also point out, “the more cohesive the faculty, the more likely the group as a whole can be persuaded by sound argument” (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000, p.484). This last point is important in light of the social nature of schools. If the faculty can be easily persuaded by sound argument, and it is up to the principal to make sure that he or she is the social persuader. In other words, the principal needs to be the leader of the social persuasion, not the angry, disenchanted veteran teacher who laments that schools just aren’t the same any more.

Being “Honor Schools of Excellence” where over 90% of their students are achieving state standards, the social persuasion in both the small and large gap schools was both positive and abundant. To review, leadership teams that make collaborative school-based decisions were strong in both schools, but the small gap schools seemed to provide more opportunities for smaller grade-based teams to meet regularly. Both schools used interview teams but the teams seemed to be more prevalent in the small gap
schools. The largest difference seemed to be in the type of instructional feedback and social persuasion that existed in the two groups of schools. In the smaller gap schools, principals seemed to provide more specific feedback on instruction than in the larger gap schools. In regards to verbal persuasion, the small gap schools were provided more rich data focused on doing whatever it takes to ensure that all students were successful; through this data, they demonstrated a high degree of collective efficacy. In contrast, the large gap schools were more cliché in their responses, citing that all kids can learn but providing little convictions and few resources to ensure all kids would learn.

At the heart of these differences in social persuasion is the principal. This point is probably best illustrated is an area where both small and large gap schools were strong—leadership teams. In looking at the data, both groups of schools consistently used leadership teams to make decisions. On the surface, there would appear to be little difference. However, in looking deeper, it would be interesting to see how these leadership teams functioned. Do the conversations focus on what is best for students or most convenient for staff? Is there talk about poor student achievement due to the background of the student or the actions (or inactions) of the staff? It is the principal, who sits in these meetings, who should drive the conversation towards a discussion of what the school can do to improve the academic success of all children. It is not enough to just say that a school meets as a leadership team. They must meet with the belief that, “teachers in a school … can organize and execute the courses of action required to have a positive effect on students” (Goddard, Hoy & Woolfolk Hoy, 2004, p.4). In other words, they must believe in their own collective efficacy.

The principal and his or her beliefs play a key role in other areas of social
persuasion. Through interview teams, for example, the principal symbolically communicates to potential candidates that teachers are key decision makers in the most important functions of the school. It is also an opportunity for principals to communicate their collective efficacy beliefs to potential new staff members, as well as ask specific questions that address the collective efficacy of those candidates. It is the belief behind the action of forming a hiring team that is most important.

Perhaps most importantly, the principal serves as a key player in instructional feedback. The data from large gap schools suggest that most of these schools lack strong instructionally knowledgeable principals who give specific feedback related to instruction. On a deeper level, the belief behind the feedback is also important. Does the principal stop at commenting on whole class lessons where 80% of the students will understand the content, or does the principal insist that resources are in place for the students who will not be successful with the lesson as presented to the entire class? The importance isn’t necessarily the action of providing feedback but the belief behind the type of feedback provided. Principals who believe all students can be successful will provide teachers with feedback to help them reach the 20% of students who don’t learn as easily the other students in the class.

*Affective State*

Another component of collective efficacy is an organization’s affective state. According to Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk Hoy (2000), “Efficacious organizations can tolerate pressure and crises and continue to function without severe negative consequences; in fact, they learn how to adapt and cope with disruptive forces” (p.484). Pressure and disruptive forces certainly exist in today’s educational system.
comes from high-stakes testing and disruptive forces may come from any number of sources. However, both small and large gap schools in this study maintained high affective states despite prevailing pressures and disruptive forces.

A positive affective state does not necessarily mean their affective states contributed to collective efficacy. A subtle difference in the affective state data emerged between the small gap and large gap schools. In the large gap schools, many participants mentioned generally that they wanted students to be happy and enjoy coming to school, whereas in the small gap schools, the comments were more focused on wanting students to enjoy learning. This subtle difference in language can make a significant difference in achievement. There are a myriad of ways the schools try to make students happy. For example, they hold carnivals, they play games, and they have free time during school. While these things might make a student happy to come to school, they won’t lead to academic success. The smaller gap schools more consistently talked about getting students excited about learning in the classroom. Students who are excited about learning (as opposed to carnivals) are more likely to be successful academically. A positive affective state that is focused on learning is definitely a contributor to collective efficacy. A positive affective state for teachers likewise doesn’t necessarily equate to collective efficacy.

For example, autonomy without accountability might lead to favorable working conditions. Thus the affective state of the staff would be positive. In this case, one could argue that autonomy without accountability would be an obstacle to collective efficacy instead of a contributor. Another example could include the protection of a duty-free planning and lunch period. When teachers’ planning time and lunch time are protected,
job satisfaction tends to be high, leading to a positive affective state. If teachers are not using that time to collaborate with the goal of analyzing student data and implementing strategies that will lead to academic success for all students, this time is not a contributor to collective efficacy either.

Both small and large gap schools mentioned the importance of having a supportive principal. Of course, teachers like to be supported and this support would lead to a more positive affective state. This begs the question: does teacher support lead to collective efficacy? If the principal is supporting teachers in their efforts to educate all students regardless of their background, the answer is yes. However, if the principal is supportive of a teacher who perpetuates the status quo that has led to the historic inequities in student achievement, the answer is no. For example, a teacher could handle a student who is a discipline problem by having that student stand in the corner of the room or even remove the kid from the room altogether. Either way, the student does not receive instruction. If a parent were to come in and argue that this practice hurts her child academically, the principal could choose to support the teacher. In doing so, the teacher would be pleased with the support, but that student would continue to miss valuable instruction.

There is a difference between the type of positive affective state that contributes to collective efficacy and the type that does not. The difference that is missing in the framework is the belief. If the belief is always that all students can learn regardless of their background, schools will be happy because they have executed the actions that make achievement for all students a reality. If the belief is that only students with particular demographic characteristics can be successful, schools will be happy with
academic success for most students. The argument could certainly be made that the affective states of all the schools in this study are too high because none of the schools have eliminated the achievement gap.

_Vicarious Experience_

Another way in which a principal’s leadership and beliefs can impact collective efficacy is through vicarious experiences. For Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk Hoy (2004), vicarious experiences increase personal efficacy “when a model with whom the observer identifies performs well” (p.5). The authors note that, “just as vicarious experience and modeling serve as effective ways to develop personal teacher efficacy, so too do they promote collective teacher efficacy” (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000, p.484). In practical terms, when a teacher can observe another teacher implementing a quality lesson, their efficacy belief is strengthened because they can watch another teacher be successful. When this occurs in multiple instances, the self-efficacy beliefs of multiple teachers will raise, which will increase the collective efficacy of the school.

As noted earlier, vicarious experiences were rarely present in the small or large gap schools. When vicarious experiences were present, they existed in professional development or peer modeling. With professional development, when teacher-leaders conducted the professional development, other staff members could relate to them more and see themselves successfully using the same strategies. Several participants also mentioned the importance of the principals’ modeling attendance at professional development sessions by being there themselves. However, this is only loosely connected to vicarious experiences.
Another way in which vicarious experiences arose was through teachers observing other teachers in their classrooms. Unfortunately, vicarious experiences in this sense were limited in almost all of the schools in this study. To increase the vicarious experiences in schools, the principal has to be the one to provide a systemic model for these experiences to occur. It begins with a belief in collective efficacy.

If a principal genuinely believed in the collective efficacy of the staff, the focus on staff development would be internal. Imbedded in the belief in collective efficacy is the belief in teacher self-efficacy. If there are teachers in the building who have self-efficacy, that is, they execute the actions necessary to impact student achievement for all students, they should be the models. Collective efficacy then could be nurtured by teachers observing these model teachers who clearly demonstrate self-efficacy. This is unlikely to occur unless the principal establishes a structure for this modeling or vicarious experience to occur. Principals are not likely to establish this structure unless they believe that the self-efficacy of a few staff members can lead to improved collective efficacy in the school.

**Implications for Practice:**

**Answering the Research Questions**

The next section will answer the research questions in light of the findings of this study. The first research question asked, what are principals of K-5 “Honor Schools of Excellence” doing to ensure the success of all of their students? Principals of the K-5 “Honor Schools of Excellence” in this study are communicating to staff the expectation that they should be using the Standard Course of Study as their guide to instruction. These principals are establishing systems to facilitate collaboration in their schools.
These collaborative groups include leadership and interview teams. These principals are also supportive of teachers. As a result, the teachers enjoy coming to work. The schools are also nurturing environments where students enjoy coming to school.

The second research question asked, “What similarities do school leaders, who are successful in creating equity and excellence, have in common?” In order to answer this research question it will be useful to review the differences between the small gap and large gap schools. The large gap schools created excellence as defined by the state but did not succeed in creating equity as measured by small or nonexistent gaps. The small gap schools seemed to do some things differently that helped them reduce the gap. First, the principals of the small gap schools had a clear vision for instruction that went beyond just teaching the Standard Course of Study. Principals of small gap schools also facilitated the use of data to analyze individual students’ academic level. From this data, they put strategic interventions in place to help students. The principals of small gap schools also went beyond the use of leadership teams and set up conditions where teachers met in smaller grade-level teams to plan instruction and analyze data. In the schools where equity was created, principals provided teachers with more direct feedback on their instruction. In addition to the feedback, principals also clearly communicated their expectation that all students will learn regardless of their background.

The next research question asked, “What findings can connect to and build upon the literature related to leadership for social justice and systemic equity?” Reviewing the purpose of this study would be a good way to begin answering this question. The purpose, as stated in Chapter 1 of this study, was to explore “how” K-5 elementary principals of state recognized “Honor Schools of Excellence” are (or are not) pursuing,
supporting, and achieving both academic excellence and systemic equity in their schools. This study connects to the existing research on equity in schools (Noblit, Malloy, & Malloy, 2001; Scott, 2001; Skrla, Scheurich, Johnson, & Koschoreck, 2001). It also connects to the research on collective efficacy in schools (Bandura 1993; Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2004; Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk Hoy). These findings build upon both the literature base for systemic equity and the literature base for collective efficacy by identifying the strategies that principals use to improve systemic equity in schools. The leadership actions and the specific strategies were limited in the existing literature. The leadership actions and strategies will be elaborated upon in answering the last research question.

The last research question asked: “What can be learned from ‘Honor Schools of Excellence’ that could benefit other schools with similar demographics?” Schools with similar demographics could certainly benefit from listening to these leaders talk about collective efficacy and understanding what strategies they used to improve equity. Beginning with the collective efficacy language, it is critical for leaders to “verbally persuade” their staff members that their collective actions will impact student achievement. In the excellent and equitable schools, these leaders clearly communicated their expectation that all students will learn, regardless of their background. Once the expectation is communicated, it is also important to implement strategies to ensure that all students will be successful. These strategies included: developing subject-specific collaborative groups, analyzing individual student data, implementing strategies to help specific students become academically successful, utilizing hiring teams, and providing teachers with specific feedback on their instruction. Other schools could also learn from
what these “Honor Schools of Excellence” are not doing. The use of vicarious experiences through modeling and observing strong teachers was not particularly strong in many of the schools in this study. Perhaps utilizing other teachers to learn from each other might have helped build more equity in even the smaller gap “Honor Schools of Excellence.”

Finally, when collective efficacy is considered as a whole, the principals of small gap schools act as facilitators of collective efficacy more than the large gap principals. While this finding in and of itself is interesting, it is not particularly useful. It is more important to understand why there is a difference between the principals of small gap schools and large gap schools. The answer may lie in social cognitive theory as well. This study has explored the extent to which the collective efficacy beliefs of a school can impact student achievement and reduce the achievement gap. However, embedded in the theory of collective efficacy is self-efficacy. In order for a school to have a high belief in its collective efficacy it must be comprised of individuals with high self-efficacy. Throughout the study self-efficacy has been referred to in terms of executing actions to impact students. However, it should also be talked about in terms of the principal executing actions to impact teachers. Principals who have a higher sense of self-efficacy believe that their actions impact the teachers whom they lead. Principals who are more self-efficacious would be more likely to communicate their vision to teachers and provide them with the feedback to help them improve and enact that vision. In contrast, inefficacious principals would not act in ways that impact teachers and foster their development.
Recommendations for Further Study

This study explored K-5 “Honor Schools of Excellence.” A similar study of secondary schools would be useful as the achievement gap is not isolated to just elementary level schools. Principals of middle and high schools struggle to close the achievement gap and promote equity and excellence in their schools.

Another recommendation for further study would be in the area of meeting the individual needs of students. A clear difference between the smaller gap school and larger gap schools was the focus of the smaller gap schools on treating students as individuals instead of sub-groups. Although the theme was present, the study did not specifically address the ways in which students were treated as individuals. A study examining specific intervention strategies for individual students would be helpful as principals look to promote equity in their schools.

Due to the number of participants (80 in all), it was not practical to conduct site visits at these “Honor Schools of Excellence.” A future study that included fewer schools but included observations at the schools would be useful not only in terms of validation but also because what some of these schools do is so imbedded in their practices that they might not think about mentioning it during an interview.

Although each of the researchers analyzed the data through different frameworks, each found that small gap schools displayed a clear and consistent focus on individual students instead of sub-groups of students. A future study analyzing the impact of focusing on individual students has on NCLB and AYP would be helpful in exploring specific strategies to close the achievement gap.
The final recommendation for further study would be to take the exemplars of both categories and do a more in-depth study. In other words, identify the three schools with the smallest achievement gaps and the three schools with the largest achievement gaps. These schools would lend themselves for an interesting comparative study.
References


Hoy, W.K., & Spero, R.B. (2005). Changes in teacher efficacy during the early years of


Roberts v. City of Boston, 59 Mass. 198 (1849).


Rowan, B., Correnti, R., & Miller, R.J. (2002). What large-scale, survey research tells us about teacher effects on student achievement: Insights from the prospects study of elementary schools. Teachers College Record, 104(8), 1525–1567.


Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol for PRINCIPALS

1) Describe _______ K-5 Elementary School. What makes it a “School of Excellence?” Has it always been a “School of Excellence?” Why/why not? How? How do you define excellence? What are your goals? Values?

2) Describe YOUR philosophy of education and schooling and how it impacts YOUR leadership style. What is your focus? Mission?

3) How do you recruit, retain, and support good teachers and good teaching? What are your expectations for your school’s curriculum? What are your expectations for your school’s instructional program? For professional development? Evaluations?

4) Talk about your students and your expectations for their success (academic achievement and personal development). Any discipline issues?


6) What are some of the major challenges facing your school community and how do you go about addressing them? How are decisions made? How are resources allocated? Do you use data? How?

7) Do you ever discuss issues of race, class, and/or diversity with the teachers, parents, students, and/or community members? Why/why not? How? ? Do you discuss gaps?

8) Is there anything else we should know about _______ K-5 Elementary School and what makes it a “School of Excellence?”
Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol for ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS
(@ 60 minutes each)

1) Describe _______ K-5 Elementary School. What makes it a “School of Excellence?” Has it always been a “School of Excellence?” Why/why not? How? How do you define excellence? What are your goals? Values?

2) Describe your principal’s philosophy of education and schooling and how it impacts his/her leadership style. What is your principal’s focus? Mission?

3) How does your principal recruit, retain, and support good teachers and good teaching? What are his/her expectations for your school’s curriculum? What are his/her expectations for your school’s instructional program? For professional development? Evaluations?

4) Talk about your students and your expectations for their success (academic achievement and personal development). Does your principal share these ideals? Why/why not? How? Any discipline issues?


6) What are some of the major challenges facing your school community and how does your principal go about addressing them? How are decisions made? How are resources allocated? Do you use data? How?

7) Do you and/or your principal ever discuss issues of race, class, and/or diversity with the teachers, parents, students, and/or community members? Why/why not? How? Do you discuss gaps?

8) Is there anything else we should know about _______ K-5 Elementary School and what makes it a “School of Excellence?”
Appendix C: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol for TEACHERS

1) Describe _______ K-5 Elementary School. What makes it a “School of Excellence?”
   Has it always been a “School of Excellence?” Why/why not? How? How do you define
   excellence? What are your goals? Values?

2) Describe your principal’s philosophy of education and schooling and how it impacts
   his/her leadership style. What is your principal’s focus? Mission?

3) How does your principal recruit, retain, and support good teachers and good teaching?
   What are his/her expectations for your school’s curriculum? What are his/her
   expectations for your school’s instructional program? For professional development?
   Evaluations?

4) Talk about your students and your expectations for their success (academic
   achievement and personal development). Does your principal share these ideals?
   Why/why not? How? Any discipline issues?

   involved? Why/why not? How?

6) What are some of the major challenges facing your school community and how does
   your principal go about addressing them? How are decisions made? How are resources
   allocated? Do you use data? How?

7) Do you and/or your principal ever discuss issues of race, class, and/or diversity with
   the teachers, parents, students, and/or community members? Why/why not? How? ? Do
   you discuss gaps?

8) Is there anything else we should know about _______ K-5 Elementary School and
   what makes it a “School of Excellence?”
Appendix D: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol for PARENT LEADERS
(@ 45 minutes each)

1) Describe _______ K-5 Elementary School. What makes it a “School of Excellence?” Has it always been a “School of Excellence?” Why/why not? How? How do you define excellence? What are your goals? Values?

2) Describe your principal’s philosophy of education and schooling and how it impacts his/her leadership style. What is your principal’s focus? Mission?

3) How does your principal recruit, retain, and support good teachers and good teaching? What are his/her expectations for your school’s curriculum? What are his/her expectations for your school’s instructional program? For professional development? Evaluations?

4) Talk about your children and your expectations for their success (academic achievement and personal development). Does your principal share these ideals? Why/why not? How? Any discipline issues?


6) What are some of the major challenges facing your school community and how does your principal go about addressing them? How are decisions made? How are resources allocated? Do you use data? How?

7) Do you and/or your principal ever discuss issues of race, class, and/or diversity with the teachers, parents, students, and/or community members? Why/why not? How? ? Do you discuss gaps?

8) Is there anything else we should know about _______ K-5 Elementary School and what makes it a “School of Excellence?”
Part A.1. Contact Information, Agreements, and Signatures

Title of Study: Good Schools, Good Leaders: Portraits of Excellence AND Equity! Date: 9/30/05

Name and degrees of Principal Investigator: Kathleen M. Brown, Ed.D.  
Department: School of Education  
UNC-CH PID: 7063-83456  
Phone #: 843-8166  
Fax #: 962-1693  
Email Address: BrownK@email.unc.edu

For trainee-led projects:  

1) For research carried out in part by a student or trainee (unpaid or paid, graduate or undergraduate):  
2) For unpaid student assistants (e.g., graduate teaching or research assistants, educational assistants):  
3) For support provided to a research project, but not trainee-led:  

Name of faculty advisor: NA

Department:  
Mailing address/CB #:  
Phone #:  
Fax #:  
Email Address:

List all other project personnel including co-investigators, and anyone else who has contact with subjects or identifiable data from subjects:

1) Jennifer Benkovitz, Co-PI (Doctoral student in Educational Leadership, School of Education)  
2) Nakia Hardy, Co-PI (Doctoral student in Educational Leadership, School of Education)  
3) Anthony J. Muttillo, Co-PI (Doctoral student in Educational Leadership, School of Education)  
4) Thad Urban, Co-PI (Doctoral student in Educational Leadership, School of Education)

Name of funding source or sponsor:  

Sponsor or award number: NA

Include the following items with your submission, where applicable. Check the items below and include in order listed:

- This application. One copy must have original PI signatures.
- Consent and assent forms, fact or information sheets; include phone and verbal consent scripts
- HIPAA authorization addendum to consent form
- All recruitment materials including scripts, flyers and advertising, letters, emails
- Questionnaires, scripts used to guide phone or in-person interviews, etc.
- Focus group guides
- Data use agreements (may be required for use of existing data from third parties)
- Addendum for Multi-Site Studies where UNC-CH is the Lead Coordinating Center
- Documentation of reviews from any other committees (e.g., GCRC, Oncology)
- Documentation of training in human research ethics for all study personnel
- Investigator Brochure if a drug study
- Protocol, grant application or proposal supporting this submission; (e.g., extramural grant application to NIH or foundation, industry protocol, student proposal)
**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

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**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

**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. I support this application, and hereby submit it for further review.

Signature of Department Chair or designee

Print Name of Department Chair or designee

Department

**Part A.2. Summary Checklist**

*Are the following involved?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.2.1. Existing data, research records, patient records, and/or human biological specimens?</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.2.2. Surveys, questionnaires, interviews, or focus groups with subjects?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>___</td>
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<tr>
<td>A.2.3. Videotaping, audiotaping, filming of subjects?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>___</td>
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<tr>
<td>A.2.4. Do you plan to enroll subjects from these vulnerable or select populations:</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. UNC-CH students or UNC-CH staff?</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Non-English-speaking?</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Decisionally impaired?</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. Patients?</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>e. Prisoners, parolees and other convicted offenders?</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>f. Pregnant women?</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>A.2.5.</td>
<td>a. Is this a multi-site study (i.e., involves organization(s) outside UNC-CH)?</td>
<td>( _X )</td>
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<td></td>
<td>b. Will any of these sites be outside the United States?</td>
<td>( _X )</td>
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<td></td>
<td>( \text{If yes, provide contact information for the foreign IRB.} )</td>
<td>( _X )</td>
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<td></td>
<td>c. Is UNC-CH the sponsor or lead coordinating center?</td>
<td>( _X )</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( \text{If yes, include the Addendum for Multi-site Studies where UNC-CH is the Lead Coordinating Center.} )</td>
<td>( _X )</td>
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</table>

| 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? | \( _X \) |
|        | \( \text{All studies testing substances in humans must provide a letter of acknowledgement from the UNC Health Care Investigational Drug Service (IDS).} \) | \( _X \) |

| 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? | \( _X \) |
|        | \( \text{If yes, see instructions within the form Consent for Stored Samples.} \) | \( _X \) |

| A.2.14. | Diagnostic or therapeutic ionizing radiation, or radioactive isotopes, which subjects would not receive otherwise? | \( _X \) |
|        | \( \text{If yes, approval by the UNC-CH Radiation Safety Committee is required.} \) | \( _X \) |

| A.2.15. | Recombinant DNA or gene transfer to human subjects? | \( _X \) |
|        | \( \text{If yes, approval by the UNC-CH Institutional Biosafety Committee is required.} \) | \( _X \) |

| A.2.16. | Does this study involve UNC-CH cancer patients? | \( _X \) |
|        | \( \text{If yes, submit this application directly to the Oncology Protocol Review Committee.} \) | \( _X \) |

| A.2.17. | Will subjects be studied in the General Clinical Research Center (GCRC)? | \( _X \) |
|        | \( \text{If yes, obtain the GCRC Addendum from the GCRC and submit complete application (IRB application and Addendum) to the GCRC.} \) | \( _X \) |
Part A.3. Potential Conflict of Interest

The following questions apply to all investigators and study staff involved with this research, and/or their immediate family members (spouse, dependent children, parents, significant others). With respect to this study, will any of the study investigators or study staff or their immediate family members:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.3.1. Have an intellectual property interest in any technology or invention used in this study, including patent rights, copyright, etc.?</td>
<td>__</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.3.2. Receive support from a non-UNC source (other than through a sponsored research agreement) for this research study?</td>
<td>__</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.3.3. Receive any form of personal compensation (other than as specified in the budget of a sponsored research agreement) from a Sponsor of this study, including salary, consulting fees, honoraria, royalties, equipment, gifts, etc.?</td>
<td>__</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. If yes, does or will that personal compensation exceed $10,000?</td>
<td>__</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. If yes, is that personal compensation tied to any performance within this study such as enrollment goals for the study?</td>
<td>__</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.3.4. Have an ownership interest of any nature in the Sponsor or a product used in this study, including equity, stock options, etc.?</td>
<td>__</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. If yes, does or will that interest exceed $10,000 in value or 5% equity in a publicly traded Sponsor?</td>
<td>__</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. If yes, does that interest include any equity interest in a non-publicly traded Sponsor?</td>
<td>__</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.3.5. Hold any position with the Sponsor, including officer, employee, director, trustee, consultant, member of advisory board, etc.?</td>
<td>__</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.3.6. Have a conflict of interest previously disclosed through the University’s conflict of interest evaluation process that relates to this research study?</td>
<td>__</td>
<td>X</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

If the answer is “yes” to any of the questions above, please include an explanation with this application. As with any changes to the research itself, relationships or interests that develop later should be brought to the attention of the IRB for further consideration. Please contact the Office of University Counsel for guidance or assistance regarding the University’s Conflict of Interest Policy. See [http://www.unc.edu/campus/policies/coi.html](http://www.unc.edu/campus/policies/coi.html) for the policy.
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 for internal and external communications regarding this research. Include purpose, methods, and participants. Typical summaries are 50-100 words.

The purpose of this study is to explore “how” K-5 elementary principals of state recognized “Schools of Excellence” are (or aren’t) promoting and supporting both excellence AND systemic equity in their schools. Through the use of interviews with principals, assistant principals, teachers, and parent leaders, the specific strategies that principals use to advance their work in the face of countervailing pressures of public schools will be documented.

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.

Although studies have examined schools that make a difference in the lives of marginalized children (Oakes, Quartz, Ryan & Lipton, 2000; Riester, Pursch & Skrla, 2002), there is an absence of literature regarding principals as the unit of analysis and the process of actually leading for excellence and equity. The rationale of this empirical inquiry of leadership for excellence and systemic equity is to document how schools, and leaders in particular, can and are pursuing, supporting, and achieving both goals (see attached copy of Application for Research Study in Wake County Public Schools).

A.4.3. 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.

This study of twenty (20) North Carolina “Schools of Excellence” employs qualitative case study methods as the dominant research paradigm. Multisite qualitative research studies address the same research questions in a number of settings using similar data collection and analysis procedures in each setting. The intent is to optimize description utilizing cross-site comparisons and to increase the potential for generalizing findings beyond a particular case. The following questions will focus this research: (1) How are principals of Schools of Excellence promoting and supporting
social justice and systemic equity in K-12 public schools? (2) What are principals of Schools of Excellence doing to ensure the success of ALL their students and what were the important first steps they took as they moved toward high achievement for all? (3) How do these findings connect to and build upon the literature related to leadership for social justice and systemic equity? and (4) What can be learned from Schools of Excellence that could benefit other schools with similar demographics? Qualitative data will be collected by the principal investigator and the four co-investigators through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with multiple sources (i.e., 15-20 school principals, 15-20 assistant principals, 30-40 teachers, and 15-20 parent leaders). Each principal and assistant principal interview will last approximately 60 minutes. Each teacher and parent leader interview will last approximately 45 minutes. The research questions, which served as the foundation on which the protocols were formulated, will also serve as the cornerstone for the data analysis. Interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed for purposes of analysis (see attached copies of interview protocols and attached copy of Application, and Approval, for Research Study in Wake County Public Schools).

A.4.4. **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.

By exploring best practices and documenting effective strategies, a research-based guide for leaders striving towards or improving upon excellent and equitable schools will be created. Aside from sharing their perspective and adding to a growing body of knowledge, there will be no direct benefit to the individual participants.

A.4.5. **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.

Because many of the participants will be in subordinate roles (e.g., assistant principals and teachers) and will be asked to comment on their principal’s execution of equity-related policies and practices, the researchers are sensitive to a certain level of psychological risk that participants may encounter through participation in this study. As such, the researchers assure all participants strict confidentiality. All participants will sign consent forms, will agree to be audio-taped, and will be provided with pseudonyms. In an effort to assure interviewees anonymity, no personally identifiable information will be used. Pseudonyms will also be used for each school and for the school district. Data will be analyzed utilizing cross-site comparisons as a whole—no individual or individual school will be singled out in the analysis or in any of the reports.
A.4.6. **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).

Data analysis procedures will follow the methods recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994). The interviews will be recorded with permission, transcribed, and will be analyzed for common themes and concepts. Constant comparative analysis/coding will be done as themes emerge.

A.4.7. **Will you collect or receive any of the following identifiers as part of the study data?** Does not apply to consent forms.

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

a. _X_ Names
b. _X_ Telephone numbers  **[Work]**
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. _X_ 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 **[School location]**
e. _ _ Fax numbers
f. _X_ 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.4.8. Data sharing.** With whom will *identifiable* (contains any of the 18 identifiers listed in question 7 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.4.9. 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). Describe your plan to destroy identifiers. When will identifiers be destroyed?

Individual participants, school sites, and the school district will not be identified in any report or publication about this study. All identifiable data, audiotapes, and subsequent transcriptions will be kept in a locked file cabinet inside the private, locked office of the PI. This information will not be shared with anyone outside the immediate research team. Pseudonyms will be used for the school district, individual schools, principals, assistant principals, teachers, and parent leaders involved. Information from individual participants will not be shared with any other participants (i.e., principals will not have access to any of the information shared by assistant principals, teachers, and/or parent leaders).

**A.4.10. Data security for storage and transmission.** Please check all that apply.

*For electronic data:*

- Secure network
- **X** Password access
- Encryption
Describe how data will be protected for any portable device:

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):

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.

With permission from the Director of Research and Evaluation for the Wake County School System, potential participants will be contacted via phone and/or e-mail. At the time of the interview, all participants will be required to complete a “Consent to participate in a research study” form that is included as a part of this application. If participants do not complete the form, they will not be included in the study. No children, decisionally impaired, or non-English speaking persons will be enrolled in this study.

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).  
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).  
Explain.

If you checked “yes” to either, will consent be oral? Will you give out a fact sheet? Use an online consent form, or include information as part of the survey itself, etc?

A.5.3. Justification for a full or partial waiver of consent. The default is for subjects to sign a written document that contains all the elements of 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?  
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.)

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.)

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

   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) __ yes __ no Protected Health Information (PHI)? (If you checked “yes,” explain how not recording or using PHI would make the research impracticable).

   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. Subjects. 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.

While the specific gender, ethnicity, race and age of the participants is unknown at this time, all subjects will be healthy volunteers.

15 to 20 K-5 Elementary Principals of “Schools of Excellence” in Wake County, NC (1 per school)
15 to 20 K-5 Assistant Principals of “Schools of Excellence” in Wake County, NC (1 per school)
30 to 40 Teachers working in “Schools of Excellence” in Wake County, NC (2 per school)
15 to 20 Parent Leaders associated with of “Schools of Excellence” in Wake County, NC (1 per school)

B.2. Inclusion/exclusion criteria. List required characteristics of potential subjects, and those that preclude enrollment. 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.

All participants must be currently working with (principals, assistant principals, and teachers) or associated with (parent leaders) a K-5, traditional calendar elementary “School of Excellence” (as designated by the state of North Carolina). Based on 2004-05 test data, 32 K-5, traditional calendar elementary schools in Wake County were identified as “Schools of Excellence.” All 32 schools will be contacted and invited to participate in this study. It is anticipated that approximately 20 of the 32 schools will respond in a timely manner and agree to participate.

B.3. 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.

The schools participating will be selected because they were originally identified as K-5, traditional calendar, elementary “Schools of Excellence” in Wake County according to North Carolina state testing data criteria (i.e., 90% of all of their 4th and 5th grade students scored at or above grade level on both the math and reading tests). With permission from
the Director of Research and Evaluation for Wake County Public Schools, each school principal will be contacted via phone or e-mail and asked if they (and their school) are willing to participate. Each principal will be asked to identify to the researcher the names of assistant principals, four to five teachers, and two to three parent leaders who might be potential candidates. The researchers will randomly e-mail some of these potential participants and invite them to participate. Efforts will be made to ensure equal access to participation among women (minority status will not be known) and to protection of privacy (e.g., principals will not know which teachers and parents were actually asked and agreed to participate). Each potential participant will have the opportunity to grant consent in a voluntary way after making an informed decision based on study details provided by the research team. The research team will make all the arrangements at the convenience of participants. All participants will sign a “Consent to participate in study” form at the time of the interview. Study participation is completely voluntary. Refusal to participate in this study will not result in any negative consequences for individuals (see attachment for recruiting e-mail).

B.4. 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?

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

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

B.5. 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.

The entire study should be completed within six months. Each principal and assistant principal interview will last approximately 60 minutes. Each teacher and parent leader interview will last approximately 45 minutes.

B.6. Where will the subjects be studied? Describe locations where subjects will be studied, both on and off the UNC-CH campus.

All interviews will be conducted in a private location at the participating school sites.

B.7. 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).
The privacy of the subjects will be observed throughout the study. Participants will not be identified in any report or publication about this study. Each interview will occur in a private location (e.g., conference room, school office, unoccupied classroom). Only the researcher and the individual participant will be present during the interview. All data will be coded to preserve anonymity.

B.8. **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.

No incentives will be used.

B.9. **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 will be no cost to the subjects other than their time to participate.
University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Adult Participants [Principals]
Social Behavioral Form

IRB Study #
Consent Form Version Date: 11/4/05

Title of Study: Good Schools, Good Leaders: Portraits of Excellence!

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What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be uncommon or previously unknown risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study.