

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by John Edward Dalton entitled “Characteristics of High-Performing, High-Poverty Elementary Schools in East Tennessee.” I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education, with a major in Educational Administration, Supervision & Policy Studies.

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CHARACTERISTICS OF HIGH-PERFORMING, HIGH-POVERTY
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN EAST TENNESSEE

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Education
Degree
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John Edward Dalton
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Mike and Linda Dalton, who showed me early in my life the importance of education, and to my wife Shelly and children, Ryan and Eliza, who sacrificed more than they should for me.

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ABSTRACT

High academic achievement by students in high-poverty schools is unusual throughout the United States. East Tennessee is no exception. However, there are some schools with high percentages of low socioeconomic student populations, which do excel in helping students reach high academic performance. This study looks at four high-performing, high-poverty elementary schools in East Tennessee to determine how they have overcome the tendency to accept low student achievement as inevitable.

By studying the high-achieving, high-poverty schools that exist in East Tennessee to find not only the characteristics that are associated with these effective schools, but also, more importantly, the practices used by educators in these schools, we can begin to provide some answers that will help all schools improve the academic performance of economically disadvantaged students. This mixed-method, multi-site case study involved four elementary schools in East Tennessee that were selected because of high test scores and value-added scores on the Annual Report Card issued by the state of Tennessee. Using quantitative data (The More Effective Schools Staff Survey) and qualitative data (interviews with the principal and at least two teachers at each school along with observations), this study sought to answer the following two research questions:

- (1) Which of the characteristics of Effective Schools do high-performing, high-poverty schools in East Tennessee have in common?
 - (a) How do these characteristics correspond to those identified in the Effective Schools Research?
 - (b) How do the characteristics differ from those identified in the Effective Schools Research?

(2) What underlying conditions (i.e., values, beliefs, and culture of the school) or distinctive practices must be present for the Effective Schools practices to exist?

A clear school mission, high expectations for success, instructional leadership, frequent monitoring of student progress, opportunities to learn and student time on task, a safe and orderly environment, and a positive home-school relationship – the seven correlates of the Effective Schools Research – were all found to be present in the four schools studied. The underlying conditions or distinct practices included strong commitment of teachers and staff members at each school; teachers were held accountable for teaching and students for learning; a positive, caring atmosphere existed where staff relationships were strong and a deep understanding of the local community was evident; and staff development and training were provided to support and consistently improve a wide variety of programs.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Educators have thought for years that students who come from a low socioeconomic status (SES) family do not perform as well academically as students from more affluent families. This assumption is not absolute because some students from low-income families do well academically, and, conversely, some wealthier students have problems scholastically. Despite the variations, there is evidence to support the claim that socioeconomic status can and does affect student achievement. Several studies on student performance (Bowey, 1995; Duncan, Brooks-Gunn & Klebanov, 1994; Levine & Levine, 1996; Simon & Hocevar, 1998) have concluded that family background is the strongest single predictor of educational achievement. These studies also show that the relationship between performance and wealth is constant across a wide range of socioeconomic status values resulting in a strong positive correlation between socioeconomic status and educational achievement. With the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), educators must now look at each subgroup (e.g., minority, limited English proficient, students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged, Title 1, and male/female) and determine how to improve the academic performance of that group of students. For economically disadvantaged students, this requires finding out how some are successful when most are not.

High academic achievement by students in high-poverty schools is unusual throughout the United States. East Tennessee is no exception. However, there are some schools with high percentages of low socioeconomic status students, which do excel in helping students reach high academic performance. This study looks at a small group of

these high-performing, high-poverty schools in East Tennessee to determine how they have overcome the tendency to accept low student achievement as inevitable. It is the goal of this research to provide helpful lessons, based on the success of these extraordinary schools, for educators who work in similar environments.

The federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation has placed low socioeconomic schools in the very difficult situation of having to immediately improve the academic success of their students or face sanctions by the state. According to NCLB, each state must implement high academic standards for all students and create assessment procedures that track the progress towards those objectives. Implemented during the 2002-2003 school year, NCLB requires 100% proficiency among students in math, reading, and language arts by 2014 (NCLB, 2001). The major emphasis of this federal legislation is that all students, even those in subgroups such as low socioeconomic students, will reach the proficient level. Further, to ensure that schools place appropriate emphasis on increasing the proficiency level in each subgroup, the NCLB act requires adequate yearly progress (AYP) to be made each year. Schools that fail to meet the benchmarks set by each state for academic progress must develop and implement changes in order to improve. Thus, it is crucial that high poverty schools needing to improve have access to the practices that successful schools have used to improve the academic achievement of their at-risk students. To find that information, it is necessary to identify those successful schools and to study them to determine the common practices that lead to success.

Despite the results from several studies regarding student performance (Bowey, 1995; Duncan, Brooks-Gunn & Klebanov, 1994; Levine & Levine, 1996; Simon &

Hocevar, 1998) that socioeconomic status is the strongest single predictor of educational achievement, most educators would agree that all students can learn, but how and under what conditions are often difficult for schools to determine. Given the current status of public schools under the No Child Left Behind legislation, schools are struggling to meet the needs of low SES students. It is the goal of this study to identify the programs, characteristics and techniques used by schools that have high-performing, low-income students.

Statement of the Problem

The student population in the state of Tennessee is growing rapidly and is characterized by an increasing number of low-income students. The Annual Report Card, issued by the Tennessee Department of Education, in 2002 showed a total of 909,746 students in Tennessee public schools (Tennessee Annual Report, 2002). By 2005, that number had grown to 977,544 students (Tennessee Annual Report, 2005). During the same period of time, the Annual Report showed that the number of low socioeconomic students, indicated by the number of students receiving free or reduced-priced meals, increased from 43.9% (or 395,149 students) to 52.1% (or 453,492 students).

The academic progress of students in the low socioeconomic group is discussed in Part II of the Annual Report Card for Tennessee. In math, for students in grades K-8, 31.1% were “below proficient” in 2003, 25.0% were “below proficient” in 2004, and 19.0 % were “below proficient” in 2005. In Reading/Language plus Writing, the results were slightly better for K-8 students with 25.9% “below proficient” in 2003 compared to 22.0 % below proficient in 2004 and 14.0% “below proficient” in 2005 (Tennessee Annual Report, 2005). The significant decreases in the percentage of low socioeconomic

students scoring “below proficient” in math and reading indicate that at least some schools have found ways to address the needs of these students. However, the significant percentage still failing indicates that schools must continue to address the academic needs of these students in order to meet the benchmarks set by the No Child Left Behind legislation.

The state of Tennessee produces an annual report card which includes the status of each of Tennessee’s 136 school systems based on the results from the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) criterion referenced test. This document does not indicate how some schools are able to achieve success despite the challenge of a high percentage of low socioeconomic status students, but it does provide the data needed to isolate areas of need. According to the State of Tennessee Department of Education website, 78 schools in those 136 systems were identified in 2005 as not meeting the Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) benchmarks required by federal law (<http://tennessee.gov/education/nclb/ayp/targetschls.2005-06.pdf>). Schools not only have faced the problem of an increasing economically disadvantaged student population, but they also have been publicly targeted for the failure to raise the performance level of this group and are under a rigid timeline for producing results. A positive result of the annual report card is that it allows the identification of schools that are successful with economically disadvantaged students. By studying the high-performing, high-poverty schools that exist in East Tennessee to determine the characteristics and practices that make them effective schools, information can be provided to help all schools improve the academic performance of economically disadvantaged students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the effective schools practices used by high-performing, high-poverty elementary schools in East Tennessee and to identify the underlying conditions (i.e., values, beliefs, and culture of the school) necessary for their implementation in other high poverty schools.

In the February 2005 issue of *Educational Leadership*, David Ferrero stated that high-performing schools that serve high percentages of minority and low-income students have a number of things in common – site-based management, school choice, and accountability. Additionally, they are data-driven and research based. He continued to say, “...these structural features only get us so far. They explain what schools have in common, but they don’t account for what makes them distinctive” (p. 8). Ferrero believed that the one aspect of high-performing schools that has long been overlooked is philosophy – the values, beliefs, and collective culture of the school that creates the “distinctiveness” of an effective learning community. It is the purpose of this study to determine not just the common practices of high-performing schools from East Tennessee, but to also determine the “distinctiveness” of each of the schools that have been studied. The distinctive practices and characteristics of these effective schools can be used by other educators to help improve student achievement in similar school settings.

Research Questions

This study will use a faculty survey, principal and teacher interviews, and observations to answer the following questions:

- (1) Which of the characteristics of Effective Schools do high-performing, high-

poverty schools in East Tennessee have in common?

(a) How do these characteristics correspond to those identified in the Effective Schools Research?

(b) How do the characteristics differ from those identified in the Effective Schools Research?

(2) What underlying conditions (i.e., values, beliefs, and culture of the school) or distinctive practices must be present for the Effective Schools practices to exist?

Conceptual Framework

Over 25 years ago James Coleman, a prominent educational researcher who studied the effectiveness of education in the United States, led a group of researchers in producing a report entitled *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Wienfield, & York, 1966). The “Coleman Report” as it became known stated that a student’s academic performance was a direct result of his/her family background (e.g., parent’s education level). Effective schools research emerged as a response to this controversial publication. The characteristics of effective schools were observed and documented through comparative research of effective and non-effective schools based upon academic achievement (Association for Effective Schools, Inc., 1996).

The Association for Effective Schools, Inc. reported in 1996 that as a result of the studies of effective schools, characteristics of successful schools had been observed and documented. It was determined that:

- Public schools can and do make a difference, even those comprised of students from poverty backgrounds.
- Children from poverty backgrounds can learn at high levels as a result of public schools.
- There are unique characteristics and processes common to schools where all children are learning, regardless of family background.
- Replication research conducted in recent years reaffirms these findings and the fact that these correlates describe schools where children are learning and do not describe schools where children are learning at a much lower level. (Association for Effective Schools, Inc., 1996, p. 2)

The characteristics found in schools where all students learn are referred to as “correlates.” These correlates were the beginning of what is now referred to as Effective Schools Research. The seven correlates are as follows:

- Clear School Mission
- High Expectations for Success
- Instructional Leadership
- Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress
- Opportunity to Learn and Student Time on Task
- Safe and Orderly Environment
- Home-School Relations (Association for Effective Schools, Inc., 1996, p. 2)

This mixed-methods study is based on the concept that the extent of the use of the correlates of Effective Schools Research is a major factor in the success of high-poverty

schools in East Tennessee (see Chapter 2 for a more complete explanation of the conceptual framework utilized in this study). Both qualitative and quantitative data will be gathered through the use of a survey, teacher and administrator interviews, and observations to determine the extent of correlate use.

Definitions

Some terms discussed in this study need to be defined for reader clarity. While some of the terms and concepts have multiple meanings and/or definitions, the following definitions have been purposefully chosen for use in this study:

- “Effective Schools Research” – Over 25 years ago a federal paper was written by a team of researchers led by James Coleman, a prominent educational researcher who discussed the effectiveness of education in the United States. Effective schools research emerged from the response that this controversial paper generated. The characteristics of effective schools were observed and documented through comparative research of effective and non-effective schools based upon academic achievement (Association for Effective Schools, 1996).
- “Annual Yearly Progress” (also referred to as “AYP”) – According to the Tennessee State Department of Education, Adequate Yearly Progress is a measure of a school’s or a school system’s ability to meet required federal benchmarks with specific performance standards from year to year. (Tennessee Department of Education, 2005)
- “High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools” – High-performing, high-poverty schools are those that meet the following criteria:

- The percentage of economically disadvantaged students in the school is at least 65%.
 - The school received a grade in each of the four subject areas tested – math, science, reading and language arts – that was above the growth standard based on the value added score (3 year average) as reported in the 2005 Tennessee Annual Report Card
- “Student Achievement” – Tennessee currently uses a criterion referenced state test called T-CAP (Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program).
 Achievement is based on the percentage of students proficient in each of the four subject areas tested – Reading/Language Arts, Math, Science and Social Studies. This research study will compare two different types of schools – two schools that are high-achieving and two schools that are low-achieving. The Tennessee State Department of Education uses a standard setting process where grade level and content area experts evaluate test items and recommend standards for each subject area and grade level on a yearly basis. The current testing company, McGraw-Hill, creates "cut scores" based on the standards set by the state to determine "Below Proficient", "Proficient" and "Advanced" status for each student.
 - “Economically Disadvantaged” – In Tennessee, economically disadvantaged is determined through free/reduced price status. “These children are from families who meet certain income criteria making them eligible to receive free or reduced price meals at school” (Tennessee Department of Education, 2005)
 - “Socially Disadvantaged” – Socially disadvantaged individuals are those who have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias within American

society because of their identities as members of groups and without regard to their individual qualities. The social disadvantage must stem from circumstances beyond their control (EZcertify.com, 2008).

- TVAAS – The Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) was implemented and soon became the hallmark for the state’s accountability system for education. The Sanders model, as it was referred to in the EIA, used the data from students’ scores gather by the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) given annually to students in grades three through eight that covers the five major academic subjects (mathematics, science, social studies, reading, and language arts) as well as end-of-course tests given to high school students. (See Appendix A for a detailed description).
- Value Added – The value-added score is a computed gain score calculated through a statistical method using a 3 year average of achievement scores to determine the amount of student improvement from one year to the next. Sanders & Horn (1998) described value-added as “A statistical method of determining the effectiveness of school systems, schools and teachers. TVAAS uses statistical mixed model theory and methodology to enable a multivariate, longitudinal analysis of student achievement data” (p. 248).

Delimitations

Creswell (1994) defined delimitation as “how the study will be narrowed in scope” (p. 110). This study is delimited in four ways. First, high performing schools for this study were chosen using data from the Tennessee Annual Report Card. By using student achievement data, every school in East Tennessee was treated equally and high-

performing schools were identified as those who have achievement scores of at least a B. Student achievement data are easily accessible through the Tennessee State Department of Education's website (<http://www.k-12.state.tn.us/rptcrd05/state1pf.asp>).

The second delimitation for this study was that only high-performing schools with a high percentage of low-income students were studied. Specific high-performing schools were identified that served a low-income student population using the demographic data accessible through the Annual Report Card. Only schools that had a 65% or higher population of students identified as "economically disadvantaged" were used in this study.

The third way this study was delimited was to restrict it to study elementary schools in East Tennessee. The researcher chose to use only elementary schools in East Tennessee so that the schools would be accessible by the researcher with limited travel. And the fourth delimitation was the collection of data from teachers and administrators only. Data were not collected from students, parents or other stakeholders.

Limitations

Creswell (1994) defined limitations as "potential weaknesses of the study," (p. 110) and states that they are likely to occur in every study and must be recognized and documented. One limitation of this study is the lack of generalizability of the findings because it included only elementary schools that serve a large percentage of low-income students. Hopefully, other elementary schools throughout the East Tennessee region can use the results of this study to improve the performance of their low socio-economic students regardless of the size of that group.

Another limitation of this study is the results may not necessarily be applicable to schools in other parts of the state because of the uniqueness of people in East Tennessee. It could be argued that the results are generalizeable and can be applied to all schools no matter the student population but each school and community is different. Each school and school system may have different policies, theories, or expectations for student learning. What is acceptable in one school in East Tennessee may not be acceptable in a similar school in Middle or West Tennessee due to differences in expectations of learning by teachers, administrators, parents, and the community.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because little or no research has identified high-performing, high-poverty elementary schools in East Tennessee. A number of studies have been conducted in several states (i.e., California, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Tennessee, Virginia) and nationwide (Barth, Haycock, Jackson, Mora, Ruiz, Robinson & Wilkins, 1999; Borman, Rachub, Datnow, Alberg, MacIver, Stringfield & Ross, 2000; Carter, 2000; Jerald, 2001; The Charles A. Dana Center, 1999) that identify high-performing, high-poverty schools and their common characteristics. This study is significant in that it will add to this body of literature and bring attention to some East Tennessee schools that have been successful with a challenging group of students.

The NCLB Act calls for an increase in accountability for results, flexibility and local control, options for parents, and use of teaching methods with proven results (NCLB, 2001). Under the NCLB Act, school districts and schools who fail to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) towards predetermined educational benchmarks will be subjected to “improvement, corrective action, and restructuring measures aimed at getting

them back on course to meet State standards” (NCLB). The use of local district funds to allow children to attend other schools and the provisions of supplemental educational services are two of the possibilities which could be required if schools fail to meet AYP. This study is significant because the characteristics of and best practices used by successful schools will be identified and made available to schools struggling to meet the AYP requirements of the NCLB Act.

Organization of the Study

In Chapter 2, a review of literature includes the research on poverty and student achievement, Effective Schools Research, and the characteristics and studies of high-performing, high-poverty schools. Chapter 3 outlines the methods that will be used to conduct this study including the research design, the assumptions and rationale for using a mixed-method design, the role of the researcher, selection and description of the participants, and the methods used for analyzing and verifying the data. Chapter 4 reports the quantitative (survey) findings and the qualitative (interviews and observations) findings. Chapter 5 combines the qualitative and quantitative data and analyzes the data together. And Chapter 6 presents a conclusion for the study, a discussion of the findings, practical advice to elementary school administrators and teachers, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This study of high-performing, high-poverty schools touches on three different sources of literature. First, a review was done of the research on the effects of poverty on student achievement. Second, the literature on Effective Schools Research and the “correlates” of effective schools were reviewed. Then, a review of the studies of high-performing, high-poverty schools was completed. The rationale for reviewing these particular bodies of research was (1) to provide the background necessary to understand how poverty affects student achievement, (2) to show how schools that are “effective” have successfully addressed the issues surrounding socioeconomic status and student achievement, and (3) to establish from the review of the studies of high-performing, high-poverty schools that these schools not only exist, but also exhibit characteristics similar to the “correlates” of the Effective Schools research.

Poverty and Student Achievement Literature

A wide range of factors have been studied to determine their impact on student achievement. Conventional socioeconomic indicators (i.e., income, parent education level, parental support, home environment, parent marital status, and academic opportunities) have been researched thoroughly. Some studies have even focused on the effects of neighborhoods (and the influence of crime, violence, and poverty) on student achievement (Bowen & Bowen, 1999; Crane, 1991; Jencks & Meyer, 1990; Levine & Levine, 1996). Other studies have revealed significant relationships between several environmental characteristics and student achievement (Bowey, 1995; Duncan, Brooks-

Gunn & Klebanov, 1994; Levine & Levine, 1996; Simon & Hocevar, 1998). Certain environmental and school characteristics were determined to have a significant impact on student achievement with regards to race (Bankston & Caldas, 1998; Levine & Levine, 1996; Peng, Wright, & Hill, 1995; Wilson, 1987, 1996).

Environmental and school characteristics including socioeconomic status, parent educational level, family structure, and availability of resources have been determined to impact student achievement differently when race is a factor, but the correlation between race and student achievement has been found to be overstated. Poverty has been targeted as the major factor linking student achievement and socioeconomic status (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, Klebanov & Sealander, 1993; Crane, 1991; Datcher, 1982; Kukul, Levine & Meyer, 1978; Meyer & Levine, 1977a, 1977b; Meyer & Levine, 1978).

Since the 1960s, social science researchers have acknowledged that socioeconomic status (SES) directly influences student achievement (Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Weinfield & York, 1966). In the report of the factors that affected student achievement in African-American and White students in the United States, Coleman et al. (1966) found the same result for both groups – the socioeconomic status of the students was the most significant factor which affected student achievement. Coleman (1990) later stated that educators should develop policy with student socioeconomic status in mind. Coleman (1990) also stated that “schools bring little influence to bear on a child’s achievement that is independent of his background and social context” (p. 119). He concluded that students developed “inequalities” outside of the school setting and bring these “inequalities” to school with them, rather than the school creating these “inequalities” for the students after they arrive.

Caldas and Bankston (2001) also found that “individual family poverty status, as indicated by participation in the federal free/reduced lunch program, does have a small, independent negative side effect on academic achievement” (p. 274). The key finding from this research was that a student’s academic achievement was significantly influenced by family social status. Druian and Butler (1987) found that one of the characteristics of students who are considered to be at risk was “being a member of a low-income family” (p. 3). They further stated that “one very important aspect of the problem is that it is clear that populations with these characteristics are growing – so that if there is a correlation between population characteristics and being at risk, the situation will in all likelihood worsen” (p. 3).

While these researchers painted a gloomy picture in regards to educating low income students, other researchers concluded that schools could make a difference. Taylor and Baker (2003) stated “A quality education prepares learners for careers *and* for further learning because a quality education teaches students how to bring their best to themselves and to society” (p. 29). Harsh (2003) reported “...the answer to what works to improve student achievement lies with the classroom itself” (p. 5). Although teachers may work hard to implement programs and strategies to improve student achievement, Harsh stated that “...no direct correlation between the level of effort made by the teacher and the improved performance level of students” (p. 6) could be found. What Harsh found was that high student achievement was linked to a distinct set of teaching strategies shared by both teachers and administrators. Harsh stated “that teachers in high achieving classrooms not only used traditionally recognized good teaching practices, but also demonstrated depth in their understanding of the curriculum and detailed management of the daily instructional process” (p. 7).

Goycochea (1998) indicated that “flagship schools” (p. 30) are usually credited with being the most effective schools in a school system whereby the “bottom schools”

(p. 30) are typically located in the poorest areas and have the lowest scores on academic assessments. Her point is that in order to narrow the margin between “flagship schools” and the low performing schools, educators must look beyond the traditional measurements in order to properly determine the effectiveness of a school. Goycochea suggests that a value-added approach that represents academic growth over a certain period of time is what is needed in order to make teachers and administrators accountable for the learning taking place in each classroom so that school effectiveness can be properly evaluated.

Cawelti (2000) found several practices that contribute to high achievement including: (1) a highly committed faculty, (2) a strong principal, (3) extensive reading practice, (4) extending time spent on task, (5) incentives and recognition, and (6) a pre-assessment program (p. 43). In 2001, Cawelti reported that his study of six high-performing school districts from across the county revealed five common elements including:

- (a) The districts developed programs, policies, and teaching strategies that lead to higher levels of achievement.
 - (b) The districts decentralized management, linked individuals to results, and established teams to monitor performance data and plan for improvements.
 - (c) The districts provided staff development time to analyze whether local and state curricula and assessments were aligned.
 - (d) The district ensured that teachers were able to assess skills, differentiate instruction, and reinforce learned skills.
 - (e) The districts were committed to research-based planning for improvement.
- (pp. 34-35)

These studies indicate a transition over the years from results that pointed to environmental factors as the primary determinants of student achievement to the conclusion that schools can effectively influence student achievement. Let us now turn our attention to that corpus of research.

Effective Schools Research Literature

Over 25 years ago James Coleman, a prominent educational researcher led a team of scholars who studied the effectiveness of education in the United States, published a report entitled “Equality of Educational Opportunity Survey.” Research, usually referred to as “Effective Schools Research,” emerged from the responses that this controversial report generated. Effective Schools Research featured observation and documentation of the characteristics found in schools determined to be effective based on academic achievement and not found in schools determined to be ineffective based on academic achievement (Association for Effective Schools, Inc., 1996).

Coleman et al. (1966) concluded that public schools did not have a significant effect on student achievement. Rather, he found that a student’s family background was the primary determinate of student success in school. Coleman concluded that students from low socioeconomic households did not possess the proper conditions for learning, did not value learning, and simply could not learn despite all efforts that schools attempted (Association for Effective Schools, Inc., 1996).

For approximately 10 years after the Coleman report, a number of research studies were conducted that compared successful low-income schools to similar schools where students were not as successful. As researchers compared the achievement data from schools across the country, they were able to find schools where poor students were

learning successfully, but one question seemed to remain – why were students in some schools learning and others were not? To answer this question, researchers began to compare similar schools where students were not achieving with the successful schools that had been identified through previous studies. The result was a list of traits observed and documented in the schools where students were learning and achieving despite having economically disadvantaged backgrounds. These characteristics eventually came to be known as the *effective schools correlates* because each of them was correlated with high student achievement (Raham, 2001).

The first effective schools research studies concluded that schools had very little impact on a child's academic achievement. The first studies were mainly based on quantitative data that focused on that impact of schools rather than the process that schools employ to produce educational achievement. The idea that schools made no difference in a child's development sparked a number of studies intent on dispelling the claims of Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Weinfield and York (1966) and Jencks (1972). The purpose of the effective schools research quickly became to demonstrate that schools did have a positive influence and effect on student achievement. The results of this research identified the characteristics or factors of school that could be positively related to academic achievement. A small sample of schools was used by the researchers during this time of the effective schools research and the results of the studies focused on what effective schools look like and the characteristics which effective schools possess.

Research studies from the mid-1960s through the early 1970s showed that there were effective schools and school systems. During this time, a researcher would compile

data from a large number of schools but would look for the predominate characteristics of those schools in terms of student achievement. If the data revealed that the majority of the schools being studied were ineffective, the researcher would conclude that those characteristics indicated ineffective schools despite the possible presence of some effective schools. In the mid-1970s, research on effective schools began to change and began to focus on the individual schools with high achievement. These schools, for the most part, did not differ from other schools with similar characteristics (student population, geographic location, socioeconomic status, and per-pupil expenditure). These schools were clearly better than most schools; therefore, something was present which warranted further study.

Ron Edmonds (1979) challenged Coleman's findings that schools could not help poor students learn. Edmonds and his team of researchers agreed that a student's family did, indeed, influence school achievement, but they were determined to identify schools that served poor students that were highly successful in order to prove that the school can influence student achievement. Initially, Edmonds' staff identified two low-income schools that had significantly out-performed academically neighboring schools from more affluent areas. Edmonds requested and received a \$1 million dollar grant from the U.S. Office of Education to continue his research to identify more schools where students from economically disadvantaged homes over achieved their learning expectations. These schools eventually became known as "effective schools" (Raham, 2001).

Edmonds (1979) determined that the results of his own research were consistent with other studies and boldly stated that, in his opinion, all schools could be effective. He wrote:

It seems to me, therefore, that what is left of this discussion are three declarative statements: (a) We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us; (b) We already know more than we need to do that; and (c) Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far. (p. 22)

Edmonds statements, contrary to the findings of such researchers as Coleman and Jencks, were based on the results of three separate studies. The first study was done with two inner-city schools in Detroit. The second study, inspired by Coleman's study, looked at 55 effective schools in the Northeast. The third study focused on 20 inner-city schools in New York. Not only did Edmonds find that effective schools had a clear purpose that all staff members worked to achieve, he also discovered that effective schools were renowned for strong leadership; a climate of high-expectations; an orderly atmosphere; communication to students and their parents about the school's priority on learning the basics; a willingness to change when necessary; and a system for monitoring student achievement (Edmonds, 1979).

A second round of effective schools research followed the initial studies from the 1970s. Some of the findings from these studies were consistent with the findings from the original studies, but some researcher's added new findings, or, in some instances, the findings of the effective schools research from the 1970s. The studies by Edmonds (1979), Brookover (1985), Rutter (1979), and others, however, remained the basis that later researchers used to further develop the characteristics of effective schools.

Goodlad (1982) studied 13 triples (i.e., an elementary, middle, and high school that serve the same student population) from across the country. Goodlad surveyed 1,350

teachers, over 18,000 students, 8,600 parents, along with all principals, superintendents, and school board members from each of the schools in the study. Along with over 5,000 observations, Goodlad and associates determined:

- The greatest predictor of school success was goal congruence among teachers, administrators, students, and parents.
- The staff in successful schools had little concern about violence, discipline, and management; instead their concern was with the school's educational priorities.
- Effective schools were perceived as workplaces that provided autonomy as well as involvement in educational decisions.
- Teachers in successful schools spent more time on instruction and students spent more time on learning tasks.
- There was little difference in actual techniques and methods of teaching between successful and unsuccessful schools. (Goodlad, 1982)

Other researchers have attempted to identify characteristics of effective schools by reviewing previous studies and synthesizing their findings. Purkey and Smith (1983) reviewed research and literature on effective schools, educational innovation, and school organization, and they concluded that effective schools possessed the following characteristics:

1. Site-based management,
2. Strong leadership either from the administration or a group of teachers,
3. Staff stability,
4. A well-planned and coordinated curriculum,

5. Ongoing, school wide staff development,
6. Parental involvement,
7. School wide recognition of academic success,
8. Maximized learning time,
9. Support from district office,
10. Collaborative planning and collegial relationships,
11. Sense of community,
12. Clear goals and high expectations commonly shared, and
13. Order and discipline.

The first nine characteristics from this list were identified by Purkey and Smith as “organization-structure variables” that occur prior to and work to further the last four characteristics which they classified as “process variables” (p. 433).

In 1987, Stedman studied schools whose low-income student population demonstrated consistent academic success for several years. Stedman’s results challenged the conclusions of many previous studies on effective schools in that he found that an emphasis on basic skills and time on task has little impact on student achievement. He found nine categories that broadly characterized the effectiveness of the schools that he studied:

1. Emphasis on ethnic and racial pluralism,
2. Parent participation,
3. Shared governance with teachers and parents,
4. Academically rich programs,
5. Skilled use and training of teachers,

6. Personal attention to students,
7. Student responsibility for school affairs,
8. An accepting and supportive environment, and
9. Teaching aimed at preventing academic problems. (Steadman, 1987, p. 218)

There were two large studies reported in the late 1980s that expanded the knowledge base of effective schools research. Mortimore, Sammons, Stoll, Lewis and Ecob (1988) conducted a four-year longitudinal study of 50 elementary schools in the inner city of London. They found that schools with smaller classes and smaller student populations, higher socioeconomic status, a clean and appropriate building, and small turnover of teacher had a distinct advantage over schools that did not have these characteristics. Mortimore et al. reported that there were 12 “key factors” that fell within the control of each school that were essential to the effectiveness of the school:

1. The principal’s leadership;
2. The assistant principal’s involvement in instructional decisions;
3. Teacher’s involvement in instructional decisions;
4. Consistency among teachers;
5. Structured lessons, with a degree of student choice within that structure;
6. Intellectually challenging instruction;
7. A work-centered environment;
8. Focused lessons, with academic work within that focus geared to individual student needs;
9. Maximum teacher-student interaction;

10. Teacher record keeping, including notes on students' progress and samples of students' work;
11. Parental involvement, including help in and visits to classrooms and attendance at meeting on student progress; and
12. A positive school climate. (pp. 250-256)

Rosenholtz (1989) conducted a mixed-method study of a random sample of 78 elementary schools in Tennessee. She identified 65 of the 78 elementary schools as “learning impoverished” and the remaining 13 schools as “learning enriched.” Within the learning enriched schools, Rosenholtz found the following characteristics:

1. Shared instructional goals,
2. Teacher collaboration,
3. A spirit of continuous learning and growth among teachers,
4. Teacher certainty about technical knowledge and instructional practice, and
5. Teacher commitment and optimism.

Austin and Reynolds (1990), reviewing what they referred to as the “second wave” of effective schools research, compiled studies conducted in a number of countries. They described that the following characteristics of effective schools were consistent among the studies they reviewed:

1. Site management,
2. Leadership,
3. Staff stability,
4. Curriculum and instructional articulation and organization,
5. Staff development,

6. Maximized learning time,
7. Widespread recognition of academic success,
8. Parental involvement and support,
9. Collaborative planning and collegial relationships,
10. Sense of community,
11. Clear goals and expectations commonly shared, and
12. Order and discipline. (pp. 168-174)

Although the results of these studies vary, the common threads that emerged were valuable in the development of a list of characteristics that could be shown to be common to effective schools. These common threads are listed in Table 1. This table shows the characteristics identified by each researcher that indicate one of the “correlates” of effective schools discussed in the next section.

Table 1 *Common Characteristics of Effective Schools Studies*

Correlates of Effective Schools	Goodlad (1982)	Purkey & Smith (1983)	Stedman (1987)	Mortimore et al. (1988)	Rosenholtz (1989)	Austin & Reynolds (1990)
A Clear School Mission	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
High Expectations for Success		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Instructional Leadership	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Opportunities to Learn & Time on Task	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Safe and Orderly Environment	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Positive Home-School Relations		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress				✓		✓

Correlates of Effective Schools

Most, if not all, effective schools exhibit unique characteristics that correlate with the success that these schools have with student achievement. For this reason, these characteristics are referred to as *correlates* by researchers such as Lezotte (1991). The seven correlates described below have been identified by researchers because of their significant affect on student learning. The Association of Effective Schools, Inc. (1996) defined these correlates as:

...the means to achieving high and equitable levels of student learning. It is expected that all children (whether they be male or female, rich or poor, black or white) will learn at least the essential knowledge, concepts and skills needed so that they can be successful at the next level next year. Further, it has been found that when school improvement processes based upon the effective schools research are implemented, the proportions of students that achieve academic excellence either improves, or at the very least, remains the same. (p. 1)

Clear School Mission

Lezotte (1991) proposed that in effective schools “there is a clearly articulated school mission through which the staff shares an understanding of and commitment to instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures, and accountability” (p. 6).

Previously, this characteristic focused on the teachers’ ability to teach to all students no matter their ability level.

In recent years, the principal has become the leader of the school and thus is expected to create a clear mission for the school (Haberman, 2003). In order to develop a clear mission, the principal should “create a common vision, build effective teams to

implement that vision, and engender commitment to task – the persistent hard work needed to engender learning” (p. 2). This does not mean that teachers should not be involved in making decisions about their school. Cibulka and Nakayama (2000) warned that “too often schools are organized as administrative hierarchies rather than as groups of professionals working towards shared goals” (p. 4). The point is that the principal should include all stakeholders involved in the school in creating the vision for the school. It is the involvement of teachers in the process of change that will keep them from leaving the school and reduce the tradition of burnout and turnover rates among young teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1997).

High Expectations for Success

Lezotte (2001) stated, “In the effective school, there is a climate of high expectations in which the staff believes and demonstrates that all students can obtain mastery of the school’s essential curriculum” (p. 7). An overarching theme that has been found throughout the research is that effective schools are “places where every educator is recognized as a valuable contributor with unique strengths and impressive potential to learn, grow, and improve (Johnson, 1997, p. 2). Teachers in effective schools not only have high standards for their students, they hold themselves to higher standards of excellence as well. These schools are places where teachers strive for excellence in teaching through peer mentoring and collaboration. This idea of academic excellence carries over to the students and the result is high performing schools where everyone learns and grows from year to year. Bauer (1997) stated, “In high performing schools, students are given challenging curricula and demanding tasks, and they are expected to succeed. High performing schools regard every child as an asset” (p. 2).

Instructional Leadership

Effective leadership in a school begins by establishing a common set of values and a shared sense of purpose among the staff. If the principal effectively communicates the mission and vision of the school to the teachers and provides them with opportunities to provide input and make decisions collectively as a group, then the staff can work together to achieve the goals of the school. Lezotte (1991) refers to the principal as a “leader of leaders” (p. 3) who empowers teachers by including them in making decisions within the school. Through these activities, the principal can become the instructional leader that is a common characteristic among effective schools. Lezotte noted:

In the effective school, the principal acts as an instructional leader and effectively and continually communicates the mission of the school to staff, parents, and students. In addition, the principal understands and applies the characteristics of instructional effectiveness in the management of the instructional program.

Clearly, the role of the principal as the articulator of the mission of the school is crucial to the overall effectiveness of the school (p. 5).

The role that teachers play in the development of the school’s mission and vision along with their involvement in making decisions within the school is a distinctive characteristic of effective schools. “In order to achieve significant changes in classroom practice, teachers must have an opportunity to participate in shaping a school’s vision...” (Cibulka & Nakayama, 2000, pp. 5-6). The principal works with the teachers and the teachers work with the principal to make sure that everyone understands the expectations of each others roles as well as the expectations for what the students are expected to learn and achieve.

Johnson (1997) recommended five “critical elements” that are crucial for ensuring that high poverty schools become high performing schools. The five “elements” are:

- Effective administrative leadership,
- Positive expectations,
- Strong, integrated curriculum,
- Shared decision making, and
- Campus wide responsibility for teaching and success. (pp. 3-4)

Johnson pointed out that simply implementing activities “will not notably improve student performance. The “critical elements” that he described come from sound educational principles where students and teachers are valued and the educational process is respected. “The critical elements assume that properly supported, students can learn and teachers can teach” (p. 3).

Opportunity to Learn and Student Time on Task

Teachers and principals have the difficult task of addressing the increases in what students are expected to learn within limited time constraints. Effective instruction occurs when educators know exactly what skills and knowledge need to be taught and schedules are designed to provide adequate instructional time. Lezotte (2001) stated:

In the effective school, teachers allocate a significant amount of classroom time to instruction in the essential curricular areas. For a high percentage of this time, students are actively engaged in whole-class or large group, teacher-directed, planned learning activity. (p. 9)

Lezotte (1991) suggested that schools create what he called an “interdisciplinary curriculum” where the essential skills are taught throughout the various courses and/or

subjects. By making decisions about the skills and knowledge which are most important (which Lezotte refers to as “organized abandonment”) and focusing the majority of instructional time on these areas, the remainder of the curriculum becomes supplementary (Lezotte, p. 4).

Safe and Orderly Environment

Lezotte (2001) stated that in a safe and orderly environment, “there is an orderly, purposeful, business-like atmosphere, which is free from the threat of physical harm. The school climate is not oppressive and is conducive to learning” (p. 6). Schools needs to teach students the behaviors that are important for creating a safe and orderly environment while eliminating the behaviors that are “undesirable” (Lezotte, 1991, p. 1). Teachers and staff members must model desirable behaviors that create a safe and orderly environment such as “cooperative team learning,” “respect for human diversity,” and the appreciation of “democratic values” (pp. 1-2).

Positive Home-School Relations

One characteristic of effective schools is “parents understand and support the basic mission of the school and are given opportunities to play important roles in helping the school to achieve its mission” (Lezotte, 2001, p. 8). Consequently, most parents of students who attend ineffective schools in low socioeconomic areas are unable to fully support the academic needs and interests due to financial and physical restraints (Goodman, 1997; Johnson, 1997).

Within the effective schools literature, some researchers have stressed the importance of serving the family and community rather than simply the student (Goodman, 1997; Johnson, 1997). Revilla and Sweeney (1997) recommended that parent

be treated as valued members of the school community and included in activities throughout the school year. Goodman (1997) acknowledged that when children see that their parents value education, “the kids settle down and get serious about learning, and then they achieve positive results” (p. 6). Schools should do all that they can to involve parents by developing programs at night and on weekends so that the relationship between the parent, the child, and the school will strengthen and thus help in improving the academic success of the students. Johnson (1997) referred to parents “as respected partners who bring important perspectives and often the untapped potential to grow in their capacity to support their children’s education” (p. 2).

Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress

Lezotte (2001) stated, “In the effective school, pupil progress over the essential objectives are measured frequently, monitored frequently, and the results of those assessments are used to improve the individual student behaviors and performances, as well as to improve the curriculum as a whole” (p. 8). Lezotte (1991) referred to two “generations” of frequent monitoring of student progress. He stated that once schools attain acceptable status in the “first generation,” schools must advance in the “second generation” during which “the use of technology will permit teachers to do a better job of monitoring their students’ progress. ... [T]his same technology will allow students to monitor their own learning and, when necessary, adjust their own behavior. The use of computerized practice test, the ability to get immediate results on homework, and the ability to see correct solutions developed on the screen are a few of the available tools for assuring student learning” (Lezotte, 1991, p. 5).

The “How” of Effective Schools

Researchers who have studied effective schools have primarily reported the characteristics of effective schools or, in other terms, “what” makes schools effective. Another dimension of the effective schools research is the “how” of school effectiveness where the researcher studies the conditions that make those situations possible. Little (1982) studied six elementary schools (three of which were designated as urban desegregated) looking at the aggregated standardized achievement test data over a three year period. Of the six elementary schools studied, four were identified as “relatively successful” with the other two identified as “relatively unsuccessful.” Little was able to determine through her investigation two conditions that aided in the success of the school. The professional development and school improvement of the “relatively successful” schools were encouraged and cultivated through shared expectations of the staff members in the school (i.e., collegiality) and evaluation and analysis were ongoing (i.e., continuous improvement). Little was able to deduce four types of relations, or what she called “interactions,” which were important for achieving both collegiality and continuous improvement:

- Teachers engage in frequent, continuous, and increasingly concrete and precise talk about teaching practice.
- Teachers are frequently observed and provided with useful (and potentially frightening) critiques of their teaching.
- Teachers plan, design, research, evaluate, and prepare teaching materials together.
- Teachers teach each other the practice of teaching. (Little, 1982, p. 331)

In 1989, Pajak and Glickman looked at school districts that had sustained an improvement in student achievement on standardized tests score over a three consecutive years. In the three school systems that they studied, they determined that there were three major areas that were evident in each situation which related to the “how” schools were being effective:

- An instructional dialogue. Teachers were engaged in a continuous cycle of discussing, planning, implementing, and reviewing curriculum and instruction.
- An infrastructure of support. Each superintendent had set up an organizational structure and designated staff responsible for fostering dialogue about improving instruction and student learning.
- Varied sources of instructional leadership. Although principals supported instructional improvement efforts, they usually were secondary instructional leaders. The primary instructional leaders varied from system to system. They included central office supervisors, assistant principals for instruction, department chairs, grade-level leaders, and teams of teachers. (Pajak & Glickman, 1989)

In 1990, Chubb and Moe reviewed data previously gathered through a study of 500 high schools in which students were surveyed first and then the school administrators and teachers were surveyed. Their conclusions were that the characteristics of effective schools found in these schools were similar to the characteristics of effective schools found in earlier research studies. More specifically, traits such as a clear purpose for the school, strong leadership, professional treatment of teachers, and a clear focus on academic work were evident in the effective schools of their review just as they had been in prior effective schools research. While Chubb and Moe’s work supported earlier

conclusions, they did add a significant conclusion about “how” the schools in their study achieved effectiveness. They said, “The most important prerequisite for the emergence of effective school characteristics is school autonomy, especially from external bureaucratic influence” (p. 23).

Levine (1991) developed nine guidelines for constructing effective schools based on his study of successful effective schools projects:

1. Substantial staff development time must be provided for participating faculty, at least part of the time during the regular teacher workday.
2. Faculties engaged in effective schools projects must not wait very long before beginning to address issues involving the improvement of instruction.
3. Faculties embarking on effective schools projects must avoid getting bogged down in elaborate schemes to train all staff members in the details of a particular instructions technique or approach at the beginning of a project.
4. Improvement goals must be sharply focused to avoid overloading teachers and schools.
5. Significant technical assistance must be made available to faculties participating in effective school projects.
6. Effective school programs should be “data-driven” in the sense that appropriate information should be collected and used to guide participants in preparing and carrying out plans for improvement.
7. Effective schools projects must avoid reliance on bureaucratic processes that stress forms and checklists, as well as on mandated components rigidly applied in participating schools and classrooms.

8. Effective schools projects should seek out and consider using materials, methods, and approaches that have been successful in schools and projects elsewhere.
9. The success of an effective schools program depends on a judicious mixture of autonomy for participating faculties and control from the central office, a kind of “directed autonomy.” (pp. 390-392)

The Association for Effective Schools, Inc. reported in 1996 that as a result of the studies of effective schools, characteristics of successful schools had been observed and documented. It was further determined that:

- public schools can and do make a difference, even those comprised of students from poverty backgrounds.
- Children from poverty backgrounds can learn at high levels as a result of public schools.
- There are unique characteristics and processes common to schools where all children are learning, regardless of family background.
- Replication research conducted in recent years reaffirms these findings and the fact that these correlates describe schools where children are learning and do not describe school where children are learning at a much lower level. (Association for Effective Schools, Inc., 1996, p. 2)

The characteristics found in schools where all students learn are referred to as “correlates” since they could be associated with schools where students were learning and achieving at high levels. These correlates were the beginning of what is now referred to as Effective Schools Research. The seven correlates are as follows:

- Clear School Mission
- High Expectations for Success
- Instructional Leadership
- Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress
- Opportunity to Learn and Student Time on Task
- Safe and Orderly Environment
- Home-School Relations. (Association for Effective Schools, Inc., 1996, p. 2)

Guenther and Calkins (2008) set the stage by providing a new idea for addressing the challenge of reforming low-performing schools. Based on the report, “The Turnaround Challenge,” funded by the Gates Foundation, the authors made the following suggestions:

We start with a straightforward idea: States and districts should work together to create zones offering the supporting operating conditions that characterize high-performing high-poverty schools. These schools are providing proof of the impact that top-notch public education can have on achievement and college matriculation among the most severely at-risk students. At these schools, decisions about staff, budget, schedule, and program tend to be mission-directed rather than mandated by bureaucratic compliance or collective bargaining obligation. Those decisions tend to result in teaching approaches and school models that look quite different from traditional public education. (pg. 25)

Guenther and Calkins continue by stating that “a new kind of resource base” (pg. 26) should accompany this new idea that effective schools should be organized into small

networks or partnerships to make sure a successful turnaround of the low-performing schools.

High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools Literature

Several researchers and educational research organizations have studied high-performing, high-poverty schools from across the country and have reported the characteristics shared by high-performing schools (Education Trust, 2001; Ellis, Gaudet, Hoover, Rizoli & Mader, 2004; Intercultural Development Research Association, 1997; Just for Kids, 2001; Kannapel & Clements, 2005; McCarthy, 2002; Meehan, Cowley, Schumacher, Hauser & Croon, 2003; Reeves, 2000). A major conclusion from this research was that no single silver bullet exists for improving student achievement. There were, in fact, many reasons why high-performing schools were successful (Kannapel & Clements, 2005; Reeves, 2000; Washington State Department of Education, 2005).

A review of the research literature on high-performing, high-poverty schools shows that the common characteristics of these schools are very similar to the correlates reported in the effective school research. A focus on curriculum and teaching, effective leadership, high expectations, the learning environment, parental involvement, professional development, resources, and teacher buy-in were characteristics found in many of these research studies. Although each of these characteristics were not found in each study, it is important to review each as they relate to the correlates from the effective school research and the purpose of this study is to determine the distinctive characteristics of high-achieving, high-poverty schools in East Tennessee. A review of the research on each of the characteristics mentioned above in relation to the Effective Schools “correlates” follows.

Research on the High-Performing Schools Characteristics

When researchers compared high-performing schools to low-performing schools that served underprivileged students, they discovered a common set of characteristics that could be used to identify the “Effective Schools” (those where poor students were performing well academically). The “Correlates” are the set of characteristics that have been determined to show a direct correlation between increased student learning and school climate (i.e., leadership, goals and objectives, standards, evaluations, and parent communication). The Association for Effective Schools, Inc. reports that when schools implement the “Correlates” which are based on the Effective Schools Research, the number of students that show improvement in academic achievement either improves or stays the same (Association for Effective Schools, Inc., 1996). In this section, the seven correlates are presented and described in detail.

Correlate #1 – Clear School Mission

Studies of high-performing schools show a focus on aligning the curriculum, instruction, and assessments with state and national standards. Ellis, Gaudet, Hoover, Rizoli and Mader (2004) noted that some of the very first findings in their research study were an emphasis at both the school and the school district to align their curriculum with the state standards. Barth, Haycock, Jackson, Mora, Ruiz, Robinson and Wilkins (1999) also found that high-performing schools used state standards to plan curriculum and instruction, assess student work, and as a part of teacher evaluations. Several studies also reported on the importance of aligning the curriculum (Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission, 2004; The Charles A. Dana Center, 1999; Reeves, 2000).

Correlate #2 – High Expectations for Success

Researchers determined in a number of studies that high expectations for students were consistent among high-performing schools and student achievement was found to be higher in schools that promoted high expectations for their students (Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission, 2004). Kannapel and Clements (2005) found that a standard of high expectations was directly related to the faculty and staff of the school as well as for the students. It was also noted that the high expectations for students included not only the regular education students but special education students too (Ellis et al., 2004).

Correlate #3 – Instructional Leadership

Effective leadership is a significant characteristic of high-performing schools. The standard that leaders in high-performing schools focus on instructional issues is frequently found in the existing research (Ellis et al., 2004; Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission, 2004; The Charles A. Dana Center, 1999). McGee (2004) called principals “leaders of learning” and noted that the involvement of principals in teaching and learning within the school corresponded to the high-performance of the students. The Charles A. Dana Center (1999) study found that schools devoted increased time to instructional leadership, with principals spending more time in classrooms. The researchers at The Charles A. Dana Center concluded: “School leaders created a collective sense of responsibility for school improvement. The shared sense of responsibility was nurtured by joint planning processes and reinforced by efforts to involve everyone in key components of the school’s work” (p. ix). Bell (2001) stated that

the staffs in the California schools studied displayed “moral leadership” (p. 10). She stated:

This ethical approach to schooling was often modeled and shared by principals, district leaders and faculty. Respect, high expectations, support, hard work and empowerment were key words that applied to both faculty and students.

‘Moral leadership’ also meant that staff and students visualized themselves as part of the system as a whole. They understood that schooling was more than preparation for academic attainment. Education laid the foundation for success in life. (p. 10)

Correlate #4 – Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress

The regular assessment of students (Kannapel & Clements, 2005; Reeves, 2000) in addition to using assessment data for guiding instructional decisions (Barth et al., 1999; Ellis et al., 2004; Hair, Kraft & Allen, 2001; Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission, 2004) provided meaningful information regarding what students were learning in relation to the curriculum alignment.

Correlate #5 – Opportunities to Learn and Student Time on Task

Research studies on high-performing schools found that the school day was efficiently planned in order to create additional instructional time and maximize the amount of time spent on instruction (Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission, 2004; McGee, 2004; Picucci, Brownson, Kahlert & Sobel, 2002; The Charles A. Dana Center, 1999). Both Reeves (2000) and Kannapel and Clements (2005) found that high-performing schools had a common focus on academics, particularly in instruction. Barth et al. (1999) document extended instructional time. They state that 80% of the surveyed

schools reported increased instructional time in reading and math. The Charles A. Dana Center (1999) stated that schools extended instructional time during and beyond the school day.

Correlate #6 – Safe and Orderly Environment

Bell (2001) maintains that another common factor of the high-performing, high-poverty schools in California was the safe and orderly environment for learning that the principals had succeeded in creating. Time was being spent on instructional issues instead of student discipline issues as in the past.

Correlate #7 – Home-School Relations

Barth et al. (1999) note that high-performing schools focus on building partnerships with families. They conducted activities to build parent involvement in areas that directly affected student achievement. The schools in The Charles A. Dana Center (1999) study earned the confidence of families by improving student achievement and they referred to a number of strategies that schools employed to build partnerships with families.

In addition to the characteristics found in high-performing, high-poverty schools research that were common with the effective schools “correlates,” a number of other characteristics were identified that should be mentioned also. While it is possible that these characteristics could in some way relate to one or more of the effective schools “correlates,” this researcher feels that they should be reviewed separately.

Professional Development

The Charles A. Dana Center (1999) documented that all nine schools in their study created opportunities for instructional personnel to work, plan, and learn together.

They added that some large-scale quantitative studies suggest that achievement is correlated with school designs that enable teachers to both spend more time over extended periods with small groups of students and to make instructional decisions in teams.

Resources

In Barth et al. (1999), 79% of the surveyed schools utilized Title I funds. The Charles A. Dana Center (1999) study, “Hope for Urban Education: A Study of Nine High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools,” identified the use of Title I funds as a common factor in reform efforts. They describe the role of Title I in the changes they observed in the schools they studied:

These schools are a powerful affirmation of the power of Title I to support comprehensive school improvement efforts. In these schools, many important change efforts were enhanced through the use of federal education resources. On the other hand, although Title I supported the change efforts, Title I was not the catalyst of the change effort. The true catalyst was the strong desire of educators to ensure the academic success of the children they served. (p. vii)

They comment that the level of district involvement varied among high-performing, high-poverty schools in the study. They add that when the district role was substantial, the school made the most rapid gains. The authors attribute both the flexibility the school had in regards to using financial resources and teachers’ access to requisite materials and training to the schools’ success. Borman, Rachuba, Datnow, Alberg, MacIver, Stringfield and Ross (2000) state that the most successful schools possessed adequate fiscal resources. They add that some engaged in grant seeking efforts and were

successful in obtaining private foundation gifts. In “Dispelling the Myth Revisited,” Jerald (2001) conducted preliminary interviews with principals and found evidence that resources were used based on needs found through student assessment in successful schools.

Miles and Darling-Hammond (1998) investigated how teaching resources were organized at five schools that supported high levels of student learning in “Rethinking the Allocation of Teaching Resources: Some Lessons from High-Performing Schools.” The authors provided evidence of each school’s “strong or improving student achievement” (p. 12) that included such criteria as the rate of improvement of student performance, low dropout rates, and high levels of graduation and college admissions. They discussed the presence of six principles of resource reallocation: reduction of specialized programs (such as Title I and special education), increased flexibility of student grouping, structures that create more personalized environments, longer and varied blocks of instructional time, more common planning time for staff, and creative definitions of staff roles and work schedules. The authors stated, “The sample is too small and the schools too unique to claim a causal connection between the organizational designs and their students’ successes” (p. 10). Three of Miles and Darling-Hammond’s six principles of resources reallocation were present in the five schools the authors studied, “Reduction of specialized programs to provide more individual time in all heterogeneous groups;” “Longer and varied blocks of instructional time;” and “More common planning time for staff” (p. 12).

High-Performing, High-Poverty Studies

A number of studies on high-performing, high-poverty schools yielded relevant information about the characteristics and practices in the curriculum, instruction, organization, and leadership of these schools. The results of these studies build upon the findings of the effective schools research and demonstrate that high-performing, high-poverty schools are possible. A review of each of the studies follows with a special emphasis on the methodology and participants along with the findings that were reported.

In “Dispelling the Myth: High Poverty Schools Exceeding Expectations,” a report of the Education Trust, Barth et al. (1999) present analyses of survey data on 366 elementary schools and high schools with attention to common attributes of high-performing, high-poverty schools. In this study, Barth et al. surveyed schools that were the top-performing or most improved with poverty levels of over 50%. Barth et al. stated that most high-performing, high-poverty schools used a larger proportion of funds to support increased professional development. These schools utilize state and district resources and 33% of schools used more than 10% of their Title I funds for professional development. The authors also explain that 81% of the schools made time to analyze student data on a regular basis and an overwhelming percentage of the school used stated standards to gauge teacher effectiveness, design curriculum and instruction, and to assess progress.

In The Charles A. Dana Center (1999) study, the researchers were particularly interested in the schools’ transformation processes. They chose schools that lacked selective admissions criteria in which at least 50% of the students met low-income definitions. The researchers reviewed school documents and utilized two-day site visits,

interviews, and focus groups with administrators, teachers, and parents. They observed that district support was critical in three of the nine schools in the University of Texas study. The nine schools in this study varied in size and student mobility rates. The Charles A. Dana Center study stated that school improvement efforts took between three and five years. The researchers discussed the ways successful schools use blocks of time for student learning and teacher collaboration. They noted that schools were able to achieve time on task (e.g., reduction in student discipline issues) by cultivating students' sense of responsibility for their behavior. They claimed that successful schools persisted through difficulties and the authors explain that teachers who did not agree with the reform efforts often departed from schools.

The nine urban elementary schools in this study came from seven different states that served economically disadvantaged, minority students and had high academic achievement. The criteria for selecting the schools in this study were based on low-income criteria (i.e., qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch), located in an urban area, did not have a selective admission policy, student achievement in math and reading was higher than the average for all schools in the state, and no evidence found where a large number of students were exempted from testing based on language proficiency or disabilities. Similar strategies identified among the schools studied were: school leaders set an "important, visible, yet attainable first goal," focus was on serving the students, focus was on teaching students responsibility, the responsibility for school improvement was shared with all stakeholders, increase in quantity and quality of instruction, curriculum was aligned with assessment, adequate materials and resources were made available, collaboration was enabled among teachers, strong partnerships with parents

were forged, and persistence was the key to improving the schools (The Charles A. Dana Center, 1999, pp. viii-ix). Based on these similarities, the following recommendations were made in this study:

- Build the capacity of principals to provide instructional leadership.
- Channel resources in ways that provide additional instructional leadership to schools.
- Create clear, measurable, and rigorous school accountability provisions.
- Ensure that accountability provisions are accompanied by adequate strategies to build capacity and provide support.
- Along with accountability, provide schools adequate flexibility and support to use that flexibility well.
- Infuse the tenets of comprehensive school reform into other federal education programs.
- Use legislation, policy, and technical assistance to help educators create regular opportunities for true professional development.
- Provide resources for increasing the quality of time made available for instruction.
- Strengthen legislation and provide technical assistance to encourage schools to build the capacity of teachers and parents for increasing parental involvement at school.
- Research is needed to better understand how school districts can better support the improvement of teaching and learning in high-poverty schools. (The Charles A. Dana Center, 1999, pp. x-xi)

Borman et al. (2000) compared four processes for reforming nine low-performing schools in “Four Models of School Improvement: Successes and Challenges in Reforming Low-Performing High Poverty Title I Schools.” The authors presented qualitative case studies about implementing instructional changes and quantitative data about the outcomes in student achievement, instructional choices and school climate. School buildings in this study served a minimum of 74% high-poverty students. While not all of the school in “Four Models” would be considered high-performing, the authors presented common factors of those with the greatest gains in academic achievement. They analyzed the impact of school improvement models and in the cases in which schools utilized nationally proven models, there was growth in measures of student academic achievement and the school professional climates only when teacher buy-in was present. They explained:

When there was shared vision among the staff, and the teachers were active participants in deciding on the reform, the reform model was implemented successfully and improvements were made. When the reform was imposed upon the school by the district or by the principal, improvements were not as readily seen. (p. 62)

While Borman et al. (2000) did not conceive of teacher support as an issue associated with time, they attributed successful implementation to a shared vision among staff and teachers’ opportunities to make decisions about reform efforts. They added that schools utilized different buy-in strategies. In this study successful schools were places that provided parent education and support. They explained that a common factor of

successful schools in their study was that teachers' beliefs before and during implementation in the reform process promoted their willingness to make sacrifices.

Carter (2000) studied 21 schools from 12 different states "that refuse to make poverty an excuse for academic failure (p. 7). Identified as "No Excuses" schools, Carter found that these schools shared certain traits and beliefs despite their differences. The Seven Common Traits of High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools as described by Carter are as follows:

1. Principals must be free.
2. Principals use measurable goals to establish a culture of achievement.
3. Master teachers bring out the best in a faculty.
4. Rigorous and regular testing leads to continuous student achievement.
5. Achievement is the key to discipline.
6. Principals work actively with parents to make the home a center of learning.
7. Effort creates ability. (excerpted pp. 8-11)

Carter (2000) not only found these seven traits common in all of the high-performing, high-poverty schools that were studied, he also discovered five effective practices inherent in all of the high-performing, high-poverty schools he studied. The first trait involved parental accountability and the way in which schools involved their parents. The second trait related to the methods by which teachers were trained. The third trait revolved around the testing of students. The fourth trait was the manner in which basic skills were taught to students. Finally, the fifth trait common in all high-performing, high-poverty schools in this study was the manner in which money was spent

by the schools. Carter stated, “By focusing a clearer eye on these five areas ... we can gain valuable lessons for improving the performance of all schools in America” (p. 13).

Bell (2001) provided a brief report on the HPS Symposium in California. The symposium identified twelve schools that fulfilled the criteria of having more than 50% and 60% of student at the high school and elementary levels, respectively, that qualify for free or reduced lunch. Bell, who once coordinated California’s Statewide System of school support, discussed the common attributes of these schools that have all received a statewide Academic Performance Index (API) ranking of over seven for a minimum of two years. The API ranking measures how a school performed compared to all schools statewide on a scale of one to 10. Bell (2001) maintains that district support is especially critical with regard to school success. Bell stated that districts in California have been especially helpful to high-performing, high-poverty schools in standards improvement, data analysis, ongoing evaluation and professional development. She added that high staff motivation and strong site leadership were found at the high-performing, high-poverty schools. Bell (2001) defined high-performing, high-poverty schools:

HPS schools appear to routinely provide for low-income and other historically marginalized groups of students the same opportunities to acquire intellectually challenging subject content that are taken for granted in more affluent communities. They are more likely to embrace, and even surpass, requirements of the state’s accountability system. They tend to engage in school practices that reflect a culture of success and excellence. And they respect the primacy of adults supporting one another, as well as children, toward a common vision of success in school and life. (p. 8)

Bell (2001) reported that one of the lessons learned in the December 2000 High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools Symposium in Sacramento, CA was that high-performing, high-poverty “schools seemed to rely upon results (what worked in their particular contexts) rather than the promotion of specific ideologies or programs” (p. 9). The results of the landmark symposium, which focused on 12 high-performing, high-poverty California schools, were 14 “common themes” and “three overarching principals” among the schools. Bell reported that all of the schools studied exhibited some evidence of a majority of the “themes” and “practices” but in some cases the schools focused on certain “themes” more than others. Bell stated that each school that participated in the symposium was prepared and able to participate in the practices or “themes” based on three very important factors: “the strength of their site and district leadership; their commitment to building a learning community; and their understanding of research-based principles regarding how children learn” (Bell, 2001, p. 10). The 14 common practices or “themes” include:

- (1) Implement rigorous standards for all students as the school’s main goal.
- (2) Focus on delivery of high quality teaching and learning for all children.
- (3) Emphasize hard work, high expectations and persistence.
- (4) Promote discipline and a safe, orderly environment as key to learning.
- (5) Make district support evident and essential.
- (6) Have principals who are models of strong instructional leadership.
- (7) Have principals who are persistent and innovative in obtaining resources to serve students’ needs.
- (8) Share leadership among administrators, faculty and parents.

- (9) Collaborate on school goals and professional development.
- (10) Regularly use assessment as a diagnostic tool to reinforce the school's academic goals.
- (11) Intervene early and often to promote the academic success of all students.
- (12) Promote policy of inclusiveness and a sense of family.
- (13) Work actively with parents to extend to mission of the school into the home.
- (14) Help faculty and students see themselves as part of the system as a whole through articulation of the academic program across grade levels. (Bell, p. 10)

Jerald (2001) evaluated over one million school-level test scores in 47 states and the District of Columbia and provides this information on a web-based database (see www.edtrust.org) in "Dispelling the Myth Revisited: Preliminary Findings from a Nationwide Analysis of 'High-Flying' Schools." This identified three categories of high-performing, high-poverty schools: those that are in these states' top third for proportions of high-poverty, high-minority (i.e., African-American or Chicano-Latino), and those included in both categories. Identified schools were all in the top third for reading and/or math achievement levels. The author utilized an undisclosed number of principal interviews to revisit the common factors identified in the 1999 survey. He emphasized that interstate comparisons were not appropriate as states identify diverse standards of student achievement and use varying methods to assess student progress. The Education Trust released the first research about the numbers of identified schools in the United States in December 2001. The report, "Dispelling the Myth Revisited" claimed there are

3,592 schools that serve high-poverty students, 2,305 schools that serve high-poverty, high-minority students, and 1,320 schools that serve high-poverty-and-high-minority populations of students. These schools at the time educated approximately 2.07 million children.

McCarthy (2002) studied the academic achievement of fourth grade students in high poverty schools in Maine. One hundred and eighteen schools were identified as high-poverty schools with at least 50% of the student population eligible for free/reduced lunches. Thirteen schools were identified as high-performing schools through an analysis of the Maine Educational Assessment program if the school's average scale score in the content areas of math, reading, writing, and science were at least $\frac{1}{2}$ standard deviation above the state average in at least two of the content areas for both the 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 school years. McCarthy also went on to explain, "Although schools needed only to excel in two of the four content areas ... two of the schools performed above standards in three content areas and three of the schools performed about standard in all four content areas" (p. 5).

The data collected for McCarthy's study came from The Maine Department of Education, School Resource Census Survey, and the Maine Educational Assessment. The results concluded that "numerous instructional strategies and staff characteristics were identified as being related to high academic achievement in high poverty schools" (p. 16). With regards to reading and writing, students in high-performing schools reported that they had more time to work in class, teachers helped the students on their writing daily, and they were required to read more on average per day than students in other high poverty schools. The students in schools that performed high in math "were

more likely to utilize calculators and hands-on materials ... as well as work in small groups” (p. 16). In schools where students were identified as high performing in science, the students did more activities where they earned points for what they had accomplished regardless of whether or not they had the right answer.

In California, Izumi (2002) studied eight high-poverty, high-performing elementary schools through interviews with the school principals. Izumi concluded that schools can overcome “excuses such as low income, family background, racial diversity, limited English proficiency, and standardized test bias” by “focusing on key factors” which were:

- Empirically proven research-based curriculum.
- Empirically proven research-based teaching methods.
- Comprehensive use of the state academic content standards as goals for student learning, guideposts for teaching, and tools for professional development.
- Use of frequent assessment as a diagnostic tool for identifying student and teacher strengths and weaknesses and for improving student and teacher performance.
- Standards-based professional development that emphasizes subject matter.
- Teacher quality and teacher willingness to use proven curricula and methods.
- Strong discipline policies that emphasize sanctions and rewards.
- Increased flexibility to use available funding and a reduction in bureaucratic rules.

(Izumi, p. vi)

Craig, Butler, Cairo, Wood, Gilchrist, Holloway, Williams and Moats (2005) identified characteristics of high-performing schools in Tennessee, determined whether the characteristics were consistent with those identified in other studies, and examined

implications for improving student achievement in low-performing schools. The researchers identified high-performing schools based on their performance across a set of achievement indicators. From these, the Tennessee Department of Education chose two elementary, two middle, and two high schools from six different systems to participate in the study.

The researchers interviewed teachers and principals at all six schools, conducted surveys of professional staff members (i.e., teachers, counselors, and librarians) at the schools using norm-referenced instruments developed by Edvantia, and reviewed school documents such as student handbooks and school newsletters. In addition, parents and community members were surveyed.

The data were collected using five survey instruments created by Edvantia. The Continuous School Improvement Questionnaire (CSIQ) is a measure of a school's performance on several improvement dimensions, such as learning culture and effective teaching. The Measure of School Capacity for Improvement (MSCI) yields seven subscales that assess the degree to which schools possess the potential to become high-performing learning communities. The Perceptions of School Culture (POSC) instrument addresses staff perceptions of various aspects of school culture. Also administered were customized surveys for parents and community members.

The CSIQ data indicated that characteristics of continuously improving schools were present to a high degree in both the high-performing elementary and middle schools studied. The MCSI data showed that the average scores of high-performing elementary, middle, and high school professionals were significantly different from those of the norm group on most of the subscales. The POSC data indicated significant differences in the

responses of high-performing elementary, middle, and high school professionals and those of the norm group. Responses to the parent survey yielded information in five categories: (1) communication between parents and teachers, (2) celebration of student successes, (3) requests for parent input, (4) communication between parents and the school, and (5) parent involvement in school events. While elementary school parents responded positively, high school parents' responses were lower on all items.

Data from the community member survey indicated that respondents believed their elementary schools ensured that all students receive the best possible education, encouraged parents' and community members' involvement in school functions, and communicated with the community regarding key issues. Respondents gave middle schools higher ratings on disseminating information through a school newsletter and gathering community members' input on substantive education issues. No community members responded to surveys distributed at the high-performing high schools.

Overall, this study found that the six high-performing schools in Tennessee were characterized by:

- Dedicated, hard-working teachers
- Curricula reported to be aligned with state standards
- Schools cultures with high expectations for teacher and student performance
- Learning and teaching as the school's central focus
- Use of multiple assessment strategies, and
- An environment of strong parent interest and community support

Kannapel and Clements (2005) examined the practices of a handful of high-performing, high-poverty schools in Kentucky. The researchers used a standardized

school audit instrument developed by the Kentucky Department of Education to answer two questions (1) “What were the common characteristics of high-performing, high-poverty schools in Kentucky?” and (2) “What characteristics and practices differentiated these schools from similar schools in Kentucky?”

Kannapel and Clements identified 26 schools based on a predetermined set of criteria. The schools had to have 50% or more of their students qualified for free/reduced lunches, a state accountability index of 80 or higher in 2003, a state academic index of 75 or higher for minority students on free/reduced lunch, an achievement gap of less than 15 points between low and middle income students and between white and African American students, and demonstrate progress over time on the state mandated test. Of the 26 eligible schools, eight were chosen to represent a range of different types of schools from various locations. The audits were conducted by state-trained teams and the researchers also visited the schools, interviewed the audit team members, and conducted follow-up interviews with the school principals.

When the results of the audits were compared with the low-performing, high-poverty schools, the eight high-performing, high-poverty schools scored considerably higher on

- Review and alignment of curriculum
- Individual student assessment and instruction tailored to individual student needs
- Caring, nurturing environment of high expectations for students
- Ongoing professional development for staff that was connected to student achievement data
- Efficient use of resources and instructional time. (p. 3)

Kannapel and Clements also reported in their findings that the eight high-performing, high-poverty schools shared common characteristics of high expectations, positive/respectful relationships, a strong academic/instructional focus, monitoring student progress, collaborative decision making, high teacher morale, and the manner in which teachers were recruited, hired, and assigned. The researchers reported that they had several unexpected findings such as a small difference in leadership styles as compared to low-performing schools, high-performing schools scored lower on implementing school based decision making, technology was not found to be used effectively in high-performing schools, and in many instances the school district leadership was not as involved in the school as expected.

The study conducted by Williams, Kirst, Haertel et al. (2005) was a collaborative research project involving EdSource, Stanford University, UC Berkely, and the American Institutes for Research. The investigation surveyed teachers and principals and identified practices and policies among teachers, principals, schools, and districts that are correlated with high achievement.

The study was large scale – it included 257 elementary schools in 145 California districts and had a high participation rate among principals and teachers. Researchers chose to include schools from a particular band of the School Characteristics Index (25th to 35th percentile), reasoning that this sample would include schools with definite student demographic challenges, but “not the most severe.” Despite the fact that students at all schools in the study could be considered similarly disadvantaged, researchers identified high-, middle-, and low-performing schools within this band based on the school’s API (academic performance index).

Teachers and principals responded to surveys that included questions about a variety of factors often reported as having a positive effect on achievement. From the survey data, researchers identified several domains that correlated with student learning, listed here from highest to lowest: prioritizing student achievement; implementing a coherent, standards-based instructional program; using assessment data to improve student achievement and instruction; ensuring availability of instructional resources; enforcing high expectations for student behavior; encouraging teacher collaboration and providing professional development; and involving and supporting parents.

Researchers in this study found that, although all of the domains under consideration were correlated with higher API scores, four showed particularly strong correlations. The highest correlation was with implementing a coherent, standards-based program. Higher API scores were also found to be correlated with ensuring availability of instructional resources, using assessment data to improve instruction and enhance student learning, and prioritizing student achievement.

Elmore (2006) studied accountability in a collection of schools in many different school districts. His focus of interest was in studying the “quality of teaching in high-poverty, racially diverse schools” where he began to look at what these successful schools were doing to improve classroom instruction. The common characteristics that Elmore found were:

- School leaders clearly articulated expectations for student learning with a sense of urgency about improvement,
- Adopted a challenging curriculum and invested heavily in professional development,

- Teachers internalized responsibility for student learning,
- They examines their practices critically, and if they weren't working, they abandoned them and tried something new,
- And school leaders insisted that classrooms be open to teacher colleagues, administrators, and outsiders for observation and analysis of instructional practice. (pg. 44)

Table 2 summarizes the common characteristics reported in the studies of high-performing, high-poverty schools. Although each study found different characteristics to be “most important” or “significant,” a comparison of the characteristics identified by each study reveals that the characteristics that are most common closely resemble the “correlates” of the Effective Schools Research: a clear school mission, high expectations for success, instructional leadership, frequent monitoring of student progress, opportunities to learn and student time on task, a safe and orderly environment, and positive home-school relations (Association for Effective Schools, Inc., 1996).

Summary

Presented in this review of literature is a background of poverty and its relationship to student achievement, the literature on Effective Schools Research and the “how” of effective schools, and the common characteristics associated with high-performing schools along with studies of high-performing, high-poverty schools. High-performing, high-poverty schools exist throughout the country and have unique qualities that allow these schools to effectively help all students to learn and achieve. It is important to note that the seven correlates of Effective Schools Research are supported in many of the studies that have been presented in this chapter. These characteristics will

become the basis for this study and will be the conceptual framework through which the findings are analyzed. Part of this research study will attempt to identify the “distinct practices” or “underlying conditions” that also are characteristic of high-achieving schools. This chapter has also presented a number of other characteristics that may or may not show up in the findings of this research study but it is important to be familiar with what previous research has identified as a possible characteristic of a high-performing, high-achieving, or effective school.

Table 2 *Common Characteristics from High-Performing, High-Poverty Studies*

High-Performing, High-Poverty School Study (year)	High Expectations	Teaching Methods	High Standards	Environment	Resources	Strong Leadership	Prof. Development	Assessment	Early Intervention	Parent Involvement	Increased Time	Teacher Willingness	Persistent Effort	Flexibility	More Research	Curriculum
Barth et al. (1999)			✓		✓		✓									✓
Charles A. Dana Center (1999)	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Borman et al. (2000)						✓				✓		✓				
Carter (2000)		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓			✓			
Bell (2001)	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓			
Jerald (2001)					✓											
McCarthy (2002)		✓									✓					
Izumi (2002)	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓				✓		✓		✓
Craig et al. (2005)	✓	✓		✓				✓		✓		✓				✓
Kannapel & Clements (2005)	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓					✓
Williams et al. (2005)	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓		✓				
Elmore (2006)	✓	✓					✓						✓			✓

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to identify the effective schools practices used by high-performing, high-poverty elementary schools in East Tennessee and to identify the underlying conditions (i.e., values, beliefs, and culture of the school) necessary for their implementation in other high-poverty schools. Not only is the quest of this research to identify the practices used by high-performing, high-poverty schools, but also to determine how closely these practices mirror the best practices gleaned from the research on effective schools. The goal of this study is to answer the following questions:

- (1) Which of the characteristics of Effective Schools do high-performing, high-poverty schools in East Tennessee have in common?
 - (a) How do these characteristics correspond to those identified in the Effective Schools Research?
 - (b) How do the characteristics differ from those identified in the Effective Schools Research?
- (2) What underlying conditions (i.e., values, beliefs, culture of the school) or distinctive practices must be present for the Effective Schools practices to exist?

This chapter describes the design, methods, and procedures used for conducting this research; the assumptions and rationale for the research design; the conceptual framework guiding the study; the role of the researcher; data collection and data analysis procedures; and the methods that were used to establish trustworthiness and to verify the

accuracy of the data collected. An explanation of the process for identifying high-achieving, high-poverty elementary schools in East Tennessee is included to provide a rich contextual background. A description of each of the qualifying schools and their school system – the students and faculty, the facility, the administrators, community, and test scores – is included as well.

Research Design

Figure 1 graphically displays the research design that was used in this mixed-methods, multi-site case study. The quantitative data collected from the More Effective Schools Staff Survey (Association for Effective Schools, Inc., 2002) were studied along with the qualitative data compiled from the interviews and observations. These data were then filtered through the conceptual framework based on the Effective Schools Research (Brookover, 1985; Coleman et al., 1966; Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte & Bancroft, 1985). Once the data were collected, analyzed, and viewed through the conceptual framework lens, the final analysis was created by comparing the results of this study with the correlates of the Effective Schools Research.

Assumptions and Rationale of the Mixed-Methods Design

A mixed-methods, multi-site case study design was used for this research study (Merriam, 1998). Yin (2003) defined a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 13). The goal in choosing this approach was to gather enough data about the schools being studied to not only fully understand how these schools help low-socioeconomic status students to achieve at high levels, but also to provide data from several different sources to support

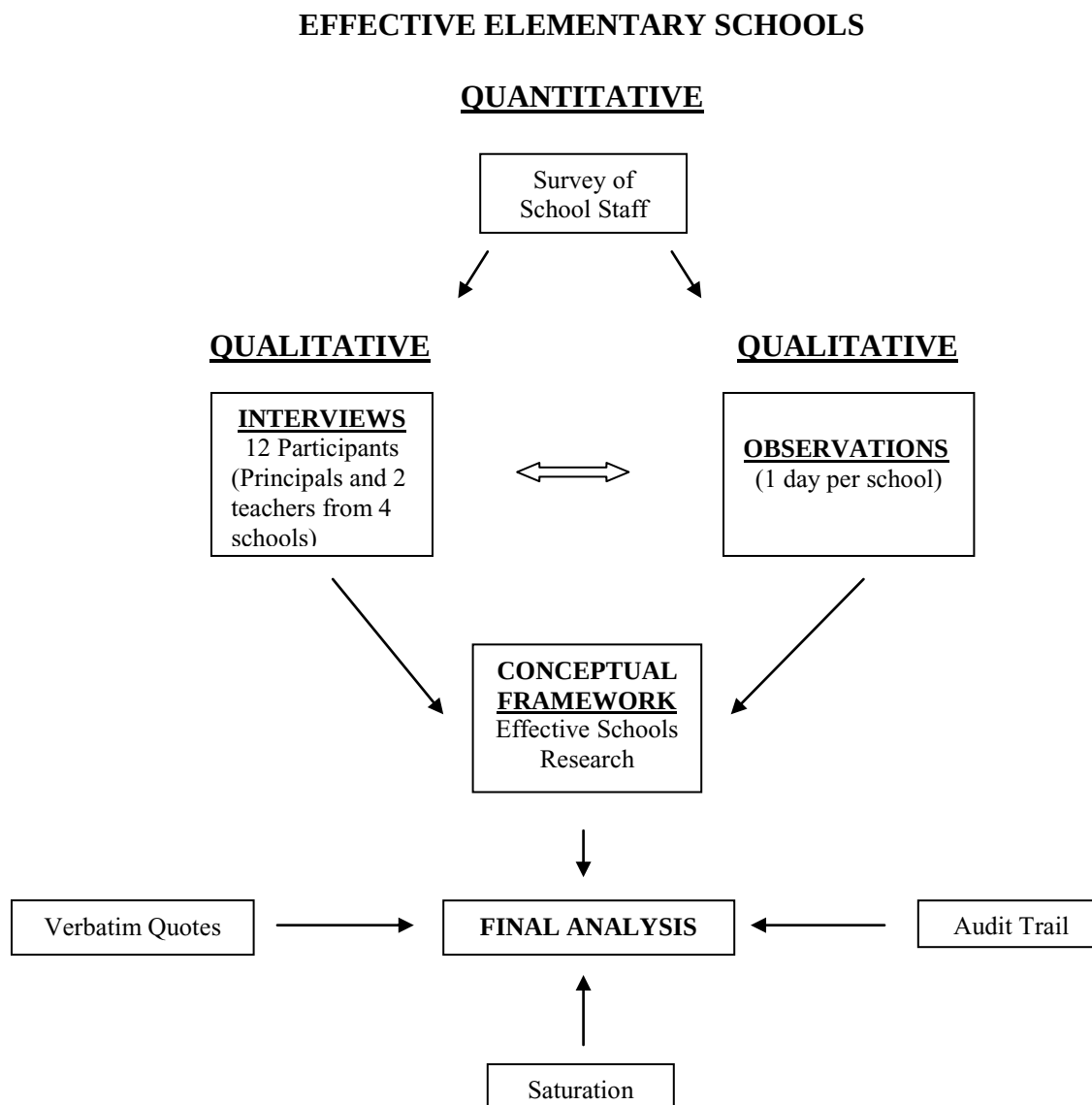


Figure 1. Research Design

the findings of the study. A mixed-methods approach ensured that both “qualitative” and “quantitative” data would be available to bolster the findings. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) defined a mixed-methods study as “the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts, or language into a single study” (p. 17).

Research studies have made use of a mixed-method design for many years although its use has not been widespread. Beginning in the 1980s and 1990s, behavioral and social scientists argued over the use of the “quantitative” research method or the “qualitative” research method (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). The positivists believed that knowledge of an objective reality was gained through deductive logic while the constructivists believed that in an ever-changing, socially constructed reality knowledge was acquired through inductive logic (Tashakkori & Teddlie). Researchers have now begun to approach their research from the standpoint that the research questions dictate which paradigm will be used.

There are some cases where the research question(s) requires both a quantitative and qualitative design. Creswell (1994) reported that researchers used a “mixed-method” approach as early as 1959, but, while a number of “mixed-method” research studies were conducted in the 1960s through the 1980s, it wasn’t until 1989 that Greene, Caracelli, and Graham provided a detailed description of the “mixed-method” approach that described the concerns or issues that a researcher faces in this type of study. As a result of their evaluation of 57 mixed-method studies, Greene et al. discovered that triangulation was an important rationale for conducting mixed-method research. Maxwell (1996) described triangulation as “collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and

settings, using a variety of methods (see also Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). Maxwell continued by stating, “This strategy reduces the risk of chance associations and of systematic biases due to a specific method and allows a better assessment of the generality of the explanations that you develop” (pp. 93-94).

This study incorporated the use of qualitative data collection strategies because as Maxwell (1996) indicated, “The strengths of qualitative research derive primarily from its inductive approach, its focus on specific situations or people, and its emphasis on words rather than numbers” (p. 17). A qualitative approach provides a means for collecting data and information through the use of interviews and observations so that the researcher can obtain the insight from the individuals who have been directly involved in the schools that are being studied. Merriam (1998) referred to interviewing as “... the most common form of data collection in qualitative studies in education” (p. 70). Merriam points out that the main assumption for doing qualitative research comes from the viewpoint that “reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds” and “qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (p. 6). Merriam also stated that in qualitative research there are essential characteristics: “... the goal of eliciting understanding and meaning, the researcher as primary instrument of data collection and analysis, the use of fieldwork, and inductive orientation to analysis, and findings that are richly descriptive” (p. 11).

Role of the Researcher

As an assistant principal at two K-5 elementary schools in the Blount County School System in East Tennessee, this researcher has faced the challenge of meeting the

needs of each and every student in those schools. With the mandates of *No Child Left Behind*, the researcher's efforts, as well as those of his colleagues, have focused on implementing strategies and programs that have been successful with low-income students. The researcher's role included gathering data through surveys, interviews, and observations.

The researcher presented little or no threat to the administrators or teachers of the identified schools in this study. As a fellow educator interested in the academic success of the students in their schools, the researcher's efforts to determine the characteristics which make their school successful should have been considered a positive inquiry. The researcher had no connection or tie to those being interviewed, and the study was focused on identifying what schools were doing to aid student academic success. The researcher noted potential biases that could influence the investigation and made every effort not to allow results to be skewed by those biases.

Although the researcher represented no threat to the faculty or administration at each school, an outsider coming in and asking questions and observing classes had the potential to affect the responses to the interview questions or the activities in the classrooms. The following measures were taken to minimize bias: triangulation of data sources through the use of interviews and observations; use of both tape recordings and written records; design of code maps and temporal records explaining how data analysis was analyzed; and the use of a data analysis grid. Additionally, member checks, the process of asking participants to verify the analysis, were employed in this study.

Maxwell (1996) discussed how bias has been traditionally seen by researchers as "something whose influence needs to be eliminated from the design, rather than a

valuable component of it” (p. 27). He continued to say that “it is clearly impossible to deal with... (researcher bias) ...by eliminating the researcher’s theories, preconceptions, or values” (p. 91). He is saying that bias is natural and will continue to exist no matter how hard you work to eliminate it. Maxwell stated, “...understanding how a particular researcher’s values influence the conduct and conclusions of the study” (p. 91) is the solution to limiting bias in a study. “Explaining your possible biases and how you will deal with these is a key task of your research proposal” (Maxwell, p. 91). Maxwell referred to a statement made by the qualitative researcher Fred Hess, “validity in qualitative research is not the result of indifference, but of integrity” (p. 91).

Selection of Schools

Kannapel and Clements (2005) studied high performing, high-poverty elementary schools in Kentucky. They identified 26 elementary schools that met the following criteria :

- State accountability index score of 80 or higher on the spring 2003 assessment,
- Percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch at or above the state average,
- Academic index of 75 or higher for students who participated in the free/reduced lunch program and for minority student,
- Pattern of progress over time on the state test,
- Achievement gap between free/reduced and non-free/reduced lunch students, and between white and minority student, of less than 15 points. (p. 7)

Of the eligible schools, the researchers narrowed their list to 15 schools making sure they included an equal mix of both urban and rural schools as well as schools from across the state. Each school was contacted and eight schools agreed to participate in the study.

The schools for this study were chosen in a similar manner as the Kannapel and Clements (2005) study. The researcher first identified schools that had an economically disadvantaged student population of 60% or greater indicated on the 2006 Tennessee Report Card. In the East Tennessee region, consisting of 34 county schools systems and 18 city school systems, 203 schools reported having 60% or higher percentage of economically disadvantaged students. (In Tennessee, economically disadvantaged status is based on the number of students who participate in the free and reduced meals program). By limiting the list of schools to only those that served K-5 or K-6, a student population of at least 300 or higher, an economically disadvantaged population of 65% or higher, and a NCLB status of “Safe,” the list of schools was reduced to 48.

For the purpose of comparison, two different types of schools will be selected for this study. Two high-achieving, high-gain schools and two low-achieving, high-gain schools will be selected. The achievement status will be determined using the achievement scores available from the 2005 Tennessee Report Card. An achievement score is assigned to each of the four subject areas tested – Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies. The focus of this study is to investigate the characteristics of four schools that have proven to have high student achievement. The high-gain status will be determined using the value-added scores also provided by the 2005 Tennessee Report Card. Based on a 3-year average, the schools selected for this study will have value-added scores that indicate a gain in each subject area of at least one standard if not more

above the average. By selecting two high-achieving schools and two low-achieving schools, this will allow the researcher the opportunity to compare and contrast four schools that have proven over time to help students make gains in learning. These schools will be located in a similar geographic region and face similar economic and social disadvantages, yet two of the schools will have lower achievement test scores which may provide some insight into their ability to help students make gains year after year.

Additionally, schools were selected for this study based on their achievement test scores and value-added scores (see Appendix A for a complete description of “value-added”). Two lists were compiled for schools to be used in this study: one for schools that had high-achievement and high-gains and another for those that had low-achievement and high-gains. For the high-achieving schools, those that met or exceeded the state averages of a “B” in Math and Reading/Language Arts and a “C” in Social Studies and Science and had value-added grades of a “A” or “B” in the four subject areas tested (Reading/Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies) in addition to the previously mentioned limitations were chosen. A total of 6 high-achieving, high-gain schools were selected. The researcher began to contact the Director of Schools and principal of each of the 6 high-achieving, high-gain schools to request permission to participate in the study. The two schools selected to participate in the study (Riverside and Valley Crest) agreed to participate in the study and were able to grant the researcher access within the researcher’s time frame (May 2007).

The same process was used for selecting the low-achieving, high-gain schools with the only exception being that the low-achieving schools had one or more

achievement scores that was below the state average. A total of 19 low-achieving, high-gain schools were selected. From this list, the researcher began to contact the principal of each school and request permission from the Director of Schools to include them in this study. Willingness to participate, availability within a tight time schedule (May 2007), and location that was accessible by the researcher were all factors in selecting the two low-achieving, high-gain schools. The researcher was met with some opposition by the principal of the first two schools contacted. The principals were not willing to participate and stated that they did not want someone “looking over their shoulders.” By first requesting permission from the Director of Schools, the researcher was able to locate, contact, and receive permission from two schools (Lakeshore and Mountain View) who were willing to participate in this study, were in a location accessible by the researcher, and were able to work within the researcher’s time schedule (May 2007).

Table 3 lists the four schools that were contacted for participation in this study. Two schools, Riverside Elementary and Valley Crest Elementary, were chosen because they had high-achievement and high value-added gain scores that met or exceeded the state averages. Two other schools, Mountain View Elementary and Lakeshore Elementary, were chosen because they had lower-achievement scores (below the state average in one or more areas), but their value-added scores were high (at or above the state average). The letters under the column labeled student achievement scores in Table 3 are the achievement grades from the 2005 Report Card in order (from left to right) of the subjects tested – Reading/Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies and the letters under the column labeled TVAAS scores are the TVAAS grades for those areas.

Table 3 *High-Achieving, High-Poverty Elementary Schools in East Tennessee*

<u>System</u>	<u>School</u>	<u>Grades Served</u>	<u>Achievement-Gain Status</u>	<u>% Economically Disadvantaged</u>	<u>Student Achievement Scores</u>	<u>TVAAS Scores</u>
River's Bend	Riverside Elementary	K - 6	High-Achieving, High-Gain	70.5 %	ABBC	AAAA
Valley Point	Valley Crest Elementary	K - 5	High-Achieving, High-Gain	76.1%	ABBB	BBAA
Lake View	Lakeshore Elementary	K - 5	Low-Achieving, High-Gain	80.2%	BCCC	ABAA
Mountain Vista	Mountain View Elementary	K - 5	Low-Achieving, High-Gain	80.5%	FFFF	AAAA

Actual names of the school districts and each school have been changed to protect the confidentiality of the schools that participated in this study. All names that appear in Table 3 are pseudonyms and not the actual names of the schools or school systems that contributed to this study.

Each of the four schools identified in Table 3 were contacted regarding their participation in this study. The researcher first contacted the Director of Schools (Superintendent) for each school system and outlined the request to survey, interview, and observe each of the identified high-poverty, high-achieving schools (see Appendix B for example letter to the Director of Schools requesting permission to conduct the study). Once permission was received from the Director, the researcher contacted each school principal and requested their participation in the study (see Appendix C for example of letter to principal requesting permission to conduct the study). Once permission was received from the principal, the researcher proceeded by distributing a survey of school effectiveness to each faculty member in the school and scheduled an interview with the

school principal and at least two teachers. Once the surveys and interviews were completed, the researcher scheduled a day of observation at each school site. Included in this methods chapter is a description of each school system, its location and each school that has been identified as high-poverty, high-achieving.

Description of Schools

River's Bend School System

River's Bend is located in the northern part of East Tennessee and is home to over 24,000 residents. The River's Bend School system has a total of 8 school buildings that serve over 3,700 students. There are over 250 certified professionals working in the school system, including fourteen administrators. The community consists of 95.1% White with 76.1% of the population having a high school diploma or higher and 15.0% of the population falling below the poverty level (U.S. Census, 2000).

Riverside Elementary School

Riverside Elementary was originally built in the early 1950's and has had two recent additions (2001 and 2002). Riverside Elementary served a total student population of 389 in grades K-5 during the 2004-2005 school year. Riverside has an experienced school staff that averages fifteen years experience. The school is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and was the recipient of a Goals 2000 Grant from the state. According to the 2005 Report Card, 70.5% of the school's students were economically disadvantaged. The student body consisted of 90.0% White, 6.7% African American, 2.1% Hispanic, 1.0% Asian and 0.3% Native American students. The student attendance rate was 93.2% in 2004 and 93.7% in 2005. The promotion rate for Riverside was 98.5% in 2004 and 98.8% in 2005. Riverside's 2004

TVAAS scores were as follows: an “A” in Reading/Language Arts, an “A” for Math, a “D” in Science, and an “C” in Social Studies. The school’s “Safe School Status” was safe, status was “Good Standing” and it met all of the federal benchmarks with regards to Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) (Tennessee Annual Report, 2005).

Riverside Elementary is one of the two high-poverty, high-achieving, high-gain schools in this research study. Based on its economic and social characteristics, Riverside Elementary is considered to be an economically and socially deprived school. Comparisons will be made between the two high-achieving, high-poverty schools and low-achieving, high-poverty schools in the discussion section of Chapter 6.

Valley Point School System

Valley Point is located in the southeast part of Tennessee and is home to over 11,000 residents. The Valley Point School system has a total of four school buildings that serve over 1,800 students. The area is located in a natural setting close to a major lake and is easily accessed by a nearby Interstate and is within a short distance to two major cities. The population in Valley Point is 97.7% White with 63.5% holding a high school diploma or higher. Only 7.0% of the population holds a bachelors degree or higher. Individuals below the poverty level in Valley Point stands at 18.3% (U.S. Census, 2000).

Valley Crest Elementary School

Valley Crest Elementary served a total student population of 441 students in Kindergarten through fifth grades during the 2004-2005 school year. The faculty includes two administrators, 27 classroom teachers, one Librarian, one guidance counselor, 3 custodians, 4 food service staff members, two secretaries, 5 educational

assistants, one music teacher, one physical education teacher, one special education teachers, one talented and gifted instructor, one curriculum specialist, one social worker, one ESL (English a Second Language) teacher, and one school psychologist. According to the 2005 Report Card, 76.1% of the school's students were reported as economically disadvantaged and the student body consisted of 97.5% White, 1.4% African American, 0.9% Hispanic and 0.2% Native American. The student attendance rate was 94.3% in 2004 and 94.8% in 2005. The promotion rate for Valley Crest was 97.4% in 2004 and 96.9% in 2005. Valley Crest's 2004 TVAAS scores were as follows: a "C" in Reading/Language Arts, an "A" for Math, a "A" in Science, and an "A" in Social Studies. The school's "Safe School Status" is safe and in "Good Standing" and the school met all of the federal benchmarks with regards to Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) (Tennessee Annual Report, 2005).

Valley Crest Elementary is one of the two high-poverty, high-achieving, high-gain schools in this research study. Based on its economic and social characteristics, Valley Crest Elementary is considered to be an economically and socially deprived school. Comparisons will be made between the two high-achieving, high-poverty schools and low-achieving, high-poverty schools in the discussion section of Chapter 6.

Lake View School System

Lake View is located in the eastern part of Tennessee and is home to over 6,000 residents. The Lake View School system has a total of three school buildings that serve over 2,100 students. Lake View is located on the northern bank of the Tennessee River. The school system has one elementary school, one middle school and one high school. There are almost 200 certified professionals working in the school system and 9

administrators. The population consists of 92.4% White leaving 7.3% minority. The percentage of individuals that hold a high school diploma or higher is 64.1% with only 5.6% holding a bachelor's degree or higher. Individuals below the poverty level are 16.0% (U.S. Census, 2000).

Lakeshore Elementary School

Lake Shore Elementary served a total student population of 603 students in grades K-5 during the 2004-2005 school year. Students attend special areas classes in physical education, music, art, guidance, computer and library at Lakeshore Elementary. According to the 2005 Report Card, the racial composition of the student body was 77.4% White and 80.2% of the students economically disadvantaged. The student attendance rate was 94.8% in 2004 and 94.7% in 2005. The promotion rate for Lakeshore was 97.3% in 2004 and 98.3% in 2005. Lakeshore's 2004 TVAAS scores were as follows: a "C" in Reading/Language Arts, an "C" for Math, a "A" in Science, and an "A" in Social Studies. The school's "Safe School Status" is safe and in "Good Standing" and the school met all of the federal benchmarks with regards to Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) (Tennessee Annual Report, 2005).

Lakeshore Elementary is one of the two high-poverty, low-achieving, high-gain schools in this research study. Based on its economic and social characteristics, Lakeshore Elementary is considered to be an economically and socially deprived school. Comparisons will be made between the two high-achieving, high-poverty schools and low-achieving, high-poverty schools in the discussion section of Chapter 6.

Mountain Vista School System

Mountain Vista is located in the central part of East Tennessee. The Mountain Vista School System is the third largest school district in Tennessee, and it has a total of 88 school buildings that serve nearly 50,000 students. Within driving distance to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and most major cities east of the Mississippi river, Mountain Vista is an interesting community that has a diverse culture. Over one-half of the school buildings are new or have been renovated since 1968 and student enrollment is steadily increasing. The school system has two vocational centers, two special education centers, and a center for dropouts in addition to its 50 elementary school, 14 middle schools, and 12 high schools. There are over 3,500 certified professionals working in the school system and approximately 1,800 non-certified personnel (secretaries, food service employees, custodians, and maintenance workers).

Mountain View Elementary School

Mountain View Elementary served a total student population of 436 students in Kindergarten through fifth grades during the 2004-2005 school year. The faculty includes one principal, one assistant principal, 28 classroom teachers, one Librarian, one guidance counselor, 3 custodians, 4 food service staff members, two secretaries, 5 educational assistants, one music teacher, one physical education teacher, one special education teachers, one talented and gifted instructor, one curriculum specialist, one social worker, one ESL teacher, and 1 school psychologist. According to the 2005 Report Card, 83.3% of the school's students were reported as economically disadvantaged and the student body consisted of 54.8% White, 37.6% African American, 6.2% Hispanic, 0.7% Asian and 0.7% Native American. The student attendance rate was

92.7% in 2004 and 94.2% in 2005. The promotion rate for Mountain Top was 99.2% in 2004 and 99.1% in 2005. Mountain Top's 2004 TVAAS scores were as follows: an "A" in Reading/Language Arts, an "A" for Math, a "A" in Science, and an "A" in Social Studies. The school's Safe School Status was "School Improvement 1 – Improving" (Tennessee Annual Report, 2005).

Mountain View Elementary is one of the two high-poverty, low-achieving, high-gain schools in this research study. Based on its economic and social characteristics, Mountain View Elementary is considered to be an economically and socially deprived school. Comparisons will be made between the two high-achieving, high-poverty schools and low-achieving, high-poverty schools in the discussion section of Chapter 6.

Data Collection Procedures

Adler and Clark (2003) wrote that case studies count on a number of sources from which data are collected. Yin (1994) referred to the use of multiple sources as the "First Principle" of data collection. Creswell (2005) stated that interviews, observations, documents, and audio-visual resources are sources from which data can be collected in a mixed methods study. Using these various sources for collecting data in association with a quantitative data collection procedure such as a survey should provide sufficient data for answering each of the research questions. Table 4 shows the data sources used to answer each research question and was used as a guide for ensuring that each data source was utilized.

A survey of school effectiveness was distributed to all faculty members and the administrators of the four schools. This was followed by semi-structured interviews of the principal and two teachers from each school. Protocols were developed for the semi-

Table 4 *Matrix of Research Questions and Data Sources*

Research Questions	Effective Schools Survey	Interviews	Observations
(1) Which of the characteristics of Effective Schools do high-performing, high-poverty schools in East Tennessee have in common?	Principals, Teachers	Principals, Teachers	Classrooms, Special area classes, arrival/dismissal of students
(2) What underlying conditions or distinctive practices must be present for the Effective Schools practices to exist?	Principals, Teachers	Principals, Teachers	Classrooms, Special area classes, arrival/dismissal of students

structured interviews of both teachers (see Appendix D) and administrators (see Appendix E). The conceptual framework used was based on effective schools research (Brookover, 1985; Coleman et al., 1996; Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte & Bancroft, 1985) using the characteristics associated with high student achievement, identified earlier as effective schools correlates (see Chapter 2, Literature Review). Both formal and casual observations were made and documented at each participating school.

More Effective Schools Staff Survey

The More Effective Schools Staff Survey (see Appendix F) was developed by the Fred A. Cardella, S. Louise Sprecher (Spencerport Central Schools), Robert E. Sudlow (Spencerport, New York), and H.W. Myers (University of Vermont) for the Association for Effective Schools, Inc. (2000). This Likert scale survey includes 101 questions and was distributed to each faculty member and administrator at each school. The questions were created by a panel of expert practitioners based on a review of the research and

literature on effective schools. The research sample on which the validity and reliability of the survey was established included 15 elementary magnet schools throughout Louisiana. These schools were not identified as gifted or talented magnet schools and were chosen to insure students of different nationalities were represented. The reliability was calculated through the Chronbach Alpha Coefficients method with an overall scale score of 0.85. Table 5 shows the Alpha, Mean and Standard Deviation score for each subscale. This survey was validated by the Catalogue of School Reform, Northwest Regional Education Lab, National Diffusion Network, United States Department of Education, Sharing Success Program, and New York State Education Department (Association for Effective Schools, Inc., 1999).

A letter accompanying the survey defined the purpose of the study, the time frame for collecting data, and assured to the participants that the results would be kept

Table 5 Reliability Subscale Scores for More Effective Schools Survey

<u>Subscale</u>	<u>Alpha</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Standard Deviation</u>
Safe and Orderly Environment	.86	47.9	10.43
Clear School Mission	.90	47.6	11.75
Instructional Leadership	.91	51.9	13.57
High Expectations for Success	.86	41.1	9.73
Opportunity to Learn and Time on Task	.81	45.2	8.78
Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress	.80	47.1	6.86
Home – School Relations	.82	45.7	9.07
Plan Implementation	.83	24.4	5.45
Staff Development	.84	26.9	6.67

confidential and used only by the researcher. The principal of each school was asked to administer the surveys and return them to the researcher by mail in a postage paid envelope.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were scheduled with the principal and two teachers from each of the four schools (see Appendix E and F). The interviews were designed to determine how both principals and teachers viewed their experiences and to allow them to describe how they were successful in a high-poverty setting. Separate protocols were designed for principals and for teachers prior to conducting the interviews. These protocols were modified during the interview as needed to encourage a full response from each participant. Adler and Clark (2003) best described the reason for using a semi-structured interview when they said that “structure in an interview can limit the researcher’s ability to obtain in-depth information on any given issue. Furthermore, using a standardized format implicitly assumes that all respondents understand and interpret questions in the same way” (p. 281).

Maxwell (1996) stated, “The key to getting good data from interviewing is to ask good questions” (p. 78). To ensure that the interviews included appropriate questions, all questions were based on the effective schools correlates and were structured to include the seven different types of questions suggested by Maxwell. These seven types are listed in the first column of Table 6. As this table illustrates, each type of question is represented in the interview questions of both teachers (represented with a T) and principals/administrators (represented with a P).

Table 6 *Interview Question Analysis*

Type of Question	Corresponding Interview Question
Grand Tour	Teacher Grand Tour Question, Principal/Administrator Grand Tour Question
Demographic	Teacher Demographic Question, Principal/Administrator Demographic Question
Experience	T2, T4, T5, T7, T8, T16, T17, T22, P1, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P14, P16, P18, P19, P20
Opinion	T3, T6, T7, T8, T9, T14, T16, T18, T19, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15, P16, P17
Feelings	T2, T4, T5, T6, T14, T18, P2, P3, P5, P6, P10, P13, P15, P17, P18
Knowledge	T1, T5, T7, T8, T9, T10, T11, T12, T13, T15, T16, T19, T20, T21, T22, P1, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P14, P16, P18, P19, P20
Sensory	T5, T6, T18, T19, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P10

Table 7 depicts the relationship of the interview questions to the research questions for this study. The interview questions that should provide data useful to answering each research question are indicated in the second column. The question for each group are indicated by the letters T (teachers) or P (principals). The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed for the purpose of data analysis.

Observations

Observation is the process of gathering open-ended, firsthand information by observing people and places. The researcher can take on one or more roles during observations. These roles exist on a continuum of obtrusiveness into the phenomenon being studied. For example, researchers may also be participants in the events they are

Table 7 *Research Questions in Relation to Interview Questions*

Research Questions	Interview Questions
1) Which of the characteristics of Effective Schools do high-performing, high-poverty schools in East Tennessee have in common?	T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10, T11, T12, T13, T14, T15, T16, T17, T18, T19, T20, T21, T22 P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15, P16, P17, P18, P19, P20
2) What underlying conditions or distinctive Practices must be present for the Effective Schools practices to exist?	T1, T4, T8, T10, T13, T17, T21 P1, P4, P10, P11, P13, P16, P20

observing. However, even if researchers take measures to minimize their presence in the research setting, it is understood that the mere presence of the researcher may influence the participants' behavior (Adler & Clark, 2003). The researcher may be a participant observer, a non-participant observer, or a combination of both (Creswell, 2005).

Observations are useful for several reasons. They can serve as a method of multiple source data triangulation as was discussed above. Additionally, observations can be useful when the researcher is unfamiliar with the phenomenon or wants to study rapidly changing social situations (Adler & Clark, 2003). In this case study, observations were used for each of these reasons.

The researcher spent one day observing at each school. Observations were recorded through field notes made by the researcher. Every effort was made to observe every aspect of the school and all activities that occurred during the school day.

Observation notes were transcribed, used in the data analysis and compared with the results from the More Effective Schools Staff Survey and the interviews.

An observation protocol was created by the researcher to assist in recording notes during the observations and to develop consistency between observations made at each of the four schools. The protocol consisted of a table containing each of the seven correlates of Effective Schools research, a column for outlining the areas where each of the correlates were observed, and a column for descriptions or notes by the researcher (see Appendix G). The researcher documented on the back of the observation protocol the events of the visit from beginning to end. Everything that the researcher did was documented in order from the time the researcher entered the school campus until the researcher left the school building.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data from the results of the More Effective School Staff Survey were compiled for each school and comparisons were made. The qualitative data from the interviews were transcribed and read carefully using a strategy known as “coding” which Maxwell (1996) stated is “the main categorizing strategy in qualitative research” (p. 78). As Maxwell alluded, “the goal of coding is not to produce counts of things” but to “rearrange it [data] into categories that facilitate the comparison of data within and between these categories and that aid in the development of theoretical concepts” (pp. 78-79). “Code maps” (Anfara, Brown & Mangione, 2001) were used to develop a flow chart which outlines the categories derived from the data and then aligned with the correlates found in effective schools research.

Table 8 is a visual representation of the interpretation of the data in three stages. In the First Iteration, the data were separated into large groups, which could then be analyzed in further detail. The Second Iteration illustrates how meaning was derived from the initial codes and the process of developing themes began to take shape. The Third Iteration brings the analysis of the data to a level that facilitates answering the research questions.

Methods for Verification

Mixed-methods research, by nature, has been questioned due to the subjective nature of the qualitative data collected. It is therefore important when conducting mixed-methods research to verify the results to, “rule out threat and increase the credibility of one’s conclusion” (1996, p. 92). The triangulation of data is the strategy that the researcher chose to verify the validity of the qualitative data in this study (Yin, 1994).

Figure 2 depicts the triangulation methods employed in this study. The quantitative method used in this study utilized the Effective Schools survey in four different high achieving, high-poverty schools in Tennessee. The qualitative methods used in this study included interviews of participants (i.e., principals and teachers), and researcher observations. This mixed-method approach enabled the researcher to discover and develop the insights into what contributes to the high-achievement of these high-poverty schools.

Constas (1992) provided a framework for verifying categories through two domains: *components of categorization* and *temporal designation*. As he stated, “The integration of these two domains of categorization provides one with a documentational table that may be used to make explicit the configuration of actions and temporal

Table 8 *Code Mapping – Three Iterations of Analysis (to be read from the bottom up)*

(Third Iteration: Application to Data Set)		
1) Which of the characteristics of Effective Schools do high-achieving, high-poverty schools in East Tennessee have in common? (a) How do these characteristics correspond to those identified in the Effective Schools Research? (1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, 1e, 1f, 1g) (b) How do the characteristics differ from those identified in the Effective Schools Research? (1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, 1e, 1f, 1g) 2) What underlying conditions or distinctive practices must be present for the Effective Schools practices to exist? (2a, 2b, 2c, 2d)		
(Second Iteration: Pattern Variables)		
1a. Clear School Mission	2a. Accountability	
1b. High Expectations	2b. Commitment	
1c. Instructional Leadership	2c. Atmosphere	
1d. Frequent Monitoring	2d. Programs and Training	
1e. Opportunities to Learn		
1f. Safe & Orderly Environment		
1g. Home-School Relations		
(First Iteration: Initial Codes/Surface Content Analysis)		
1a. mission	2a. consistency	
1a. goals	2b. above and beyond	
1b. expectation	2b. willingness	
1c. decision	2c. care	
1d. testing	2c. family	
1d. evaluate	2c. community	
1e. programs	2d. supplemental services	
1f. safety	2d. staff development	
1g. communication		
1g. parent		
1g. home		
DATA - Interviews	DATA - Observations	DATA - Documents

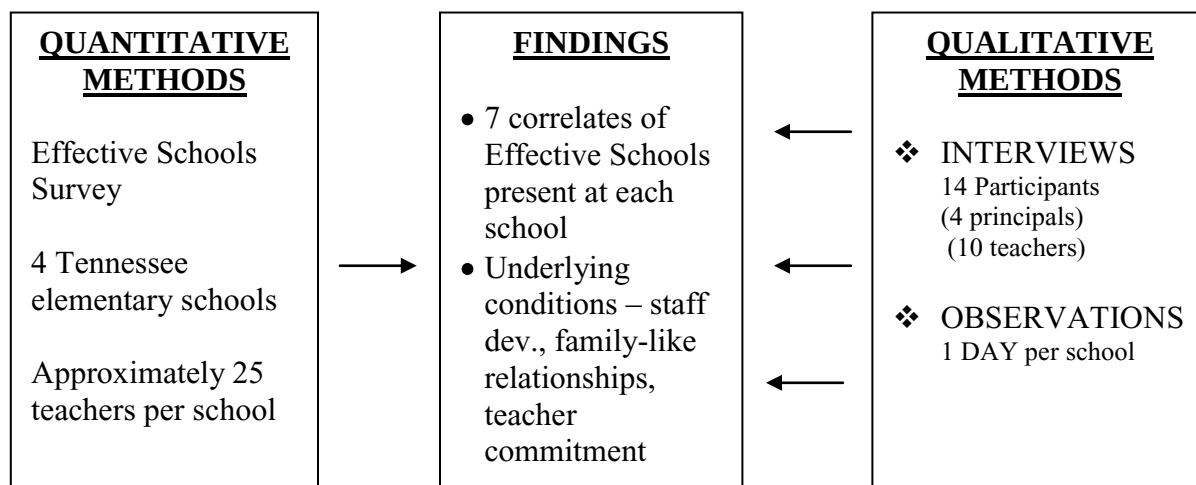


Figure 2. *Triangulation Methods Employed*

qualities associated with category creation in a given study” (p. 257). In the first domain, the *components of categorization* identify a detailed series of actions which are connected with the categorization. The second domain, or *temporal designation*, indicates the “temporal aspects of category development” (p. 256). As Conostas stated, “the primary value of this documentary approach rests in its potential to encourage researchers to make analytical events open to public inspection” (p. 257). Thus, the problem of not providing the reader of a mixed-method study with a thorough explanation of how categories are developed is alleviated. Conostas’ solution was applied to the problem concerning the credibility of qualitative research by using the “documentation of category development procedures” to increase “the methodological rigor and analytical defensibility of the qualitative orientation” in this study. Table 9 illustrates the how the development of categories for determining the characteristics of successful high-achieving, high poverty elementary schools in East Tennessee will be documented.

Trustworthiness was increased by the use of verbatim participant language and accounts rather than researcher interpretation. The use of an audit trail and continued investigation until reaching the point of saturation also ensured trustworthiness of the data.

Summary

The mixed-method, multi-site case study design provided a clear pathway for collecting and analyzing data. The use of the More Effective Schools Staff Survey (Association for Effective Schools, 2005), a validated survey instrument, provided strong quantitative data. The interviews and observations afforded a means to confirm the survey data. Triangulation of the data from these sources assured its accuracy. Trustworthiness was increased through the use of these transparent methods and data analysis procedures.

Table 9 *Documentation Table for the Development of Categories*

Origination			
Where does the authority for creating categories reside?	A priori	A posteriori	Iterative
- participants		h,i,j,k	a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,i,j
- programs			k
- investigative			
- literature	a,b,c,d,e,f,g	a,b,c,d,e,f,g	
- interpretative			
Verification			
On what grounds can one justify a given category?			
- rational			
- referential	a,b,c,d,e,f,g		h,i,j,k
- external			
- empirical		h,i,j,k	
- technical			
- participative			
Nomination			
What is the source of the name used to describe a category?			
- participants			h,i,j,k
- programs			
- investigative		h,i,j,k	
- literature	a,b,c,d,e,f,g		
- interpretative			
<i>Category Label Key - (Themes)</i> a. Clear School Mission b. High Expectations c. Instructional Leadership d. Frequent Monitoring e. Opportunities to Learn f. Safe & Orderly Environment g. Home-School Relations h. Commitment i. Accountability j. Atmosphere k. Programs & Training			

(Constas, 1992)

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter the findings will be reported for both the quantitative and qualitative data collected for this study. This mixed-methods research study gathered data using the More Effective Schools Staff Survey and interviews with the principals and at least two teachers at each school. Observations were also recorded by the researcher to allow triangulation of the data. The More Effective Schools Staff surveys were tabulated and scored by the Association for Effective Schools, Inc. In addition to interviews, the researcher observed each school setting and documented his observations through field notes. Both the questions used in the interviews and the protocols for the observations were based on the Correlates of Effective Schools. For a complete description of data collection methods and procedures see Chapter 3.

The findings will be organized for each participating school in relation to each of the seven Correlates of Effective Schools. This will provide a direct answer to Research Question #1 – Which of the characteristics of Effective Schools do high-performing, high-poverty elementary schools in East Tennessee have in common? Reporting the findings categorized by the seven correlates will assist in answering Research Question #2 – What underlying conditions or distinctive practices must be present for the Effective Schools practices to exist? Each school will be introduced by a brief description based on the researcher's field notes. The findings for each school are concluded with a discussion of the underlying practices and conditions and a summary of the interview responses.

Riverside Elementary

Background

Riverside Elementary is an older two-story school that had recently been remodeled. Concrete steps lead to the front door from a sidewalk next to the street. A buzzer is used to signal the secretary that someone needs the door unlocked to enter. The foyer of the school is very small with the office immediately off to one side. The researcher was met by the principal and the office staff. Each person was friendly and welcoming. The researcher interviewed the principal and then was taken on a tour of the school building (Field Notes, May 10, 2007).

Observations made during the tour were that the hallways were narrow and were accented by old wood trim work and wooden doors. The walls were covered with child-like paintings above the water fountain, over the doorways, and at intersections. There was a lot of activity outside the school building where a school carnival was being prepared for students to go to later in the day. A two-story addition had just been completed and it blended nicely with the old brick and concrete façade (Field Notes, May 10, 2007). Following the tour, two teachers were interviewed to determine their perception of the existence of the seven correlates of Effective Schools. Table 10 displays the demographic data for the three interview participants.

The More Effective Schools Staff Survey was distributed by the principal to each teacher at Riverside Elementary. To provide confidentiality, the principal made arrangements for the secretary to collect completed surveys and return them to the researcher in a postage paid envelope provided by the researcher. Twenty-four classroom teachers received the survey and twelve returned the survey for a response rate of 50%.

Table 10 *Riverside Interviewee Demographics*

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Years Experience</i>
Principal	Principal	M	8
Teacher	Title I	F	29
Teacher	1 st Grade	F	28

Clear School Mission

According to the teachers that responded to the survey, 96% agreed that Riverside Elementary had a Clear School Mission. In the interview, the principal discussed how the school's mission was tied to the mission statement of the River's Bend School System. He said,

We try to follow as our whole school system does; the school mission statement here is "every child is a winner."

The 1st grade teacher described the school's mission as,

Basically to see that the kids are happy, and to see that they get the best education they can along with life skills that will help them carry over what they have learned wherever they go; even if they are in one of those lower class situations they can learn to cope with that. They know just because they have that kind of environment that doesn't mean they have to carry on that kind of environment when they grow up, and they can be successful even in that environment.

High Expectations for Success

Ninety-seven percent (97%) of the survey respondents agreed that the staff at Riverside Elementary had high expectations for all students. The principal talked about the expectations for students at Riverside Elementary. He said,

We have very high expectations. I guess one of my personal philosophies is that a child's success in school is directly correlated to the emphasis that is placed on it at home. If education is important to the parents and they are being supportive at home of the school and educational process, then we see a lot of success here at school. If it not important at home, that is when you get the attitudes and kids that just don't care because they know there was no consequences at home. I am looking into trying to change that.

The 1st grade teacher stated that her expectations for students were,

I expect them to come in and work hard. I teach them to be respectful. I teach them to be responsible for themselves and be responsible for their learning. They know that I know what goes on at home, and they know once they come into my room that is a new world, new day, and we are going to do the best we can with what they bring to the classroom.

Instructional Leadership

Ninety-six percent (96%) of the survey respondents agreed that decisions that affect both students and staff members are made collaboratively at Riverside Elementary.

The principal explained,

I always try in any decision I make to think first of how it will affect the kids and how it will benefit them. Even when it comes down to budgeting and people asking for money. What are you doing with that for the kids? Are you just buying that for your classroom, or your kids going to be involved, how will that improve their education. I find that with our entire school system.

The 1st grade teacher described how the staff was included in decisions that are made at Riverside Elementary. She explained,

We have our committees that we go through, planning curriculum committees that meet once a month. They have something for their students to work on. Right now planning has been busy on awards, they have been working on that. So we have committees that we work through. Then the leaders of those groups make decisions, especially at budget time we make decisions for next year. We very much have input in our next year. He (the principal) is very open, and if we say this is not working, then he says change it. The heads meet not as regularly this year as we normally have, but a lot of that is because he (the principal) is new and he is trying to engulf the whole thing. We do meet at the end and decide budget things and all that.

Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress

Ninety-seven percent (97%) of the survey respondents agreed that student progress was frequently monitored at Riverside Elementary. The 1st grade teacher discussed how the school used a variety of assessments to evaluate student progress and to provide for students at all ability levels. She said,

It is very hard. What helps us here is we ability group. I have the non-mastery reading class, so I don't have as wide a variety and skill level of kids to keep assessing, because they are very close. You still have your high, medium, and low, but they are closer together than if you are trying to assess a whole group of kids. So, since I do have a non-mastery class, I have two designated assistants for students, which helps a lot with the assessment. We assess at the beginning of the

year and that is how we group them. We use basically an open court assessment, which is our reading program. I just pull from it what I want. It is basically sight, words, beginning sounds, things like that. We use our Star Reading program and that is how we group them. I do an assessment every two weeks, report assessment basically. About every six weeks I reassess the skills from the beginning of the year to see how they have progressed.

Opportunities to Learn and Student Time on Task

Ninety-nine percent (99%) of the survey respondents, the highest percentage for any response on the survey, agreed that Riverside students had ample opportunities to learn. The principal explained the structure that has provided opportunities for all children to learn,

We are a Title I school and we have been able, through that funding, to provide two additional teachers beyond what the BEP allows us to have, so that helps us to keep our numbers low and also helps us to do our skills based instruction. We ability group for reading and math, and we group kids, non-mastery, partial mastery, and mastery, based on skills they have mastered. Each six weeks they will have a six-week assessment where they can re-evaluate. It is a very fluid system where kids are able to move back and forth depending on their level of mastery of the content being covered at that time. I really attribute a lot of our success to that because we are able to take education to a child at the level they are at, and then move them on from there.

The Title I teacher also emphasized the program that Riverside has in place that provides for the needs of the students,

We do the school-based program. The whole school is a Title I school. Every teacher in the school is a Title teacher when it comes to reading and math time. Again, we do pull out the children, we have them in mastery, non-mastery, partial mastery, according to their TCAP scores, according to teacher recommendations, and just on some general tests that we give. Throughout the year we have had children who have started maybe in a non-mastery, and within one six weeks or two six weeks they move up. Maybe, the first weeks, we just placed them according to test scores because test scores don't test everything about that child. We may have placed that child in a wrong group. So, after the first two or three weeks, we re-evaluate and make sure we do have the children placed where they need to be.

Safe & Orderly Environment

Visitors to Riverside Elementary enter the school by concrete steps that lead from the sidewalk up to the front door. The doors to the school are locked and a sign directs visitors to "buzz" the office for assistance. The office staff uses a video/intercom system to screen visitors and limit access to the building. Once the door is remotely unlocked by the office staff, visitors are greeted at the office door as they enter the building. Once signed in, a visitors badge is presented to be worn during the visit (Field Notes, May 10, 2007). The More Effective Schools Staff Survey results showed that 93% of the respondents agreed that the school was a safe place for everyone.

The principal took the opportunity during a guided tour of the building to discuss at length the steps that the school had taken to ensure the safety of the students and staff. A new camera system had recently been installed using funding from a Safe Schools

Grant obtained by the school system. In a corner of his office, the principal had a very neatly organized display of flat panel monitors and a digital recording system. The surveillance system allows the principal to monitor and record activity at the school twenty-four hours a day. This system was also designed to allow monitoring by the police department at any time. As the tour of the building continued, other safety measures were also noted – staff members wore identification badges and exterior doors were locked (Field Notes, May 10, 2007).

Home-School Relations

Eighty-four percent (84%) of the survey respondents agreed that a positive relationship existed between home and school. The principal explained how the school interacts with parents and the community,

We do have a lot of parent involvement. One of the things we had the luxury of when we had a little more Title funds, we had a parent involvement coordinator here at the school. She actually did home visits, was in the home, and worked with parents. We have a very active PTA here, parents are very involved. We have a big event going on today, all kinds of parents that will be here and be involved. For the kids who need their parents to be involved and need that support that is where it does not come from. Those are the kids that struggle.

The 1st grade teacher described the community and the socio-economic background of the students at Riverside. She explained,

We have a lot of great kids, a mixture, a lot of kids that come from high-income families, and a lot of kids who come from lower-income families. Interestingly, some even live on the same street; they are mixed in that way. The way the

housing is there are a lot of really nice older houses with higher class families and then you have on the other side of the street, lower-income. We have a variety of parents that are involved, we have a group that are very involved with their children, spend a lot of time working with their children at home, and we have the other side who the kids don't see with their parents, don't live with their parents. They have no help whatsoever. We have lots of kids who have everything, kids who have no electricity and no running water. A very wide diversity of children are in our building.

Underlying Conditions or Distinctive Practices

A strong commitment by the staff members at Riverside was discussed by each person interviewed. The principal gave his opinion of the reasons for his school's academic success,

The one thing that makes us successful is the teachers in this building. I have teachers that will be here at 6:45 a.m., getting ready; we don't even start until 8. They will be here sometimes until 4 or 5 in the afternoon. I get calls on Sunday night at 10 p.m. when somebody has come in and set off the alarm because they forget to come in the front; but they are here doing something, getting ready for the week, and they spend their lives here. They know the financial situation we are in sometimes, and they don't really come and ask me for a whole lot of things, but you go into the classroom and you look at all the money they spent on something, and it comes out of their own pockets.

The Title I teacher also stated that teachers at Riverside had made the biggest difference in the academic success of their students,

The first thing is when I look at the teachers who are here, and who have been here for several years, I think that makes the biggest difference. We have some of the newer teachers who have come along in the last 2 to 3 years, they are learning from the ones that have been here. But it takes a lot more work. If you are not dedicated to this job and you expect to leave at 3:30 every day, there is no way. You have to know that you will have to do some extra work for a lot of children here. You do have to teach the skill over and over. We have a pacing scale. One day you do this, but it may take your group 2 to 3 days. I think the teachers are very dedicated, very flexible, and super hardworking.

The 1st grade teacher stated that the support staff at Riverside was a significant factor in the academic improvement of the students,

The teacher that you have and your assistant. I could not survive the group that I have this year without the assistants. They are very knowledgeable, they are trained. One has been here for quite a few years and I have had her several times on and off. They love the kids just as much as we do and they buy into their education as much we do.

Table 11 combines the data sources from the interview responses and the More Effective Schools Staff Survey in relation to each of the seven correlates of Effective Schools. Data that indicated “Strong Support” or “SS” had at least 90% or more positive responses on the survey and at least two of the three interviewees (or more) gave examples that supported the correlate. If the percent of positive responses was 65% or more and at least one of the three interviewees (or more) gave examples in their responses, the correlate was classified as having “Support” or “S.” If the survey results

Table 11 *Riverside Data Analysis*

Interviewee	Clear School Mission	High Expectations	Instructional Leadership	Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress	Opportunities to Learn	Safe & Orderly Environment	Home-School Relations
Principal	S	SS	S	SS	S	SS	SS
Title I Teacher	S	S	SS	S	S	S	S
1 st Grade Teacher	S	S	S	S	SS	S	SS
% of Positive Responses on Survey	95.83%	96.67%	96.11%	96.97%	98.55%	92.86%	83.02%
OVERALL	S	S	S	S	S	S	S

found less than 50% of positive responses and no examples were given, the correlate was classified as having “No Support” or “NS.”

Valley Crest Elementary

Background

Valley Crest Elementary is located in the heart of Valley Point, TN along a beautiful scenic highway. The school is surrounded by a beautiful and peaceful pastoral setting. The school appeared to be fairly new and the grounds were neat and well manicured. Two portable buildings were located on one side of the school and were accessed by a covered walkway. The covered walkway at the front of the building led to the front doors. The foyer was bright and open with signs directing visitors to the office located just inside the front doors. The researcher was warmly greeted by everyone that he met and he got the impression that everyone was welcome at this school (Field Notes, May 9, 2007).

The researcher met the principal and was given a tour of the building. The hallways were very neat and clean. Classes of students walked in single file lines as they moved through the hallways. Bulletin boards filled the walls with student work, honor rolls, and AR (Accelerated Reader) recognitions. It was quiet in the building, but students were actively involved in learning in each classroom visited. Everything and everyone seemed to have a purpose. After conducting the principal interview, the researcher interviewed two teachers (Field Notes, May 9, 2007). Table 12 displays the demographic data for the three interview participants.

The More Effective Schools Staff Survey was distributed to each teacher at Valley Crest Elementary. The principal ensured the researcher that one of the office staff would collect the completed surveys and return them to the researcher in the postage paid envelope provided by the researcher. All of the thirty teachers at Valley Crest completed and returned their surveys.

Clear School Mission

The More Effective Schools Staff Survey found that 91% of the staff that responded agreed that a clear school mission was present at Valley Crest Elementary. Responses to the interview questions concerning the school's mission statement were primarily in terms of goals for their students. The principal of Valley Crest talked about the goal that they had established for their school,

Table 12 *Valley Crest Interviewee Demographics*

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Years Experience</i>
Principal	Principal	F	30
Teacher	4 th Grade	F	5
Teacher	1 st Grade	F	16

That's one thing that we try to get across to our kids that we believe that they can succeed. I think all of our faculty has that mindset, and we sometimes have to work on imparting that to our parents because a lot of times they'll get this idea that "I wasn't good in math so I understand that they aren't going to be good in math." We work around that and try to get them to believe they can succeed, it may take a little more work, it may take a little more effort, but we've got the resources here and we're willing to put forth that effort. Mainly instilling in them the idea that you can.

The 4th grade teacher discussed how she was welcomed to the faculty and what her perceptions were when she began teaching at Valley Crest Elementary,

Their mission is to help the children and I want to be a part of that because that is why I went into teaching. I see the results that they have had. Yes it is a poverty situation, but you always have in every school those parents that care and those that don't.

High Expectations for Success

The survey results indicated that 95% agreed that the staff had high expectation for all students at Valley Crest. The principal and teacher interviews provided support for high expectations for students at the school. The principal explained her beliefs,

We try to get across to them that we believe that they can succeed in life, sometimes when I have them in here especially if they are a behavior problem, that's one thing that I talk to them about. I even share with them some of my personal background because my parents were divorced and we have a high

percentage of that here. I try to tell them that you can set your mind to it and go on, you can do anything.

The 4th grade teacher stated that she expected her students,

To be hard workers. To care about what they do. And more importantly, its school, and that is what we are here to do. Try your hardest – that's the whole point of coming to school. We're all on different levels. Some do better than others. But, if we all try we're going to get a little bit out of something.

Instructional Leadership

The staff also agreed on the survey (94% responded positively) that instructional leadership was strong at Valley Crest Elementary. Both the principal and the teachers interviewed talked about how the staff was included in decisions made at the school. The principal explained her leadership style,

If there are decisions that need to be made I try to get their input because there are times whenever I have to make the hard decisions myself. You can't ever get everybody to agree completely.

The chain of command at Valley Crest is clearly present, but the 4th grade teacher stated that teachers were involved in making decisions,

As far as executive decisions that would be (the principal and assistant principal), the school board and others. She does come around, and we have meetings. We have a lot of input, and feedback from her is positive.

Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress

Academic progress is carefully monitored at Valley Crest Elementary School. Ninety-Two percent (92%) of respondents agreed that student progress was frequently monitored. The principal explained how the school tracks student achievement,

We have the teachers identify the students using TCAP scores, THINKLINK tests that our system has invested in (starting in second grade we do the THINKLINK test 3 times a year and in 1st grade we only do it twice a year starting in late Fall). We take all that data (the TCAP test from the year before, the THINKLINK test given from the first of the year and the previous year), we take their previous grades and how they are doing at that time, and we identify the students that we feel will benefit from additional help.

Teachers are expected to follow the state objectives at Valley Crest Elementary. The 4th grade teacher explained how the teachers carefully followed the state curriculum and checked student progress,

We have a little bible, as we call it. It's a checklist with our state objectives on it. We write those down in our plan books the first time that we teach it. If a child in the room makes an 80 or above they pass. If it's below, we teach that skill again until they pass. Sometimes it doesn't happen for some of our children. But we do have a checklist that we go by and it's in our plan book and we check it off to make sure and monitor it. It's the state of Tennessee objectives. (The principal) checks our plan book every 2 weeks to look for the SPI and to see if they are checked off

because she has an even bigger checklist that she has to check off that her teachers are teaching the standards.

Opportunities to Learn and Student Time on Task

A significant response was evident through The More Effective Schools Staff Survey where 94% agreed that students were kept on task throughout the school day. During his visit, the researcher noted that the hallways and classrooms were quiet and students were engaged in learning. Each interviewee chose to answer the question concerning student time on task by explaining their daily schedule (Field Notes, May 9, 2007). The 4th grade teacher described a typical day in her classroom,

When we first come in we have so many buses that unload at different times. So we have what's called a "warm-up" in the morning. It's usually spelling, writing, and any homework that they didn't get finished at night. We have a lot of children that have circumstances that they can't handle and parents that can't read. As they come in, I don't penalize them, I help them. We do that in the morning. After that, we have Saxon math which is a new math that I love. It's repetitive, and the kids love it too. After that we have special classes, we come back and we do reading. Our reading consists of Scott Foresman readers that we read out of, and we usually do a skill and a story all week long. The vocabulary we do all week long about that story that we are reading. Take AR tests on those. After reading, we go into English and we also have our Scott Foresman English that we do. After English we go to lunch. After lunch we come back and do science and social studies. We'll do science for fifteen days and social studies for fifteen days. It's just too much to do both for fourth graders. This is usually the

first time that they have had science and social studies out of a book. The rest of the day is an AOL time which is time for any help with homework. If they want to read, they have 15 minutes before they go home to do that. And the rest of the day is basically car riders.

Safe & Orderly Environment

A little lower (yet still significant) positive response (87%) from the staff indicated that their school was safe and expectations for behavior were evident throughout the building. Signs were posted at the front door guiding visitors to the office. Exterior doors were locked as well as classroom doors were locked to ensure that students and teachers are safe. The principal talked in detail during the interview and while touring the building about policies that were developed both at the school level and district level to guarantee safety and maintain an orderly environment (Field Notes, May 9, 2007).

The principal explained how the faculty and staff ensured the safety of everyone at the school,

We have the drills that everybody has – fire drills, weather drills and we have met in the county as – we have a safety kit in case there is some kind of, with all our information stuff in it. We have planned, and we really haven't instigated as much as we are supposed to, but, we have planned like there's an intruder in the building we're supposed to send out a code and they're supposed to lock the doors. We teach here with locked doors. That may sound rough and stiff, but that's a requirement of the county. We do teach with locked doors. We have an SRO officer that is here two days a week, at least. The only outside doors that are

supposed to be unlocked is right out here where we can see who comes and goes. We have visitor passes. For the most part we don't send parents past the foyer – its not that we don't want to be standoffish and we try to make our parents feel like we're accessible to them – we've had a few instances where a parent was not supposed to be around a certain person or something like that, and we didn't realize it so we just decided we have enough assistants to cover the classroom and the teacher walks down and then, that way, they don't get tied up.

Home-School Relations

The staff at Valley Crest made every effort to not only communicate with parents, but they took steps to ensure that they were doing everything they could while the students were at school to improve student achievement (Field Notes, May 9, 2007). The More Effective Schools Staff Survey found that 69% of the staff felt that a positive relationship existed between home and school. Seventeen percent (17%) replied that a positive relationship was not present and 14% was unsure whether a positive relationship existed between home and school. The principal said,

I've found that even in this our parents will sometimes get frustrated because maybe they aren't as interested I think as we want them to be in school, but there is no doubt in my mind that they love their children. As (our Director of Schools) said many, many times, they send us the best they've got. And we take them, and do what we can with them.

The 4th grade teacher explained how the small community helped to ease any tension that parents may have with the school. She said,

Because this is a small community, we do have a pretty good relationship – parents are in and out of the office and the school. The big thing is that this is a small community and pretty much everybody knows everybody. They’ve got smaller brothers and sisters, or I had their brothers and sisters before, so it’s kind of like we are on a first name basis.

The 1st grade teacher talked about the frustrations that the staff faces with involving parents at the school,

During PTO meetings, we started serving snack and drinks, door prizes, whatever, to get parents to come out because we would have a PTO meeting with 50 people there and 40 of them were teachers. I know we are a low income school. I understand, but there should be more than that.

Underlying Conditions or Distinctive Practices

The staff at Valley Crest showed a sincere concern for the education of their students. Not only those individuals who were interviewed, but several staff members that the researcher met during his visit talked about how much they cared for the students and went “above and beyond” to provide the best possible education (Field Notes, May 9, 2007). When asked what is the most important factor in improving student achievement, the principal said,

All of our supplemental services that we offer to them. ... We have people that go above and beyond, and I think that is what makes the difference. It’s not just a job to them, they are a part of this community. This is where their children belong to their school. It’s a community school. They make it personal to them.

The 4th grade teacher said,

We just care. I know in my classroom the kids are my family. This is our home. You want your kids to do well. When they are there with me for those few months – I think we all have that same thing, we want them to do well and we don't want them to fail. It kind of falls back to the thing that we care enough to want to see them succeed. They already have one bullet against them – poverty. Mom didn't go to school, dad didn't go to school. In my classroom I tell them that this is their home. We've got to succeed so work hard. That's what I attribute mine too personally. We do have other things, after school things where we try to reach those kids. After they leave here I hope the same thing is there, but I have several kids that I think don't have a chance, but they are succeeding in middle school. That's what I attribute it to, plus the work after school. Being a teacher, you have to love them, and you have to love your job!

The 1st grade teacher talked about the staff's commitment to the students,

Our staff is willing to go above and beyond. Another big thing, our central office staff is really good about going out and searching for things that work. Just like the Saxon math. Things like that make all the difference in the world. I think that is one thing, our system sees a program that works, they will do whatever they need to do or sacrifice to get that. One thing that really doesn't have anything to do with the curriculum is that everyone here gets along. Everyone is friends with everyone. Everyone's willing to help out. Everyone is willing to help everyone else. I think that is the big thing as far as the camaraderie. Everyone gets along with everyone. That creates a good atmosphere for everyone coming in off the

street like you or anyone else. They see that when they walk into the room or into the school. Just our halls are clean, very well kept, the decorations that are up.

It's not cold when you walk in, it's very loving.

Table 13 combines the data sources from the interview responses and the More Effective Schools Staff Survey in relation to each of the seven correlates of Effective Schools. Data that indicated "Strong Support" or "SS" had at least 90% or more positive responses on the survey and at least two of the three interviewees (or more) gave examples that supported the correlate. If the percent of positive responses was 65% or more and at least one of the three interviewees (or more) gave examples in their responses, the correlate was classified as having "Support" or "S." If the survey results found less than 50% of positive responses and no examples were given, the correlate was classified as having "No Support" or "NS."

Table 13 *Valley Crest Data Analysis*

Interviewee	Clear School Mission	High Expectations	Instructional Leadership	Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress	Opportunities to Learn	Safe & Orderly Environment	Home-School Relations
Principal	S	SS	SS	S	SS	SS	SS
4 th Grade Teacher	S	SS	SS	SS	SS	S	SS
1 st Grade Teacher	S	SS	S	S	SS	S	SS
% of Positive Responses on Survey	90.00%	94.89%	94.2%	92.42%	93.48%	86.90%	69.22%
OVERALL	S	SS	SS	S	SS	S	S

Lakeshore Elementary

Background

Lakeshore Elementary is the only elementary school in the Lake View School system. Lakeshore Elementary is located on top of a hill just off a major highway in a sparsely populated area. A long driveway leads to the parking lot. The entrance of the school is indicated by a covered walkway. Only a small portion of the building is visible from this area of the school. The front doors were locked but visitors were allowed to enter through a single door with a glass window that led directly into the school's office. The researcher was welcomed by the secretary and bookkeeper (Field Notes, May 8, 2007). The researcher then interviewed both the principal and assistant principal and then interviewed three of the fifth grade teachers.

After the interviews were finished, the principal and assistant principal led the researcher on a tour of their building. What seems like a small school from the outside turned into quite a large building upon inspection. Each wing of the school opened into a small two-story common area around which classrooms were located. There was a little bit of activity as we walked the long hallways, but most students were found in classrooms working at the direction of their teachers. The building was in good condition and appeared to be well-maintained both inside and out. Classrooms were filled with pictures, student work, books, computers, and materials (Field Notes, May 8, 2007).

Table 14 displays the demographic data for the five interview participants.

The principal distributed the More Effective Schools Staff Survey to each of the thirty-three staff members and made arrangements for the secretary to collect the completed surveys and return them to the researcher in the postage paid envelope

Table 14 *Lakeshore Interviewee Demographics*

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Years Experience</i>
Principal	Principal	M	32
Assistant Principal	Assistant Principal	M	31
Teacher	5 th Grade	F	11
Teacher	5 th Grade	F	10
Teacher	5 th Grade	F	11

provided by the researcher. A total of eleven (11) completed surveys were returned to the researcher for a response rate of 33%.

Clear School Mission

The staff at Lakeshore Elementary indicated on the survey that 95% agreed that a clear school mission was present. The principal explained the mission statement for Lakeshore Elementary School,

Here's what our mission statement is: "Lakeshore Elementary School's commitment is to motivate and encourage children to become proficient or advanced in reading, writing and mathematics by providing a positive educational environment." The bottom line, our vision statement is: "The vision of Lakeshore Elementary School is to provide an environment where teachers, staff, parents, administrators and the community work together to create an atmosphere where all students to achieve continuous improvement in all areas of learning as they develop increased respect for each other."

The principal also discussed the goals that the staff had for the current school year,

We had three goals. Our three goals this year were to increase our math scores proficient and advanced by 2%, to increase our reading scores to proficient or

advanced by 3%, and to improve our writing score from a 4 to a 4.1. That's our three goals. That's it. That's the bottom line. We even got it down to how many kids that is.

High Expectations for Success

A total of 96% of the staff surveyed were in agreement that the administration and the staff at Lakeshore Elementary had high expectations for their students. The principal explained,

Everyday when I go into their room the standard is on the board. I'll show you what we do in just a minute (walk-through). They tell their kids what they are going to learn that day – “guys it's on the board right there.” We're not trying to hide anything from somebody. Let your kids know what they are going to learn that day. That is what we expect out of our kids. We have high expectations for all of our kids. Now you have to keep that in perspective. You've got to know that type of child that we are dealing with you can have high expectations, but our high expectations aren't going to be maybe what some other schools are. Our high expectations for some kids are to pass the TCAP. Then we have expectations for others that they need to score advanced, so it depends on the child.

One 5th grade teacher also discussed the high expectations that teachers had at the school,

I think our expectations are high regardless of our student's backgrounds. I think we go beyond what is expected of us to reach and get to them. They don't always meet our requirements, but I think we go the extra mile to get them up their where

they need to be through enrichment, working with kids in the morning, or, after school. Not only academically, but in everything.

Instructional Leadership

A significant positive response (94%) on the survey revealed that the principal was an instructional leader at the school and involved the staff in making decisions. The principal discussed how he involves all staff members in making decisions at the school,

Most of it is made by all of us. Any type of instructional decisions, we have an instructional team within our system – we are very fortunate we have only three schools – we meet twice a month and discuss high school, middle school, and elementary school issues. That’s where all the decisions are made. Now, I bring it back to my staff, and I say “OK guys we’re thinking about doing this...” We have an advisory team, one representative from each grade level plus the specials and special ed. that meets once a month, or, as needed. If I have been in an instructional team and there’s something very important that we’ve been talking about, I’ll call them in one day at three o’clock. I’ll sit down and say “guys this is what we’ve been talking about, now go to your peers and tell me what you think.” Each grade level meets once a week and they have to turn in minutes of those meetings, they just don’t meet, and they have to turn in minutes.

A 5th grade teacher described the leadership hierarchy at Lakeshore Elementary,

There is a core team, and there is an advisory team. We talk about things amongst our grade level and then it goes back to advisory, which works with the administration. We are redesigning for next year, and we will present options which we would like for him to look at so we’re still waiting for an answer on

that. He's pretty open. I don't feel like we're in a dictatorship like this is what your going to do and this is how it's going to be done. I don't feel like it's that way.

Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress

The More Effective Schools Staff Survey exposed that 89% of the staff felt positive that student progress was frequently monitored throughout the school year. The staff at Lakeshore Elementary has implemented a number of programs to monitor student progress at various points throughout the school year. The principal said,

We do a lot of TCAP review. We have several in-service days built in.

Obviously the worst part of that is we don't get our TCAP back in time. But we spend a lot of time at the first of the year, a lot of in-service time, going over TCAP data. We continue that during the year. We also do a thing called THINK LINK that we started this year, we've started that and it's been wonderful. We use those progress reports out of THINK LINK, we send those home. It's very similar to TCAP, that's why we picked it, and I know there are several of those out there too. The reason that I use it is basically I talked to several other people and went to several in-services of people that did use it, my old school system uses it, and they were sold on it. I went and researched the people that had been doing it for three or four years, not somebody that had been doing it one year.

This is only our first year, but we do keep up with all of that. Our computer teachers keep up with the STAR with ACCELERATED READER, as a matter of fact right now what our computer teachers are doing, they are retesting everyone on ACCELERATED READER so we have an August score and now we have a

May score so we're going to see by teacher how these kids have progressed.

We've got the MY READING COACH, we do that in 4th and 5th grade which is all data driven too, and it basically gives scores of where they started and where they ended. Really about everything we do is data driven.

A 5th grade teacher at Lakeshore Elementary discussed the variety of programs used to monitor student progress,

We have several research based programs like Think Link, Reading Coach, Classwork, Star Reading, we can test them at the beginning of the year, and then throughout the year to see if they are making progress and, if they're not, then we know what we need to focus on with that child. And, if they are, then we can move on.

Opportunities to Learn and Student Time on Task

The staff agreed on the survey (93% positive response) that students had multiple opportunities to learn and time on task was stressed. The administration has implemented a method for ensuring that students stay on task and teachers are following the curriculum map. The assistant principal explained,

I'll just give you a couple of examples. First of all, they have to give me their daily schedule. If I walk in her class, she should be teaching math. So, if I want to go see this teacher teach math, I know that I can go in there at nine AM. That's one of the things that I started. We have got three or four teachers now that will e-mail us and say "In case you do a walkthrough today, I've had to adjust this and this." If you go in at 9:15 AM and it's a transition time and they are five minutes off, OK, but, if it is in the middle of what should be Language Arts and they're

teaching math, they will get a “See Me” down at the bottom. We do what we call “walk throughs” which that is pretty popular now.

Safe & Orderly Environment

The principal and assistant principal noted a number of safety procedures as well as concerns during a tour of the school campus. The doors to the foyer of the school building are locked, and signs direct visitors to enter a glass door to the side of the main entrance which leads directly into the office of the school. A computer station is provided for visitors and volunteers to sign in and out, leaving a record of their visit (Field Notes, May 8, 2007).

As the principal, assistant principal and the researcher toured the campus, several safety items were noted. All exterior doors were locked and access into the building was limited to the office door. A concern of the administration was the isolation of the school building and lack of visibility from the main highway. Also, wooded areas surround the entire campus restricting visibility of the areas around the building such as the playground, parking lot, and entrance (Field Notes, May 8, 2007). The More Effective Schools Staff Survey indicated that 89% of the staff felt that the school was a safe and orderly environment for everyone.

Home-School Relations

The survey found that only 74% of the staff agreed that a positive relationship existed between home and the school. Although only 8% disagreed that the positive relationship was present, 18% were unsure about their feelings on the subject. The principal explained the unique situation that the school faces,

We have all kinds of programs here, and we have a lot of parents who come and they will come to certain things. They will come to fun things. Now a lot of times, academic things, and what we try to do is to combine both. Each grade level has a parent night, and it is a fun night, but it is also a learning night we try to incorporate – “guys we want you to have fun, but they need to be learning something while you’re having fun.” We get a lot of parental involvement. Now on a daily basis, nothing, and we don’t expect it.

A 5th grade teacher also said that parental involvement is not what the staff would like for it to be. She said,

I would say we don’t have as much parent involvement as we would like. We have some wonderful parents that will help and do whatever, but, for the most part we don’t have a lot of parent interaction due to the low socioeconomic status – phones being disconnected, not being able to get in contact with the parents. School is not their priority; it’s not on top of their list. That feeds into the children. Twenty percent are probably involved, and the rest are not. Now our Hispanic population has good strong family units at home, but they have the language barrier and they are not the behavior issue, it’s just the language barrier. The parents don’t participate, but the children are expected to behave.

Underlying Conditions or Distinctive Practices

Several unique characteristics were identified during the visit to Lakeshore Elementary School. The staff referred to the work of the principal as a major reason for the success at the school. The administrators talked at length about accountability for

teachers, staff members, and students. The principal stated his opinion for the academic success at Lakeshore Elementary,

I'm going to say accountability. When I got here, teacher accountability wasn't here. Not only that, teacher morale – you're only going to do as well as how you teach your kids. I don't care how smart they are, I don't care how great a teacher they are, if they don't come in the building ready to teach. We've worked on morale, just like this week is teacher appreciation week, we just handed those out Wednesday afternoon in a faculty meeting (t-shirt). I give a "I Make a Difference Award" in every one of our faculty meetings. We do hold them accountable.

A 5th grade teacher talked about the variety of opportunities that the school is able to offer to their students. In her opinion,

All of our programs and the individualization for each program that we have. The kid is getting what they need. There are so many programs that they can have right now. If they need assistance in reading, then we have a reading program for them that is individualized for them. If its math, then we have a program for them that diagnoses the child and works with just what they need. A few teachers are open mornings at 7:15 AM and tutoring after school. There are writing programs for kids who want extend writing. There's a reading novel study club. They have an opportunity prior to and after school.

Another 5th grade teacher talked about the principal as the leader in the change that has occurred at the school. She said,

I think a lot of it too is him (the principal), he doesn't want to hear any excuses, he expects the child to be doing what they are supposed to be doing no matter

how low, how bad, how poor. He wants everybody on target and performing and working. And, they have come to know that now. And, the consistency that he has here. I came right when he came, and, prior to that, there were a lot of different principals. I worked for one principal fourteen years and then, after he retired, they had several. He's been here the longest though. With the interns that we all have, he hires a nice percentage of them, and they know what to expect so it just keeps perpetuating. We have quite a few every year, and they are a big asset.

Table 15 combines the data sources from the interview responses and the More Effective Schools Staff Survey in relation to each of the seven correlates of Effective Schools. Data that indicated “Strong Support” or “SS” had at least 90% or more positive responses on the survey and at least three of the five interviewees (or more) gave examples that supported the correlate. If the percent of positive responses was 65% or

Table 15 *Lakeshore Data Analysis*

Interviewee	Clear School Mission	High Expectations	Instructional Leadership	Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress	Opportunities to Learn	Safe & Orderly Environment	Home-School Relations
Principal	SS	SS	SS	SS	SS	S	SS
Assistant Principal	S	SS	SS	S	SS	S	SS
5 th Grade Teacher	S	SS	S	S	SS	S	S
5 th Grade Teacher	S	SS	SS	S	S	S	S
5 th Grade Teacher	S	SS	S	S	S	S	S
% of Positive Responses on Survey	93.75%	93.94%	90.91%	88.43%	90.12%	85.71%	67.91%
OVERALL	S	SS	SS	S	SS	S	S

more and at least one of the five interviewees (or more) gave examples in their responses, the correlate was classified as having “Support” or “S.” If the survey results found less than 50% of positive responses and no examples were given, the correlate was classified as having “No Support” or “NS.”

Mountain View Elementary School

Background

Mountain View Elementary is located within an older residential community in north Mountain Vista. The school is literally within steps of the road, and there is very little parking at the front of the school. It appears to be a rundown, old building with an obvious addition that was done years ago. A number of portable buildings are located next to the school. The inside of the building looked just like the outside – old brick walls, tile floors, and narrow hallways. It looked like a poor school (Field Notes, May 3, 2007).

The researcher met with the principal and had the opportunity to interview three different teachers. The principal gave a quick tour of the building that included the library, the cafeteria, the gym, as well as several classrooms. There was a lot of activity going on throughout the school, and the researcher was able to ask a lot of questions during the tour. The appearance of the building itself was very deceiving because the learning activity going on within the school walls was fresh, new and exciting (Field Notes, May 3, 2007). Table 16 displays the demographic data for the four interview participants.

The More Effective Schools Staff Survey was distributed to each teacher at Mountain View Elementary. The principal distributed the surveys to each of the twenty-

Table 16 *Mountain View Interviewee Demographics*

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Years Experience</i>
Principal	Principal	F	11
Teacher	2 nd Grade	F	4
Teacher	4 th Grade	F	4
Teacher	Title I	F	4

eight teachers at the school and made arrangements for the Title I teacher to collect the completed surveys and return them in the postage paid envelope provided by the researcher. A total of twenty-one (21) completed surveys were returned to the researcher for a response rate of 75%.

Clear School Mission

The More Effective Schools Staff Survey reported that 95% of the staff that completed the survey agreed that the school had a clear mission. Responses to the interview question concerning the school's mission statement were very similar. The school's mission is posted on the school's website and in the student handbook (Field Notes, May 3, 2007).

The principal described the school's mission statement as,

Really to (1) prepare the kids academically for middle school, (2) of course enriching the curriculum, (3) make sure lower level needs are met here. Have they been fed? Do they have clothes on that are not dirty? Are they safe? For example we had a third grade girl yesterday say that she was having sex with her brother. They were both molested when they were younger so now the brother is in middle school, and the third grader is now having sex with the eighth grader. She said she was addicted to porno on the computer. It is a different story like

this every single day so making sure the kids are safe, making sure they feel values, have a voice is important to us. Most of the kids are not going to get anything in their homes, academically, socially, emotionally, behaviorally, so we are pretty much the catch-all, just being a full service school where a 100% full service school anything these kids need we made sure they have, just make sure they have a bright future.

The teachers agreed with the principal. The 4th grade teacher said,

The school mission for our kids is to really just get them to learn, but the desire to learn and really think about how they can use these things in the future. We are preparing our kids to be effective learners. How do we help our kids survive in the world? A lot of them obviously come from lower income families. How do we help them desire to do more and know that they can, and the more they do, they can finish high school, for some of them go on to college; instilling that desire is what I thought we should focus on.

The 2nd grade teacher also provided a reason for creating the mission statement,

We have a mission statement that we wrote as a staff, and, basically, it is just to prepare the students to be lifelong learners so that when they leave here they are prepared to go to middle school and be successful. That is really our mission.

We hope they enjoy learning and they don't say I hate school. We want them to like school, and hope we have given them enough information that when they get to middle school, that they can continue on to be successful.

The Title I teacher stated,

The mission of our school is to prepare our students so they will be ready for middle school, both academically and socially. They are to be prepared to be lifelong learners and just be able to support their own learning. We give them the tools they need to be successful in that, be successful in math, in reading and successful in life.

High Expectations for Success

Overwhelmingly the staff at Mountain View had high expectations for their students. Ninety-seven percent (97%) of the staff gave a positive response to the questions on the survey concerning the correlate of “High Expectations for Success.”

The principal and each teacher interviewed at Mountain View Elementary spoke similarly about the high expectations of students at their school. The principal stated,

For my students to follow the rules. People have argued with me, but in inner city you have to have that. Our three school rules are respect yourself, respect others, and respect our school. They are not taught respect at home so I expect them to be respectful, to be excited about learning, to accomplish everything they have through the curriculum, be kind to each other. That is a biggy! To have a good time, and be loving.

Each teacher also discussed their expectations of students in their classrooms.

The 4th grade teacher said,

I have expectations for my kids, and I let them know at the beginning of the year and all year long. One thing that we have at our school is three rules, which have

been very effective having them school-wide: (1) respecting yourself, (2) respecting other, and (3) respecting the school. I am sure you will hear that from others, too, but we expect that. If that does not happen, then the kids know they are going to have some sort of consequences from that and they know those rules.

The 2nd grade teacher also talked about her student expectations,

I have very high expectations for my students. Sometimes I feel like I may be a little to hard on my students, but I feel you have to set the bar higher. I have behavioral expectations, academic expectations. Behavior-wise, I expect them to come in the room, follow classroom rules and school rules. Academic-wise, I expect them to do their best on the level that they are working. I know that not everyone in my classroom can do every assignment the same, so we have to do a lot of differentiating as far as assignments are. I just expect them to try and give as much to their work as I am giving to them.

The Title I teacher discussed student expectations from a school perspective,

We expect that our students will be on grade level, that they will do their best, work to their own academic ability, they will behave in class, respect their teachers, respect their fellow students, and we also tell them to respect themselves, knowing that they have to do for themselves, that they have to be responsible for their own academic achievement as well as behavior.

Instructional Leadership

Leadership is shared at Mountain Top Elementary School. The staff agreed (94% positive response) that the principal was the instructional leader at the school and that the entire staff was included in making decisions. Both the principal and the teachers

interviewed talked about how the staff was included in decisions made at the school. The interviewees also discussed instructional leadership in their school. The principal said,

The Leadership team here is strong. The grade level chairs here are strong. In second grade for example, they came and said our reading instruction is not working. We have too many levels. We want a group for part of our literacy block. So I said, "I am really hesitant about that, I am worried about guided reading, worried about the small group instruction. However, if you all believe it in let's try it." They tried it, part of it did not work, and part of it did. They came back to me and said we are going to restructure it again, look at scores. I give them that leeway. However, I have the opportunity to see the building as a whole. Sometimes they are just in a grade level in their classroom. At some point, I don't have veto power, but they know they can make decisions about whatever it is. If I see it is affecting our learning environment, affecting test scores, then I say we are going to have to come back to the table. They are such a knowledgeable staff; we have had so much staff development because of Reading First that they are trained.

The 2nd grade teacher also talked about the role of the leadership team. She said,

There are ten members on it from various grade levels and different groups in our school, and, if there are any decisions that need to be made that needs to have a lot of discussion about, we will come and discuss it. How do we spend this money, what do we want to do about this issue, etc... The faculty feels like they have a lot of input. If you not on the Leadership Team, you know who the

members are, you can go and say “I would like you to talk about this, see what you can do about this.” They meet at least once a month.

The 4th grade teacher spoke about the influence of the principal in the school. She stated, There is a lot of staff input. She has always been good. Obviously she gets to make the final call on something. But, she is always really good at faculty meetings of putting something out – we are thinking about doing this, what do you think? We have grade level planning meetings every week on Wednesday. Sometimes she will give the grade level chair something that will say, talk to the teachers and see what people think about this, and turn it back into me. She really does ask for our feedback. She is really a huge part of our school. She is not the kind of the principal that is in her office with the door closed that you never see. She is always asking, “what do you think about this, how should we do this.” Sometimes, like I said, she makes the final decision. It may not be what we wanted, but most of the time it is. We always have been able to get to have input.

The Title I teacher also spoke about the leadership team. She said,

Decisions are made collaboratively. We have a Leadership Team that has members at every grade level. When a decision has to be made, they talk to their grade level about what is coming up, and what they think would be best for the student. All of our decisions come down to what is best for our students, to meet their needs, and have them to be successful.

Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress

The More Effective Schools Staff Survey detailed that 94% of the staff gave positive responses when asked on the survey about the frequency of monitoring student

progress. Teachers spoke in depth about the many programs used to monitor student progress. The principal also explained in detail how the school tracks student achievement during the interview. Observations were made during the visit of students being tested individually to check reading fluency (Field Notes, May 3, 2007).

A strong relationship was also found during each interview concerning frequent monitoring of student progress. The principal talked about how the school monitored student progress. She stated,

I think our tiered instruction with reading, making sure our activities are focused, and engaging, has really helped us. Before I got here, they did not use a curriculum, they didn't know they had a curriculum guide, didn't turn in lesson plans. They did not do assessment analysis meeting. So they are very attuned to looking at what they are doing in the classrooms, analyzing that, doing the assessment, and then coming back and tailoring their instruction. That was not happening in the past; just make sure that everything in the classroom is engaging.

The principal also discussed how teachers monitored student progress to improve instruction,

They know there are actual standards, local and state. After every assessment they give, there is a little form they fill out looking at the strengths and weaknesses of students, how they are going to re-teach or enrich, and how many students are proficient. That really made them target the kids that were not excelling or not on benchmark. Our special ed. teacher said that is the best thing that has ever happened to this school because the special ed. kids at one point were just looked at as resource kids, those are your kids, and those are our special

ed. kids. Once all this accountability came into the building, the teachers know these are my babies even though they may go out to tier or go out to resource, I am still accountable.

The 2nd grade teacher talked about how she assessed students in her classroom,

In reading we do the DIBELS Assessment from the University of Oregon. We do that three times a year to get a bench mark where they will be in a year and see how they progress. Then the kids are identified by that, an assessment as being strategic or intensive intervention. We put them into the intervention program in Voyager, and we have several others, and then we progress monitor them every two weeks to see how the program is sitting. Everything is flexible so if we need to move a student into a different group, we do that, based on their needs. That is for the reading review. For math we have fourth and fifth grade and I believe third as well, we do groupings on that. Those are flexible also, and, if we need to move kids, we will. But, we look at unit test scores to place them initially, and then, if the teacher feels like the student is really excelling, they need to be moved up, or, if the student is struggling, they will move the kids based on that.

The 4th grade teacher also discussed how she monitored student progress in the classroom,

We have so many ways to monitor student progress here. We just went through out SACS this year, and they ask us to tell them the forms of assessment that you use at your school. We do have a lot of informal and formal assessments that we use. As far as reading, we have the Reading First so we use the Dibbles Assessment where we have 3 monitoring benchmarks a year, but, in between, we

do progress monitoring with intensive kids every 2 weeks, so we are always watching those intensive kids so see if they are making progress, are they regressing, or how is that going. With math we have all the Mountain Top County ones, like math unit test, reading bench mark test, language, writing, but also we have been doing that CBM math testing. That is kind of nice because you can get on the computer and pull up all sorts of graphs, and you can compare our students here to other Mountain Top Schools.

The Title I teacher described the school wide approach for monitoring student progress,

With our math we use the CBM testing, which is a county-wide assessment. They monitor three times a year using a CBM benchmark assessment, which is just a quick test to see how they are doing. But, we also use our classroom tests to monitor students as well, and to make sure they are keeping on track and, if they are not, then our teachers intervene and pull them back for extra teaching. With our reading we use DIBELS progress monitoring and benchmark assessments. We benchmark all of our kids three times a year using the DIBELS oral reading test. The students who score below proficient or below grade level are monitored every 2 weeks to makes sure they are catching up on their reading. We provide intervention for those students and we watch it, and, if we think it is not working, then we change what is happening to try to meet the needs of each student.

Opportunity to Learn and Student Time on Task

The staff at Mountain View Elementary agreed significantly (95% positive) that students were given many opportunities to learn and kept on task throughout the school

day. During the school visit, the researcher observed that classes were orderly and on task. The hallways and classrooms were quiet and students were engaged in learning (Field Notes, May 3, 2007). The principal described options that the school has available to deal with behavioral situations,

We have a solutions classroom, and that is where the behaviorally challenged kids are. I don't know if it is actually effective for those kids, but I think it is for the other population. It gives the other kids a safe environment and learning environment. I love all of these kids; the teachers love all of these kids.

However, we have to make sure the classroom is safe so they are able to instruct, and they are able to learn. We have in-school suspension which helps.

The 2nd grade teacher discussed how the entire school worked to organize the school day to improve student achievement,

We have school-wide at least a ninety minute reading block, doing regular reading instruction, doing small groups, working on different schools, guided reading groups. We have an intervention program for our students who need extra help in reading. We test them, assess them, and we call that program Voyager. We will have thirty extra minutes working in the Voyager Group. I spend about two hours in reading instructions every day.

The 4th grade teacher described a typical day in her classroom,

We start right at 7:30. The kids come in at 7:30, do their morning work. We do all of our normal morning things like sharpen our pencils, listen to announcements. From 8 to 8:30 I do guided reading groups. Then we go to our special area classes. That is when we do all of our planning, meetings, etc. When

I first started here we had thirty minutes every day and now we have fifty minutes every day. It is amazing what you can get done. Really, we are only supposed to plan on Wednesdays, but we ended up getting together. On Tuesdays, we have M-Team and S-Team meetings. It is really nice. When the principal came, she wanted to know how we could fix the schedule for us to have the planning time. After that, we normally do some language, writing, have lunch, and finish up, start math, recess, science social studies. We do science for 3 weeks, social studies for 3 weeks, kind of go back and forth, and then, by that time, it is time to go home. We go from 7:30 to 2:30.

The Title I teacher described how she worked with students to increase their academic success,

I am a reading interventionist. I pull students for 30 min. at a time. I pull from first, second, third, and fifth grades now. I haven't pulled fourth grade yet this year, and I have pulled kindergarten in the past. Our kindergarten teachers have managed to schedule their interventions so that they don't need any help. What happens is all of our students who score intensive on their reading; they require an extra hour of reading instruction outside of their ninety minutes. All of our teachers provide thirty minutes of additional reading instruction to all of their students who score strategic or intensive, anything below grade level. Then the students who need the additional thirty minutes I pull back into small groups. I have small groups thirty minutes all day long except for my planned time and my lunch. I run them back to back. I pull nine groups right now.

Safe and Orderly Environment

Although 12% of those surveyed disagreed, the remaining 88% did agree that the Mountain View was a safe and orderly school environment. Signs are posted at the front door guiding visitors to the office. Doors are locked and staff members as well as visitors wear ID badges. The principal talked in detail during the interview about changes that had been made in policies at the school to ensure the safety of everyone (Field Notes, May 3, 2007).

Mountain View Elementary has undergone a transformation over recent years in order to improve their learning environment. The principal described the situation,

This place looked like a zoo on top of a prison. One day I was trying to restrain a kid and get him to come help, and he said, “after I finish my biscuit.” That was mentality of the officers, very lazy. I called the security officer and said “get him the hell out of my school; I will be the security officer.” If they have any problems around here, they will go through me. The parents knew me from other schools, they know I do not play, the kids have seen me take them down, drills, disaster fire, anything under a minute. If I said right now there is sewage on the playground, keyword for practice drill, we could walk through this building and within a minute, you could not find one person. I think we have done it so often that the kids feel safe. The staff, too, are so aware of what is going on around them. If we see a strange car, they are alerted. I think the community knows that I am not to be messed with. “Oh you are a sweet country girl from Adamsville”. I am not. It is big on my mind, but I told them if someone comes in this building they will have to through me first. I don’t want a fence here. I want to keep the

kids safe, I want to keep my teachers safe. You have to guard the community just like we do.

The 2nd grade teacher discussed how the school works on ensuring the safety of the students,

I think that is always kind of difficult especially today. In our school, we do have a lot of portable classrooms, and I am in a portable myself. If we feel like there is a threat, we lock our door and teachers all have keys. The doors into the school are kept open because we need to get access. We have looked at possibly doing some sort of a buzz system with a speaker phone. Our kids are pretty good about if they see somebody in the school they don't know without a visitors tag on them, they are pretty good about telling me. We do the best we can with what we have.

The 4th grade teacher described a recent incident at the school,

As far as being physically safe here, the principal is a stickler as far as practicing all the drills. Two weeks ago we had a real fire in the bathroom. Someone set fire to the toilet paper dispenser in the bathroom. We were outside for 2 hours while they got everything cleaned up. As far as those kind of safety issues, I think she is always good about practicing those kind of things. I think we try to make them feel that if things might not be great at their home, that this is where they can come where people love them, are going to take care of them. We don't put up with bullying at all. If the principal hears about that, it is not good. I think we try to keep everybody safe by keeping behaviors in check, practicing our drills, and just letting them know that there are people here for them. We have our

guidance counselor, so, if someone is having some problems, they can always talk to her.

The Title I teacher discussed how the teachers work with students to improve the safety of the school,

We have worked really hard to get our kids to understand that they need to be respectful to each other, and that is the first thing with safety, knowing that you are safe from other students. We enforce our rules the same all the time so that we know that they feel safe within their classrooms. As far as outside factors, we have drills that we practice, so that they know if something were to happen we would have a plan. I was just outside in the courtyard yesterday with some of my students, and they said “What happens if we are out here and they do that drill.”

We have a drill for an intruder where we hide in the room and lock the doors. We go to the first classroom we can get to. If we have to, we can knock on that window and climb through the fire escape door. But, they think about those things all the time, how to keep themselves safe.

Home-School Relations

The relationship between home and the school at Mountain Top Elementary is difficult but improving. Nineteen percent (19%) of those surveyed disagreed that a positive relationship existed between home and school, seventy-six percent (76%) did agree that the relationship was positive. The principal describes what the school is doing to communicate with home,

I do a lot of home visits for one. I make positive phone calls at least two or three a day to parents, especially of my bad kids. He finished his math test, or he got

on level one today. With the mobility rates in Mountain Top, especially in inner city schools because I have been in four, of course some of these parents go from school to school so they knew me at the other schools which helps. Just building those relationships. We do lesson line every week; send home weekly newsletters, PTO meetings (we don't have good participation in those). We have our library and tech lab open twice a week at nighttime so that has helped. We have tried to get volunteers in, and that is hard to do especially with transportation. We have had meetings at local community center, things like that. We have a little bit more turn out, but any time we offer food or any time we offer anything free, here they come or music programs where they are performing. We had a music program Monday night, and I'll bet we had 250 parents there. The population is so diverse. It is cool to look out there. It is like San Francisco, kind of like a melting pot at Mountain View. They do support us. I don't have as many parents call that cuss me out every single day, and they don't come on campus doing that.

The 2nd grade teacher talked about what the staff was doing to improve parental involvement at the school,

We don't have a strong parental involvement. It is improving. We do have a lot of parents who cannot make it to the school or for some reason do not want to come to the school, so our PTO meetings are not popular, but we have seen a growing rise in parents who come to open house, come to parent-teacher conferences. We hold them at least twice a year, and that has really gone up. The

teachers are willing to call parents and go visit parents. It is especially hard to do in schools with this type of environment.

The 4th grade teacher explained the changes in recent years at Mountain View Elementary,

When I first came here my first year of teaching there really was not much of a relationship between home and school. Then we started some new things with our new behavior system. We started to take home folders when we sent home a behavior report every day, and we started asking the parents, ask them to look at this and sign your name that you have seen what has happened. When we first started that, not many folders came back. Parents were not signing them. Now it is rare if someone does not bring their folder back. It has really just helped us keep track. We even have on our behavior report where we have a spot where we can check “this is why they lost points today; this is why they got the grade they did.” They lost points in music, lost points for talking out, etc. The first year we didn’t have that. We would send someone home saying you are on Level 1, ninety-four. And parents would call and say why did they lose six points. So then we kind of updated that and made a checklist. We have a clipboard that have their names and points, and we have a little code, like talking is a T. We keep track of it all day. We started having more things at school. Our PTO the first year I was here there was three people. Now there are about fifteen. It is growing slowly. We started having training here at school for parents where we have food, invite them in. We have T-CAP night, how you can help your kids with T-CAP tests. We do phone calls home where, if they are not here, the principal calls their

house every morning to see if they are coming to school. That has really helped our attendance a lot. That has helped. We have always had report card night, and, in the beginning we didn't have many people.

The Title I teacher talked about how teachers communicate with parents at Mountain View,

We have a lot of parent communication. All of the teachers have a daily form that they fill out for student behavior. It goes home every day and parents have to sign it so that they know how their student was behaving that day at school. There is also a little spot for teachers to make any notes that need to make any additional comments they want to tell the parent, and the parent reciprocates usually and write on the form any comments they have. We also have a lesson line where parents can call in and find out things that are happening in the classroom. Our principal send home newsletters, teachers send home newsletters. A lot of times the parents just call in if they have questions, and they feel very comfortable to call in and ask things that are going on. The relationship between home and better has gotten much better. It is just more than coming to school, and being involved at home, too. We are getting much better with those aspects of it.

Underlying Conditions or Distinctive Practices

When asked to identify the factor(s) that were the most significant in helping their school improve the academic achievement of their students, teacher training and /or staff development was mentioned by every staff member interviewed. When asked what she thought was the most significant factor that influences student achievement at Mountain View, the principal said,

Staff development and just the accountability that goes with staff development. I think getting a hold on behavior. We brought in a program from Vanderbilt, COMP. That has helped us come together school-wide. What happens in one classroom happens in another. We have a point system. If brother goes home on a level, the mother knows what is going to happen with the other one. I think that is helpful. I think just holding teachers accountable, and getting a hold on behavior.

The 2nd grade teacher talked about the amount of training that she received as a teacher at Mountain View,

Another thing that has helped is that we have a lot of young teachers. I came here just out of college, not quite prepared for what I was getting into. I think the training that the grants have brought in have really shown us what we need to do to help our kids, the best practices. We really feel like (not to be bragging), but we have a lot of reading training, and we really feel like we have exceptional skills in teaching kids in reading.

The 4th grade teacher talked about how grants enable the staff at Mountain View to provided much needed training for teachers,

After we got the Reading First Grant we go so many more materials and so much professional development. The second one is our COMP (Classroom organizational management program) grant. The third thing is the principal. Those three things are what set this school straight.

The Title I teacher also discussed how the staff was able to improve student achievement,

than 50% of positive responses and no examples were given, the correlate was classified as having “No Support” or “NS.”

Summary

The findings for this study were as follows:

- The seven correlates of Effective Schools Research were present in each of the four schools studied;
- Four underlying conditions and/or distinct practices existed in the schools in this study: a family-like environment, teachers who go “above and beyond,” a variety of programs, and ongoing professional development.

Both the quantitative and qualitative data findings have been reported in this chapter. Research Question #1 was partially answered through the findings because all seven correlates were found to be present in each of the schools studied. The More Effective Schools Staff Survey (quantitative data) reported that each correlate was found to have a positive response (>70%) for six of the seven correlates in each of the four schools. Correlate VII, Home-School Relationship, had a positive response (>67%) in all four schools. Also, the interviews and researcher observations (qualitative data), provided support for each of the seven correlates in each school. Chapter 5 will analyze in more detail the extent to which the findings correspond to and differ from the Effective Schools correlates.

Research Question #2 – What underlying conditions or distinctive practices must be present for the Effective Schools practices to exist? – was partially answered in this chapter. The interviews and the researcher’s observations provided a description of the practices or conditions in each school that were thought to be most important for the

academic success of students. Chapter 5 will provide an analysis of the similarities and differences between the underlying conditions and distinct practices among the four schools in this study.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS

Introduction

The second part of Research Question #1 – How do the characteristics of effective schools in this study differ from those identified in the Effective Schools Research? – is be answered in this chapter. Both the quantitative and qualitative data findings are analyzed to determine the extent to which the data supports each of the seven correlates of Effective Schools. Research Question #2 pursued the underlying conditions and/or distinctive practices identified at each of the four schools in this study. The similarities and differences between these practices and/or condition will be analyzed and compared to provide a response to this research question. Also, any connections and discrepancies between the two high-achieving, high-gain schools and the two low-achieving, high-gain schools are examined and evaluated.

Survey Responses

According to Gay (1996), there are four types of measurement scales: nominal, ordinal, interval, and ratio. Nominal data represent the lowest level of measurement whereas ratio data represent the highest level, or the most precise level of measurement. Gay stated,

In general ... the mean is the preferred measure of central tendency. It is appropriate when the data represent either an interval or a ratio scale and is a more precise, stable index than both the median and the mode. (p. 435)

The More Effective Schools Staff Survey is a likert-style survey in which participants choose one of the following answers which best corresponds to their thoughts or feelings

for each question from “Strongly Disagree,” “Disagree,” “Don’t Know,” “Agree,” to “Strongly Agree.” Because this scale ranks or classifies but does not define equal intervals between ranks, it is an ordinal scale which will only allow comparisons to the number of responses in each category. The survey questions were grouped by the Association for Effective Schools staff according to which one of the seven correlates of Effective Schools was supported. Totals for the responses for each correlate were calculated along with the percentage of respondents choosing each response as well as the percentages of “Positive” and “Negative” responses. Appendix H, I, J and K each contain seven tables which show the results of the More Effective Schools Staff Survey for Riverside Elementary, Valley Crest Elementary, Lakeshore Elementary, and Mountain View Elementary, respectively.

The principal at each school was provided with enough surveys for each classroom teacher and was asked to distribute the surveys at his/her convenience. To protect confidentiality, surveys were collected by someone other than the principal and returned to the researcher in a postage-paid envelope provided by the researcher. Table 18 reports the number of classroom teachers at each elementary school, the number and

Table 18 *Number of Survey Responses*

School	Type of School	# of Classroom Teachers	# of Surveys Returned	Percentage of Surveys Returned
Riverside Elementary	High-Achieving, High-Gain	24	12	50%
Valley Crest Elementary	High-Achieving, High-Gain	30	30	100%
Lakeshore Elementary	Low-Achieving, High-Gain	33	11	33%
Mountain View Elementary	Low-Achieving, High-Gain	28	21	75%
TOTALS		115	74	64%

percentage of surveys returned, and the totals for all four schools. The researcher contacted the principals at both Riverside Elementary and Lakeshore Elementary after receiving the completed surveys and discovering a response rate of 50% or less. It was requested that each principal ask their teachers a second time to complete the surveys. The researcher offered to provide postage for any additional surveys that were completed and turned in. No additional surveys were received from either Riverside Elementary or Lakeshore Elementary.

Table 19 shows the number and percentage of responses and totals for each of the seven correlates. The total number of responses for each correlate is the total number of responses from all respondents for all of the survey questions that supported that correlate. For example, sixteen of the survey questions supported Correlate I, so the total number of responses from the 74 respondents for Correlate I was 1,184. Correlate II, High Expectations for Success, received the highest positive rating with 95.68% of all of the responses from the teachers in the four schools marking either “Agree” or “Strongly Agree.” Correlate V, Opportunities to Learn and Student Time on Task, received the second highest percentage at 94.36%. Correlate III, Instructional Leadership; Correlate I, Clear School Mission; and Correlate IV, Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress, also had positive ratings above ninety-two percent at 93.78%, 92.99%, and 92.87% respectively. The positive rating for Correlate VI, Safe and Orderly Environment, dropped to 87.74%. The lowest positive rating was for Correlate VII, Home-School Relations, at 73.21%. Despite having positive ratings below ninety percent, these two correlates still have a significant rating (above 70%) which indicates that they were perceived to be present in each of the schools studied.

Table 19 *Total Responses for Seven Correlates for All Schools*

Correlate	Total # or %	Total Negative	Total Positive	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total Responses
I	#	83	1101	3	46	34	642	459	1184
	%	4.14%	92.99%	0.25%	3.89%	2.87%	54.22%	38.77%	
II	#	48	1062	1	28	19	556	506	1110
	%	2.61%	95.68%	0.09%	2.52%	1.71%	51.09%	45.59%	
III	#	69	1041	3	40	26	536	505	1110
	%	3.87%	93.78%	0.27%	3.60%	2.34%	48.29%	45.50%	
IV	#	58	756	1	19	38	449	307	814
	%	2.45%	92.87%	0.12%	2.33%	4.67%	55.16%	37.71%	
V	#	96	1606	2	44	50	1014	592	1702
	%	2.71%	94.36%	0.12%	2.59%	2.94%	59.58%	34.78%	
VI	#	127	909	9	84	34	606	303	1036
	%	8.98%	87.74%	0.87%	8.11%	3.28%	58.49%	29.25%	
VII	#	337	921	10	185	142	663	258	1258
	%	15.50%	73.21%	0.79%	14.71%	11.29%	52.70%	20.51%	
Total	#	475	7396	29	446	343	4466	2930	8214
Total	%	5.78%	90.0%	0.35%	5.43%	4.18%	54.3%	35.6%	100%

Table 20 adds the percentage of responses for each school for each correlate.

Riverside had the highest percentage of positive responses for all correlates at 94.44% and the highest percentage of positive responses on six of the seven correlates.

Lakeshore had the lowest percentage of positive responses for all correlates at 87.14% and the lowest percentage of positive responses on six of the seven correlates. Riverside had the highest percentage and Lakeshore had the lowest percentage of positive responses on correlates III through VII.

Valley Crest had the lowest percentage of positive responses for Correlate I, the second highest percentage for Correlate III, the third highest percentage of positive responses for the remaining five correlates, and the third highest percentage overall.

Mountain View had the highest percentage of positive responses for Correlate II, the third

Table 20 *Percentage of Responses for Each School and Each Correlate*

Correlate	# or % of Responses	Total Negative	Total Positive	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total Responses
Correlate I	#	49	1101	3	46	34	642	459	1184
Totals	%	4.14%	92.99%	0.25%	3.89%	2.87%	54.22%	38.77%	1184
Riverside		3.65%	95.83%	0.00%	3.65%	0.52%	44.79%	51.04%	192
Valley Crest		5.42%	90.00%	0.21%	5.21%	4.58%	61.88%	28.13%	480
Lakeshore		1.71%	93.75%	1.14%	0.57%	4.55%	45.45%	48.30%	176
Mountain View		3.87%	95.24%	0.00%	3.87%	0.89%	53.27%	41.96%	336
Correlate II	#	29	1052	1	28	19	556	506	1110
Totals	%	2.61%	95.68%	0.09%	2.52%	1.71%	50.09%	45.59%	1110
Riverside		3.34%	96.67%	0.56%	2.78%	0.00%	38.33%	58.33%	180
Valley Crest		3.33%	94.89%	0.00%	3.33%	1.78%	56.00%	38.89%	450
Lakeshore		1.21%	93.94%	0.00%	1.21%	4.85%	39.39%	54.55%	165
Mountain View		1.90%	97.14%	0.00%	1.90%	0.95%	53.97%	43.17%	315
Correlate III	#	43	1041	3	40	26	536	505	1110
Totals	%	3.87%	93.78%	0.27%	3.60%	2.34%	48.29%	45.50%	1110
Riverside		1.11%	96.11%	0.00%	1.11%	2.78%	40.00%	56.11%	180
Valley Crest		3.78%	94.22%	0.22%	3.56%	2.00%	54.67%	39.56%	450
Lakeshore		4.85%	90.91%	0.61%	4.24%	4.24%	39.39%	51.52%	165
Mountain View		5.08%	93.33%	0.32%	4.76%	1.59%	48.57%	44.76%	315
Correlate IV	#	20	756	1	19	38	449	307	814
Totals	%	2.46%	92.87%	0.12%	2.33%	4.67%	55.16%	37.71%	814
Riverside		3.03%	96.97%	0.00%	3.03%	0.00%	46.21%	50.76%	132
Valley Crest		3.33%	92.42%	0.30%	3.03%	4.24%	63.94%	28.48%	330
Lakeshore		1.65%	88.43%	0.00%	1.65%	9.92%	39.67%	48.76%	121
Mountain View		1.30%	93.51%	0.00%	1.30%	5.19%	55.84%	37.66%	231

Correlate (con't)	# or % of Responses	Total Negative	Total Positive	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total Responses
Correlate V	#	46	1606	2	44	50	1014	592	1702
Totals	%	2.70%	94.36%	0.12%	2.59%	2.94%	59.58%	34.78%	1702
Riverside		1.09%	98.55%	0.00%	1.09%	0.36%	49.28%	49.28%	276
Valley Crest		3.48%	93.48%	0.00%	3.48%	3.04%	67.54%	25.94%	690
Lakeshore		2.37%	90.12%	0.00%	2.37%	7.51%	51.78%	38.34%	253
Mountain View		2.69%	95.45%	0.41%	2.28%	1.86%	58.18%	37.27%	483
Correlate VI	#	93	909	9	84	34	606	303	1036
Totals	%	8.98%	87.74%	0.87%	8.11%	3.28%	58.49%	29.25%	1036
Riverside		4.76%	92.86%	0.00%	4.76%	2.38%	50.60%	42.26%	168
Valley Crest		8.81%	86.90%	0.95%	7.86%	4.29%	59.52%	27.38%	420
Lakeshore		7.79%	85.71%	2.60%	5.19%	6.49%	55.19%	30.52%	154
Mountain View		12.24%	87.07%	0.34%	11.90%	0.68%	63.27%	23.81%	294
Correlate VII	#	195	921	10	185	142	663	258	1258
Totals	%	15.50%	73.21%	0.79%	14.71%	11.29%	52.70%	20.51%	1258
Riverside		9.80%	83.82%	0.98%	8.82%	6.37%	56.37%	27.45%	204
Valley Crest		17.06%	69.22%	0.98%	16.08%	13.73%	52.35%	16.86%	510
Lakeshore		10.69%	67.91%	1.60%	9.09%	21.39%	45.99%	21.93%	187
Mountain View		19.05%	75.63%	0.00%	19.05%	5.32%	54.62%	21.01%	357
Grand Total	#	475	7396	29	446	343	4466	2930	8214
Totals	%	5.78%	90.04%	0.35%	5.43%	4.18%	54.37%	35.67%	8214
Riverside		3.76%	94.44%	0.23%	3.53%	1.80%	46.85%	47.60%	1332
Valley Crest		6.52%	88.62%	0.36%	6.16%	4.86%	59.73%	28.89%	3330
Lakeshore		4.34%	87.14%	0.82%	3.52%	8.52%	45.86%	51.28%	1221
Mountain View		6.65%	91.08%	0.17%	6.48%	2.27%	55.47%	35.61%	2331

highest for Correlate III, the second highest percentage of positive responses for the other five correlates, and the second highest percentage overall.

Correlate II, High Expectations for Success, had the highest percentage of positive responses for all four schools. Correlates I-III and V had 90% or above positive responses in all four schools. Correlate IV was very close to this level with the percentage of positive responses above 92% in three of the schools and a percentage of positive responses of more than 88% at the fourth school. This could indicate that these five correlates are more critical elements for success in high-poverty schools than are the other two correlates.

Correlate VI, Safe & Orderly Environment, received positive ratings from 87.74% of the respondents which was the second lowest for the seven correlates. Riverside had the highest percentage of positive responses at 92.86%, followed by Mountain View at 87.07%, Valley Crest at 86.90%, and Lakeshore at 85.71%. One explanation for Correlate VI having a lower percentage of positive responses than the first five correlates listed could be the amount of money per pupil spent by the school system. According to the 2005 Tennessee Report Card, the state average for “Per Pupil Expenditures per Funded ADM (average daily membership)” was \$6,970. River’s Bend School System (Riverside Elementary) average per pupil expenditure per funded ADM was \$7,771. Mountain Vista School System (Mountain View Elementary) average per pupil expenditure per funded ADM was \$6,846. Valley Point School System (Valley Crest Elementary) average per pupil expenditure per funded ADM was \$6,178, and Lake View School System (Lakeshore Elementary) average per pupil expenditure per funded ADM was \$6,538. The difference in funding level may explain why Riverview, with funding

well above the other schools and the state average, had the highest percentage of positive responses. The second highest funded school had the second highest percentage of positive responses, but the lowest funded school did not have the lowest percentage of positive responses.

The lowest percentage of positive responses for any correlate was 73.21% for Correlate VII, Home-School Relations. As was the case for Correlate VI, Riverside Elementary had the highest percentage of positive responses followed by Mountain View, Valley Crest, and Lakeshore, respectively. The percentage of positive responses for Correlates VI & VII indicate that the correlates are present, but had not been addressed as well as the first five correlates. This was supported by the qualitative data that suggested there was emphasis on the correlates, but resources were not sufficient to do everything that was needed. This possibility is supported by the higher percentage of positive responses for Riverside (92.86%) which had a significantly higher funding level than the other schools. Overall, 90.04% of the 8,214 responses to the More Effective Schools Staff Survey questions were positive.

Clear School Mission

The percentage of positive survey responses for Correlate I for each of the four schools was above 90%. The high-achieving, high-gain schools (Riverside and Valley Crest), interestingly, had a lower percentage of positive responses at 92.92% than did the low-achieving, high-gain schools (Lakeshore and Mountain View) at 94.50%. Although all of the principals and teachers that were interviewed were able to clearly describe their mission at their school, the two low-achieving, high-gain schools were able to

specifically describe their school's mission statement that had been collectively developed by the staff.

The principal at Riverside described the school mission to see that "every child is a winner." The teachers at Riverside talked about their mission to make sure that "kids are happy" and to provide the "best education" by teaching students "lifeskills." Very similar responses were made at Valley Crest Elementary. The principal at Valley Crest stated that "we believe they can succeed" and teachers talked at length about the means that they went through to "help children." In comparison, the two low-achieving, high-gain schools had more specific mission statements that were consistent between the principals and the teachers. At Lakeshore Elementary, the principal quoted the school's mission and vision statements and even spoke about the 3 goals that they had for the current school year. The teachers interviewed at Lakeshore also recited the school's mission statement from memory. At Mountain View Elementary, the principal quoted the school's mission statement from memory. The teachers at Mountain View talked specifically about their mission to "prepare students to learn" and get them "ready for middle school." The school's mission statement was also clearly posted on the school's website and in the student handbook (Field Notes, May 3, 2007).

It is clear that the low-achieving, high-gains schools had a higher average of positive responses on the survey because they were more specific and consistent throughout the interviews in reciting that school mission statement and one of the schools had the mission clearly posted on its website and in its handbook. The More Effective Schools Staff Survey, the interview responses and the observations made by the

researcher indicate that all four “high-gain” schools in this study have a clear school mission.

High Expectations for Success

The percentage of positive survey responses for Correlate II for each of the four schools was above 90% (average of 95.68%). This average was the highest of all seven correlates. The average positive ratings for both high-achieving, high-gains schools and the low-achieving, high-gain schools were very close at 95.78% and 95.54%, respectively. Comments made by principals and teachers, when questioned about their expectations of students were very similar for the high-achieving, high-gain schools and also for the low-achieving, high-gain schools. The principal at Riverside Elementary, one of the high-achieving schools, stated that he had “very high expectations” for students and both teachers at Riverside stated that they expected their students to “come in and work hard” in their classes. The principal at Valley Crest Elementary, the other high-achieving school, said that her expectation for students was to believe that “they can succeed,” and the teachers interviewed at Valley Crest said that they expected their students to “be hard workers” and to “care about what they did.”

In comparison, the two low-achieving, high-gain schools focused more on specific expectations for students and even teachers. The principal and assistant principal at Lakeshore Elementary stated that they expected the “standard on the board” in every class. Their expectation for teachers was to tell the students what they would be learning about for the day in the beginning before instruction. The teachers at Lakeshore talked about the difficulty that they faced daily with a diverse student population. They stated that they had “high expectations regardless of background.” A very similar philosophy

emerged at Mountain View Elementary. The principal discussed how she expected her students to “follow the rules.” Both the principal and the teachers at Mountain View mentioned how they had three basic rules that they expected students to follow – “respect yourself, respect others, and respect your school.” Again, the low-achieving, high-gain school staff members tended to be more specific in their responses in comparison to the responses of the individuals from the high-achieving, high-gain schools. The interview and observation data and the survey data all indicated that High Expectations for Success existed in each school.

Instructional Leadership

For all four schools, the percentage of positive responses for Correlate III was higher than 90% (average of 93.78%). Those interviewed talked a lot about their input in making instructional decisions at the school. Although each school is different, individuals at each school talked about how teachers had input through committees, leadership teams, or advisory groups. Each principal talked about how they gathered input from teachers and included teachers in making important decisions that affected the school’s academic program.

Not a great deal of variance could be found in the interview responses regarding instructional leadership. The principal at Riverside Elementary stated that he based decisions on “how it will affect the kids” and the teachers talked about “decisions made by committees” at the school and that the principal was always “open” to new ideas. The principal at Valley Crest Elementary stated that she always talked to teachers to “try to get their input” when making decisions. The teachers at Valley Crest echoed the fact that they “have a lot of input” in decisions that were made at school and they were

encouraged by the “positive feedback” that the principal gave them. The principal at Lakeshore Elementary also shared decision-making saying “most of it is made by all of us.” The teachers at Lakeshore discussed how the “advisory team” represented each grade level and assisted the administration in much of the decisions made at the school level. At Mountain View Elementary, the principal declared that the “leadership team is strong” at the school and the teachers communicated how they “always have input.” The responses shared during the interviews, in addition to what the researcher observed, and the percentage of positive responses for each school above 90% on the survey indicated that all four principals were focused on instruction and had clearly communicated that to their teachers and parents.

Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress

In three of the four schools the percentage of positive responses on the survey for Correlate IV was over 90%. The average percentage of positive responses for all four schools was 92.87%. The only school below 90% was Lakeshore Elementary who had an average percentage of positive responses of 88.43%. The two high-achieving, high-gain schools had a higher percentage of positive responses average at 94.70% compared to the average percentage of positive responses of the two low-achieving, high-gain schools at 90.97%.

Each principal talked about the variety of programs that their school used to monitor student progress. Programs used ranged from TCAP tests to ability grouping to purchased software programs like THINKLINK and Accelerated Reader. The teachers at all four schools were up-to-date on the programs described by the principals and talked in depth about how they used these programs to measure student performance throughout

the school year. One teacher at Riverside discussed how she “assessed every two weeks”. Both the principal and the two teachers interviewed at Valley Crest mentioned what they called their little “bible” which was “a checklist with the state objectives on it” that the teachers used in their plan books to chart progress towards meeting the state objectives. A teacher at Mountain View referred to the “DIBELS Assessment” that the school used to monitor student achievement in reading and identify students in need of reading intervention. The interviews and survey reports illustrate that each of the schools had programs in place to monitor student achievement throughout the school year and that staff members were well trained of these programs and held accountable for their implementation.

Opportunities to Learn and Student Time on Task

The percentage of positive responses on the survey for Correlate V was over 90% for all four schools (average of 94.36%). The percentage of positive responses average for the two high-achieving, high-gain schools was 96.02% compared to the average percentage of positive responses for the two low-achieving, high-gain schools which was 92.79%. During the interviews, principals and teachers discussed several different approaches for ensuring that all students were on task and had ample opportunities to learn when questioned. Depending on the school situation, the principals focused on different ways to ensure that teachers were teaching and students were learning.

The principal at Riverside discussed how he had two more teachers due to the additional funding provided by the Title I program. At Valley Crest, the principal and teachers talked at length about how their daily classroom schedules kept students busy throughout the school day. At Lakeshore Elementary, the principal and assistant

principal collected teacher schedules and periodically “walked through” classes to check that schedules were being followed and standards were being taught. At Mountain Top Elementary, the focus was on a safe classroom environment for teachers and students. The principal talked about the “solutions classroom” for students with severe behavior problems and the “in-school suspension” classroom that helped to preserve the safety of the classroom and instruction time. Due to the conditions at the school when the principal was hired, safety was the priority.

Although every school provided a number of programs that were geared towards helping students improve academically, each school differed in the types of programs used and approaches to helping the students that were farthest behind. The one common trait that all school shared was that they each focused on the standards or skills from the curriculum guide provided by the state of Tennessee. Skills based instruction was a very important tenet of each school curriculum. Overall, the survey, interviews, and the researcher’s observations indicated that the four schools shared a focus on giving all students the opportunity and time to learn.

Safe and Orderly Environment

Riverside was the only school that had a percentage of positive response for Correlate VI above 90% (92.86%). The overall average percent of positive response for all four schools was 87.74%. The two high-achieving, high-gain schools had a higher percentage of positive responses average (89.88%) than the two low-achieving, high-gain schools (86.39%). Despite the lower percentage of positive responses for this correlate, each school in this study had specific procedures in place to protect the staff and students and create an orderly atmosphere. At Riverside Elementary, the principal demonstrated

an elaborate video surveillance system that monitored the entire school building. Visitors were welcomed to the school through the main entrance where access was restricted by the office through a buzzer system. At Valley Crest Elementary, the principal described how visitors were welcomed to the office, but were not allowed to go directly to classrooms to meet with teachers during the school day. Assistants were sent to the classroom so the teacher could meet with the parent in the office. Also, an SRO was assigned to the school and a district policy required all classrooms to be locked at all times. At Lakeshore Elementary, visitors entered the building directly into the front office and all exterior doors were locked. The staff at Mountain View Elementary School discussed how they were constantly aware of potential safety issues within the school. The principal dealt swiftly with acts of violence and bullying. Those interviewed mentioned how often they practiced safety drills and focused on keeping student behavior in check. Clearly, based on the data collected in the surveys, interviews and observations, all of the schools demonstrated a high level of awareness of the importance of a safe and secure environment.

Home-School Relations

Only one of the four schools had a percentage of positive response for Correlate VII above 80% (average of 73.21%) This correlate had the lowest percentage of positive responses in all four schools. Riverside and Mountain View had the highest percentage of positive responses at 83.82% and 75.63%, respectively. Valley Crest and Lakeshore had the lowest percentage of positive responses at 69.22% and 67.91%, respectively. The high-achieving, high-gain schools had a percentage of positive response average of 76.52% compared to the low-achieving, high-gain schools which had a percentage of

positive response average of 71.77%. Principals and teachers were very aware of the unique problems that most low-income families face in relation to the importance that is placed on education in the home. All staff members interviewed seemed to understand the culture of poverty and were willing to confront the problems that occur when dealing with students from a disadvantaged family background. Both teachers and principals talked about the home situations that most of their students faced and indicated they had made home visits, phone calls, and conferences with parents almost on a daily basis.

Riverside Elementary reported the lowest percentage of economically disadvantaged students at 70.5% (2005 Report Card) and the principal and teachers at the school commented that they had “a lot of parental involvement” despite the high percentage of poverty. The researcher observed that as the percentage of economically disadvantaged student population increased among the schools in this study, parental involvement declined. At Valley Crest, where 76.1% of the students were considered economically disadvantaged, the principal summarized the situation when she said, “I’ve found that even in this, our parents will sometimes get frustrated because maybe they aren’t as interested, I think, as we want them to be in school.” At the two low-achieving, high-gain schools where the economically disadvantaged student population was the highest, the staff accepted the situation and was working to improve the relationship between home and school. The principal at Lakeshore said that the PTO had increased it’s attendance through a variety of programs, but, as he stated, “Now on a daily basis, nothing, and we don’t expect it.” At Mountain View, the principal and teachers interviewed accepted the situation, but were working hard to “build relationships” by improving the communication between home and school through daily progress reports

and positive phone calls. Despite problems with parental involvement, the More Effective Schools Staff Survey, the interviews and the observations made by the researcher indicated that the relationship between home and the school was positive due to the efforts at each school to communicate frequently with parents through a variety of methods such as weekly newsletters, phone calls, lesson line, PTO meetings, and parent-teacher conferences.

Underlying Conditions and/or Distinctive Practices

A number of underlying conditions and/or distinct practices were suggested by the responses from the principals and teachers and the observations of the researcher as the reason(s) for high-performance in the high-poverty schools in this study. Four of these conditions/practices were identified by staff members of at least two schools and were consistent with the researcher's observations. These included teacher commitment, an emphasis on accountability, a family atmosphere and a variety of programs along with the availability of staff development opportunities.

At both Riverside Elementary and Valley Crest Elementary, both principals referred to "teacher commitment" or "people that go above and beyond" to help students succeed. Interestingly, this underlying condition was not mentioned at either Lakeshore Elementary or Mountain View Elementary. The researcher noted the dedication of staff members at both schools through their commitment to after school tutoring programs and participation in PTO events.

The principal at Lakeshore Elementary and the principal at Mountain View Elementary both spoke about "accountability" as a major factor in the academic success of students at their respective schools. The teachers interviewed at these schools praised

the principals for holding both students and staff members accountable. Those interviewed at Riverside and Valley Crest did make mention of accountability as a factor in the academic success at their schools.

A “family-like” atmosphere was discussed by both the teachers and the principals at Riverside Elementary and Valley Crest Elementary. Neither Lakeshore Elementary nor Mountain View Elementary staff members mentioned this characteristic. Both Lakeshore Elementary and Mountain View Elementary pointed out that their variety of programs and training was a significant reason for the academic success at their schools.

Comparison of High-Achieving, High-Gain Schools And Low-Achieving, High-Gain Schools

According to the More Effective Schools Staff survey results, the high-achieving, high-gain schools (Riverside and Valley Crest) had a slightly higher percentage of positive responses on the survey at 91.53% than did the low-achieving, high-gain schools (Lakeshore and Mountain View) at 89.11%. The high-achieving, high-gain schools had a higher percentage of positive responses on six of the seven Effective Schools correlates with the low-achieving, high-gain schools having the higher percentage of positive responses on Correlate I – Clear School Mission. A higher percentage of surveys were returned to the researcher from the high-achieving, high-gain schools (75%) as compared to the low-achieving, high-gain schools (54%). As noted in the earlier discussion of the data in Table 21, Riverside, a high-achieving school, had the highest overall percentage of positive responses and Lakeshore, a low-achieving school, had the lowest. However, the second highest positive response percentage came from Mountain View, a low-achieving school, while the third highest came from Valley Crest, the other high-

achieving school. Table 21 shows the average positive response percentages for both the high-achieving, high-gain schools and the low-achieving, high-gain schools for each of the seven Effective Schools correlates.

Several differences between the high-achieving and low-achieving schools were found in the qualitative data. For example, for Correlate I, Clear School Mission, those interviewed in the low-achieving schools were more specific about the school's mission statement. They were also very consistent in their use of terminology when talking about the mission of their school. By comparison, those interviewed in the high-achieving schools were not as specific and their responses were not consistent between schools or even within the same school. A very similar pattern was found for the other six correlates as well. Other differences between the high-achieving and low-achieving schools emerged as underlying conditions and/or distinctive practices were discussed.

Table 21 *High-Achieving, High-Gain Schools vs. Low-Achieving, High-Gain Schools*

Correlate	High-Achieving, High Gain			Low-Achieving, High-Gain		
	Riverside	Valley Crest	Average	Lakeshore	Mountain View	Average
I						
<i>Avg. Pos. Response</i>	95.83%	90.00%	92.92%	93.75%	95.24%	94.50%
II						
<i>Avg. Pos. Response</i>	96.67%	94.89%	95.78%	93.94%	97.14%	95.54%
III						
<i>Avg. Pos. Response</i>	96.11%	94.22%	95.17%	90.91%	93.33%	92.12%
IV						
<i>Avg. Pos. Response</i>	96.97%	92.42%	94.70%	88.43%	93.51%	90.97%
V						
<i>Avg. Pos. Response</i>	98.55%	93.48%	96.02%	90.12%	95.45%	92.79%
VI						
<i>Avg. Pos. Response</i>	92.86%	86.90%	89.88%	85.71%	87.07%	86.39%
VII						
<i>Avg. Pos. Response</i>	83.82%	69.22%	76.52%	67.91%	75.63%	71.77%
Total						
<i>Avg. Pos. Response</i>	94.40%	88.73%	91.57%	87.25%	91.05%	89.15%

The principal and teachers interviewed from the high-achieving schools identified teacher/staff commitment and a caring, family-like atmosphere as the underlying conditions that accounted for their academic success with students. The principal and teachers interviewed for the low-achieving schools listed the variety of programs they offered students along with the training they received through professional development and the accountability set forth by the principal at each school as the distinct practices that explained their academic achievement with students.

Summary

An analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data from this study was presented in this chapter. The seven correlates of Effective Schools Research were found to be present in all four schools in this study. A comparison of the two high-achieving, high-gain schools and the two high-achieving, low-gain schools was also presented in this chapter. The survey results showed that the percentage of positive responses were higher in the high-achieving, high-gain schools in three of the four schools in this study. The underlying conditions or distinctive practices suggested by those interviewed in addition to the researcher's observations were analyzed and presented. Chapter 6 will discuss the findings and the analysis and present the conclusions for this study along with the implications for current educators and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify the effective schools practices used by high-performing, high-poverty elementary schools in East Tennessee and to identify the underlying conditions (i.e., values, beliefs, and culture of the school) necessary for their implementation in other high poverty schools. The following research questions were designed to help achieve the purpose of this study:

- (1) Which of the characteristics of Effective Schools do high-performing, high-poverty schools in East Tennessee have in common?
 - (a) How do these characteristics correspond to those identified in the Effective Schools Research?
 - (b) How do the characteristics differ from the correlates identified in the Effective Schools Research?
- (2) What underlying conditions (i.e., beliefs, values, school culture) or distinctive practices must be present for the Effective Schools practices to exist?

The data collected for this study were analyzed based on a theoretical framework of the correlates of Effective Schools Research. The goal of this study was to identify the characteristics of high-performing, high-poverty elementary schools, and, also to determine any unique conditions or practices that assist schools in improving academic achievement. This chapter presents the findings of the study as they relate to the research questions, implications for current educators, recommendations for future research and conclusions drawn by the researcher.

Characteristics of High-Performing, High-Poverty

Elementary Schools in East Tennessee

The seven correlates of the Effective Schools Research were all found to be present in the sample of schools studied. The underlying conditions and distinct practices that both teachers and principals felt were important included teacher commitment, an emphasis on accountability, a family-like atmosphere, and a variety of programs along with professional development and training for teachers. The data indicated that these characteristics (the seven correlates of Effective Schools Research and the underlying conditions and distinct practices) were evident in the four schools in this study.

Each school had a mission that was clear and evident. The More Effective Schools Staff survey results showed that each school had more than 90% positive responses concerning this correlate. In one school, Valley Crest Elementary, the staff talked about how they aligned their curriculum and instruction to the state standards as suggested by Barth et al. (1999), Ellis et al. (2004), Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (2004), Reeves (2000), and The Charles A. Dana Center (1999).

High expectations for success were evident for students and also faculty members at each school. In the high-performing schools in this study, high expectations were anticipated for both students and teachers as suggested by the research (Bauer, 1997; Ellis et al., 2004; Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission, 2004; Kannapel & Clements, 2005; Lezotte, 2001). The survey results showed that each school had more than 93% positive responses concerning high expectations in their schools.

The principals in each of the four schools in this study were seen by the teachers as instructional leaders. Staff members were involved in making decisions that affected

every aspect of the operation of the school. Both Lezotte (1991) and Johnson (1997) discussed how effective leadership begins with the principal and the values that he/she demonstrates. The More Effective Schools Staff survey results showed that each school had more than 90% positive responses concerning instructional leadership. This was consistent with previous studies (Ellis et al., 2004; Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission, 2004; McGee, 2004; Bell, 2001; The Charles A. Dana Center, 1999).

Each school had procedures in place to frequently monitor student progress throughout the school year. Lezotte (1991, 2001) discussed the importance of frequently measuring and monitoring student achievement as did a number of other researchers (Barth et al., 1999; Ellis et al., 2004; Hair et al., 2001; Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission, 2004; Kannapel & Clements, 2005; Reeves, 2000). Each of the schools in this study reported a variety of assessment strategies used to monitor student achievement ranging from traditional assessments to the use of a variety of programs such as DIBELS and computer programs like THINKLINK and ACCELERATED READER. Three of the four schools had more than 92% positive responses on the survey with the fourth school having more than 88% positive responses.

Multiple opportunities for students to learn were provided in each school, and teachers were held accountable for teaching the appropriate skills and to ensure that students were learning. Lezotte (2001) found that an increased amount of instructional time where students were actively engaged in learning was an essential element of effective schools. The teachers and principals interviewed in this study provided a variety of illustrations of how they maximized instructional time such as daily schedules and the variety of programs that addressed student needs. The More Effective Schools

Staff survey results showed that all of the four schools had more than 90% positive responses regarding opportunities for students to learn and time on task.

The survey, as well as the interview responses and observations by the researcher, indicated that both students and staff members were safe and the school climate was conducive to learning. Both Bell (2001) and Lezotte (1991, 2001) found that a safe and orderly environment for learning was necessary for high-poverty schools to succeed academically. The survey showed more than 85% positive responses from each of the four schools for this correlate.

The positive home-school relationship correlate was the most difficult for the schools in this study to achieve perhaps due to the socioeconomic status of the families in the schools (70.5% of the students at Riverside Elementary received free or reduced priced meals, 76.1% of the students at Valley Crest Elementary received free or reduced priced meals, 80.2% of the students at Lakeshore Elementary received free or reduced priced meals, and 83.3% of the students at Mountain View Elementary received free or reduced priced meals). Although the data revealed that the quality of the home-school relationship was not what the faculty at each school wanted or felt was needed, each school stressed the importance of a positive relationship with families and tried various methods to improve the communication between school and the home and to involve parents as much as possible. Many researchers have pointed out that schools must reach out to families and communities in order to bridge any gaps that may exist to improve the education of the students (Goodman, 1997; Johnson, 1997; Revilla & Sweeney, 1997). The More Effective Schools Staff survey results showed that Correlate VII received the lowest positive response from each of the four schools in this study. The highest

percentage of positive responses was from Riverside Elementary at 83.92% and the lowest percentage was from Lakeshore Elementary at 67.91%.

The analysis of the data revealed underlying conditions and distinct practices in the schools studied that were considered important for success. Consistently, principals and teachers talked about the family-like relationship between the staff members at each school. Many of those interviewed discussed the commitment of teachers and staff members at each school to provide a quality education for each and every student. Also, the teachers interviewed discussed how teachers at their schools went “above and beyond” to provide for their students. Although some research studies have mentioned “buy-in” by the stakeholders (Borman et al., 2000) and some studies mentioned “hard work” and “effort” by stakeholders in addition to “persistence” (Bell, 2001; Carter, 2000) as key elements of high-performing schools, only one study was found that discussed “dedicated teachers” as a characteristic of these schools (Craig et al., 2005). Craig et al. identified six characteristics of six high-performing schools (two elementary, two middle, and two high schools) in Tennessee, determined that the characteristics were consistent with those identified in other studies, and examined implications for improving student achievement in low-performing schools. The six characteristics of high-performing schools included: dedicated, hard-working teachers, curriculum aligned with state standards, high expectations for students and teachers, learning and teaching were the school’s central focus, multiple assessment strategies were used, and strong support and involvement of parents and the community. Also, staff development focused on areas of need was seen as a major factor in the academic success of students.

A comparison of the two high-achieving, high-gain schools (Riverside and Valley Crest) and the two low-achieving, high-gain schools (Lakeshore and Mountain View) found that the schools were very similar in their characteristics but different in some of their approaches. All four schools had a very high percentage of positive responses on the More Effective Schools Staff survey. Correlates I-V had a percentage of positive responses above 92%. Correlate VI, Safe & Orderly Environment, had a percentage of positive response above 87% and Correlate VII, Home-School Relations, had a percentage of positive response above 73%.

The assumption that the high-achieving, high-gain schools would outscore the low-achieving, high-gain schools was very close to being accurate. The high-achieving, high-gain schools had a higher percentage of positive responses on six of the seven correlates with the low-achieving, high-gain schools having a higher percentage of positive responses on Correlate I – Clear School Mission. Correlate II – High Expectations for Success – was very close with the high-achieving schools having an average positive response of 95.78% and the low-achieving schools had an average positive response of 95.54%. In the remaining five correlates, III-VII, the two high-achieving schools had an average positive response percentage at least three percentage points higher than the two low-achieving schools. Overall, the high-achieving schools had an average positive response of 91.57% compared to the low-achieving schools that had an average positive response of 89.15%. Although the results of this study indicate that the seven correlates are present in all four schools, the assumption that the high-achieving, high-gain schools would scored higher than the low-achieving, high-gain schools would hold true for all correlates except one – Clear School Mission. It was

noted through the interview data that the principals and teachers from the two low-achieving, high-gain schools focused more on the curriculum and teaching methods which would help to explain how Correlate I received a higher percentage of positive responses than the high-achieving schools in this study.

The two high-achieving, high-gain schools differed from the low-achieving, high-gain schools specifically in the interviews when discussing the underlying conditions and distinct practices. The high-achieving schools identified a family-like atmosphere where committed teachers and staff members worked diligently and went “above and beyond” to help students. The low-achieving schools discussed a variety of programs that were available for helping students in addition to ongoing professional development and training for teachers as the distinct practices that accounted for the improvement in academic achievement at their schools. Although the seven correlates were found to be present in all four schools, the principals and teachers at the low-achieving, high-gain schools were more focused on the curriculum and teaching methods as compared to the principals and teachers at the high-achieving, high-gain schools who were more concerned with the environment and culture of the school.

Implications for Current Educators

Bracey (2008) discussed the “base-rates fallacy” in relation to studies performed on high-poverty schools. He stated, “The base-rates fallacy occurs any time generalizations are made from a selected sample without looking to see whether the same thing is going on in the general population” (p. 59). The results of this study represent a small group of schools from one geographic area. This researcher acknowledges that the issue of poverty in schools is a complex issue and the findings that have been presented

should be explored in other schools throughout the country. However, the correlates of the Effective Schools Research should be considered for implementation by all schools since almost all, if not all, schools have some proportion of economically disadvantaged students. Further, if high poverty schools can use these correlates to overcome issues such as limited educational resources and a low level of parental support, then one can argue that all schools would benefit from establishing these correlates. The practices and the underlying conditions that were present in the schools in this study should also be considered for all elementary schools. The schools in this study demonstrated that a caring and inviting atmosphere where teachers go “above and beyond” the scope of their responsibilities to ensure student achievement both inspires and demonstrates that any obstacles can be overcome. Accountability and the use of a variety of research-based programs, along with proper training and professional development activities, are other underlying conditions or distinct practices that work.

The argument for the implementation of the seven correlates gains additional support from a recent report published by the Memphis City School System. Cook, Garrison and Ogle (2008) studied twelve schools in the system that had made positive changes in AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress), during the 2006-07 school year. The researchers concluded that the schools studied in this report shared several characteristics that contributed to their academic improvement:

- Focus on learning,
- Communication flourished in these schools,
- Discipline formed a foundation in the schools reviewed,
- Teachers and administrators learned regularly,

- Use of data. (p. 35)

Each of these five factors can be directly linked to one of the correlates of Effective Schools Research. The factors are linked to the correlates as follows: focus on learning (High Expectations for Success); communication flourished (Positive Home-School Relations); discipline formed a foundation (Opportunities to Learn and Student Time on Task); teachers and administrators learned regularly (Instructional Leadership); and the use of data (Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress).

An interesting comparison can be made using the per pupil expenditure for each school system in this study. Using the 2005 Annual Report Card, only one school system, River's Bend School system, had a higher per pupil expenditure per ADA (average daily attendance) at \$8,194 than the state average at \$ 7,366. The other three school systems (Valley Point, Lake View, and Mountain Vista) had a per pupil expenditures that were lower than the state average at \$6,600, \$6,731, and \$7,204 respectively. The researcher noted that based on the interviews and observations, the schools that had a lower per pupil expenditure were more focused on their mission and goals than the one school that had a higher per pupil expenditure. This could mean that current educators who are trying to improve student achievement in schools should closely evaluate their school situation and not use the blanket approach of "what's good for one is good for all." Current educators looking to improve academic achievement in schools should use the characteristics identified in this study carefully because not all schools have the same needs.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study provides support for establishing the seven correlates of Effective Schools as a basis for improving high-poverty schools. Additional study is recommended to determine: (1) if the seven correlates are present in successful schools in other areas of Tennessee, (2) if some of the correlates are more important than other correlates, (3) if the underlying conditions or distinct practices found in the this study are essential for success, (4) if a relationship exists between the correlates and the underlying conditions, and (5) what minimum performance level is in order for the correlate to be considered fully implemented.

The first recommendation for future research would be to study the seven correlates of Effective Schools Research in other successful schools throughout the state of Tennessee. More research should be conducted to determine if the seven correlates exist in high-achieving schools with different student populations. A comparison of high-achieving schools with a higher percentage of middle to higher income students to the results of this study would assist in generalizing the results of this study for use in all schools.

Further research is also needed to determine the level of importance for the seven correlates. This study treated the seven correlates as equally important. The results of the More Effective Schools Staff survey showed that two correlates (Safe & Orderly Environment and Positive Home-School Relations) had lower percentages of positive responses than the other five correlates. More study is needed to determine if some of the correlates are more important than others and, thus, call for more emphasis when being implemented.

The Association for Effective Schools, Inc. promotes the use of the seven correlates of Effective Schools, but, further research should be conducted to determine if the correlates are essential for success in schools. The data supported the presence of the correlates in the four schools in this study, but research had yet to rule out whether these seven correlates are the essential correlates for success in schools.

The goal of this research study was to determine the characteristics that are present in high-performing, high-poverty elementary schools in East Tennessee. The relationship between the underlying conditions and distinctive practices identified by this study should be examined in more detail. This study simply identified the characteristics found in the schools, therefore, future research should study if a relationship exists between the conditions and practices found in this study and the seven correlates of Effective Schools.

This study found that all seven correlates were present in the four schools based on the high percentage of positive responses to the More Effective Schools Staff survey, responses to the interview questions and observations made by the researcher. Future research should be conducted to determine the minimum performance level at which the correlate could be considered fully implemented at the school. This information could help schools who are implementing the seven correlates to determine when and if each of the correlates are fully implemented.

Discussion

This study determined that the seven correlates of Effective Schools Research were present in the sample of elementary schools studied in East Tennessee. It was also determined by this study that a number of underlying conditions and distinct practices

present in the schools studied were important factors in the high achievement of the students. The researcher stated that both the correlates and underlying conditions/distinct practices should be considered by current educators as important characteristics to emulate when working with schools to improve student achievement.

It is the opinion of this researcher that some other conclusions can be drawn from this research study. First, it is very important to point out that the principal in each of the schools studied played a significant role in the success of each school. Three of the four principals had spent a number of years at their school and had been challenged to improve the academic status of the school. The fourth principal was new to the school but through the interviews conducted by the researcher, teachers credited the principal with making changes and/or being responsible for many significant changes in the school. Therefore, it is important to note that in addition to the correlates and underlying conditions/distinct practices, the role of the principal significantly influences the success of the school.

Another important conclusion made by the researcher is that a distinct difference existed between the low-achieving, high-gain schools and the high-achieving, high-gain schools. The focus of the two low-achieving schools primarily revolved around having a clear mission that everyone understood and followed. A variety of programs and teaching methods had been developed at the two low-achieving schools yet the focal point centered around the fact that everyone knew what they were supposed to be doing and the goal that they were trying to achieve. Although the high-achieving, high-gain schools did indicate a clear school mission, their focus revolved around creating a caring, family-like atmosphere where teachers went “above and beyond” to provide for their

students. Given these differences between the two types of schools in this study, it is interesting to see how schools in different areas approach the same problems in similar ways. Again, it would be very important for the current educator interested in applying the characteristics identified in this study to assess their school and its needs so that when they apply the conditions/practices found in this study they will also see the academic success.

Summary

The high-poverty schools in this study demonstrate that programs that are based on the seven correlates of Effective Schools can succeed. The implications of this study for current educators are that the correlates should be implemented in all high-poverty schools, if not in all schools. The distinct practices and underlying conditions that helped make the schools in this study successful should also be emulated. Additional study is needed to determine the effectiveness of the correlates and underlying conditions or distinct practices in other schools, the relative importance of the correlates, and the inter-relationship between the correlates and underlying conditions or distinct practices.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

TVAAS Explained

According to the 2004 Tennessee Report Card, value-added assessment “measures student progress within a grade and subject, which demonstrates the influence of in-school factors on the student’s achievement” (www.k-12.state.tn.us/rptcrd04/part3a.htm). Each school is awarded a letter grade for each subject area tested: Reading/Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies. The letter grade represents the school’s status for student academic achievement on the states standardized tests know as the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (T-CAP). The status for each letter grade is as follows:

- A – Exceptional
- B – Exceeds State Growth Standard
- C – Maintains State Growth Standard
- D – Below State Growth Standard
- F – Deficient (2004 Report Card)

Above average status means that students in the school made significantly more gain in the subject area tested than the average gain for all students in the state of Tennessee.

Below average status means that students in the school made significantly less progress in the subject area tested than the average gain for all students in the state of Tennessee.

It is important to note that Tennessee made a transition from using norm referenced tests to using criterion referenced tests during the 2004-2005 school year. Since the 2005 Report Card uses three year averages, additional research will be necessary to determine the effects of the change in tests.

Origin of the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System

On March 11, 1992, Governor Ned McWherter signed the Education Improvement Act (EIA) into law in Tennessee. As a part of this new legislation, the state sales tax was increased in order to provide more funding for education. As a means for ensuring that this new increase in funding would result in better student performance, the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) was implemented and soon became the hallmark for the state's accountability system for education. Sanders and Horn (1998) described the TVAAS system as

A statistical method of determining the effectiveness of school systems, schools and teachers. TVAAS uses statistical mixed model theory and methodology to enable a multivariate, longitudinal analysis of student achievement data. (p. 248)

The Sanders model, as it was referred to in the EIA, used the data from students' scores gathered by the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) given annually to students in grades three through eight that covers the five major academic subjects (mathematics, science, social studies, reading, and language arts) as well as end-of-course tests given to high school students (Sanders & Horn, 1998). Sanders and Horn explained the theory behind this system.

Each student's test data are accumulated over time and are linked to that student's teacher(s), school(s), and school system(s). TVAAS utilizes the scaled scores students make over time to model their learning patterns. By taking advantage of the longitudinal aspect of the data, it is possible to note when the normal pace of academic growth deviates. By following growth over time, the child serves as his or her own "control." This enables the partitioning of school system, school, and

teacher effects free of the exogenous factors that influence academic achievement and that are consistently present with each child over time. (p. 250)

Shearon (2001) indicated that there are several interesting factors that have been learned from the TVAAS system:

- The effectiveness of a school in helping students make gains cannot be predicted based on its racial or economic makeup.
- There are HUGE variations in the effectiveness of schools.
- Our schools are getting steadily better. Fewer are to be found with overall gains less than 70% of the national norm, and more and more are achieving 110%.
- High achieving students are the most underserved of all Tennessee students. (p. 1)

What then is value-added assessment? Crane (2002) states that value-added is an approach that “focuses on how much value a school or a teacher is adding to what students bring with them from year to year” (p. 1). Crane believes that value-added testing is the most direct and simplest approach for determining the quality of a school or an individual teacher because it measures how much a student learns from year to year.

Crane (2002) described three major benefits of the value-added testing system. He stated that the first benefit would be that this form of assessment would help to increase the effectiveness of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, otherwise known as *No Child Left Behind*. The enforcement of sanctions outlined under this act is a means for encouraging schools to improve through the implementation of good teaching practices. The second benefit described by Crane was the belief that value-added testing would improve teaching through a measurable system, which could be used to assess

teacher quality. The average gain for all of the students for each individual teacher is calculated creating a teacher score that is reported to school systems. Administrators can use the value-added scores to determine when teachers are effective and when they need improvement. The third benefit of value-added testing that Crane stated was that it would help to determine the most successful school reform models. Crane said, “The best way to improve schools is to rigorously test a wide variety of different strategies and models and then systematically winnow out the failures and build on the successes” (p. 5).

The value-added system does have limitations. Crane (2002) stated that the first problem with this approach is that value-added analysis is statistical. “By definition, all statistical approaches are imprecise to one degree or another; there is always a margin of error” (p. 5). This approach to testing also does not address the most significant issue for all testing approaches, the fine line between actual learning and “teaching to the test” (p. 5). The final limitation discussed by Crane is the argument over Sanders claim that teacher quality overshadows socioeconomic factors so much so that there are no adjustments made for any such characteristic.

Appendix B

Request to Conduct Study (Director of Schools)

April 7, 2006

Dr.
Director
Schools
Avenue
, TN

Dr. :

As a candidate for a doctoral degree in Educational Administration, Supervision & Policy Studies at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, I am currently writing my dissertation on high-performing, high-poverty elementary schools in East Tennessee. The goal of my research is to study how high-poverty schools are able to produce high student achievement and to identify the unique characteristics found in these schools.

Elementary School in is a high-performing, high-poverty school that I would like to include in my study. I am requesting your permission to contact the principal of Elementary, , and ask for their participation in my research.

I will be asking each school to participate in the following ways: (1) complete a staff survey created by the Association for Effective Schools; (2) an interview with the principal and at least two teachers; and (3) to allow the researcher to visit each school for 1 day to observe and document daily activities and procedures. My research has been approved by my dissertation committee with Dr. Vincent Anfara as chairperson and has been reviewed and approved by the university's Institutional Review Board.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to the opportunity to study the success that the staff at Elementary has created. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,

John Dalton

Appendix C

Request to Participate in Study (Principal)

April 7, 2006

Mr.
Principal
Elementary School
Street
, TN

Mr. :

As a candidate for a doctorate's degree in Educational Administration, Supervision & Policy Studies at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, I am currently writing my dissertation on high-performing, high-poverty elementary schools in East Tennessee. The goal of my research is to study how high-poverty schools are able to produce high student achievement and to identify the unique characteristics found in these schools. Elementary School in is a high-performing, high-poverty school that I would like to include in my study. I am writing to request your participation in my research.

As a participant in this study, I am asking your school to participate in the following ways: (1) complete a staff survey created by the Association for Effective Schools; (2) an interview with the principal and at least two teachers; and (3) allow the researcher to visit each school for 1 day to observe and document daily activities and procedures. My research has been approved by my dissertation committee with Dr. Vincent Anfara as chairperson and has been reviewed and approved by the university's Institutional Review Board.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to the opportunity to study the success that the staff at Elementary has created. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,

John Dalton

Appendix D

Teacher Interview

Grand Tour Question: What is it like teaching at your school?

- I. Clear School Mission
 - 1) What is the mission of your school?
 - 2) How have you contributed to the development of the school's goals and mission?
 - 3) How is the school goals and mission evaluated?
- II. High Expectation for Success
 - 4) What expectations do you have for your students?
 - 5) How do your students feel about learning?
 - 6) How do your students feel about their school? your expectations? success?
- III. Instructional Leadership
 - 7) How are the school goals developed and implemented?
 - 8) How are instructional decisions made, implemented, and evaluated?
 - 9) Describe how decisions are made in your school.
- IV. Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress
 - 10) How do you monitor your students' progress?
 - 11) How do you assess your students' ability to learn?
 - 12) Describe how student achievement is assessed in your classroom.
- V. Opportunity to Learn and Student Time on Task
 - 13) Describe a typical day in your class. (i.e.: Activities, Lesson, Student Behaviors)
 - 14) What are your expectations for student behavior?
 - 15) What are the school's expectations for student behavior?
 - 16) How are the rules and consequences enforced in your class? by the school?
- VI. Safe and Orderly Environment
 - 17) What does your school do to ensure the safety of the students and staff?
 - 18) How would you describe your school's environment? (i.e.: Orderly, Chaotic, etc...) Please explain.
- VII. Home – School Relations
 - 19) How are parents received at your school? in your classroom?
 - 20) How does the community support your school?
 - 21) Describe how you communicate with parents.

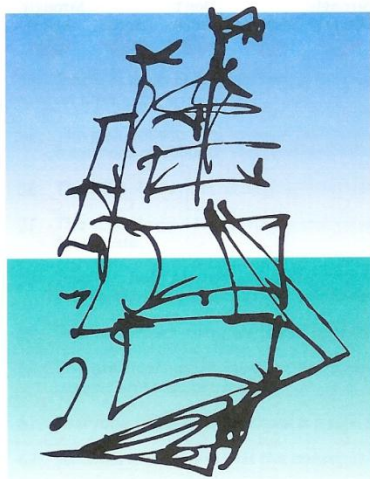
Appendix E

Principal/Administrator Interview

Grand Tour Question: What is it like working at your school?

- I. Clear School Mission
 - 1) What is the mission for your school? your students? your staff?
 - 2) How do ensure that the mission of the school is achieved?
 - 3) How is the environment of the school conducive to learning?
- II. High Expectation for Success
 - 4) What expectations do you have for your students? your staff?
 - 5) How do your students feel about learning?
 - 6) How do you view your staff in relation to their attitude(s) toward student learning?
 - 7) Describe how your staff works together with each other?
- III. Instructional Leadership
 - 8) What type of things to do you in terms of curriculum and instruction?
 - 9) Describe some of the procedures that you use to evaluate and implement changes in curriculum.
 - 10) How do you make decisions within your school?
- IV. Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress
 - 11) How do teachers in your school monitor students' progress?
 - 12) How do you use data on student progress to improve instruction?
- V. Opportunity to Learn and Student Time on Task
 - 13) Describe your expectations for student behavior?
 - 14) How are the rules and consequences enforced?
 - 15) Describe your thoughts on how class time should be used?
- VI. Safe and Orderly Environment
 - 16) How do you ensure the safety of the students and staff?
 - 17) How would you describe the daily activities of your school?
- VII. Home – School Relations
 - 18) How do you get parents involved in school activities?
 - 19) What types of support do you receive from the community?
 - 20) Describe the types of activities that parents are involved in at your school?

Appendix F



"Setting the Course
for Learning by All"

Questions on this survey come from a body of educational research describing the culture of schools where all students learn to high levels. They were developed by Fred A. Cardella and S. Louise Sprecher, Spencerport Central Schools, Robert E. Sudlow, Spencerport, New York and H.W. Meyers, University of Vermont. Survey © 2000 Cardella & Sudlow.

The purpose of this survey is to find out what you think of your school this year. To ensure confidentiality, only a summary of the data is reported. Please take the time to respond to the following statements as honestly as you can.

More Effective Schools Staff Survey

Marking Directions

- Write the name of your district and school in the space provided.
- Do not write your name on this survey. Your answers are meant to be anonymous.
- Read each question carefully and answer in terms of what has occurred in your school *this year* – not in terms of what occurred in previous years.
- While you may not be sure about a question, answer in terms of your own perceptions, opinions or experiences.
- Decide if you Strongly Disagree with the item, Disagree with the item, Agree with the item, Strongly Agree with the item or just Don't Know. Fill in the appropriate oval on the answer sheet.
- This is not a timed survey, but it should be completed in one sitting. Answer all questions.
- All survey answers will be summarized and reported back to the school for use in developing a plan for improving your school.
- PLEASE USE A NO. 2 PENCIL OR BLUE OR BLACK INK PEN.

School Name: _____ District: _____

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. All students are encouraged to develop responsibility for completing assigned work in a timely manner.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. The principal is highly visible throughout the school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Seat work activities are productive through careful preparation, active supervision, and provision of assistance to students in such a way that others are not disturbed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Parent and community volunteers play an active role in the school's program.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. The community provides parent representation to the school improvement team.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Resolution of discipline issues involves administrators, teachers, students and parents.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Student assessment and evaluation are based on mastery of defined objectives of the curriculum.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Parent involvement in the school benefits student learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Students are taught how to evaluate their own performance.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Most discipline issues are handled by classroom teachers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. Students are given the time, help and encouragement necessary to achieve desired performance levels.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. Staff members are encouraged to share ideas and to work together to improve the instructional program.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. Student learning objectives are developed cooperatively by the staff.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. The school gives recognition to students who demonstrate positive behaviors.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. There is a high level of school and home cooperation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. Grouping practices provide for teacher directed instruction for the whole class as well as for small group instruction.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. Teachers are trained to work with parents to help children learn.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. Emphasis is placed on learning as a result of instruction.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. Teachers place emphasis on learning content.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

PLEASE DO NOT WRITE IN THIS AREA

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	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
20. Teachers place an emphasis on learning skills and strategies.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21. The focus of the school is learning by all .	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22. The principal promotes parent involvement in the school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23. Mission statements, slogans, mottoes and displays promote the school's academic goals.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24. The principal is a resource person to the staff.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25. Teachers make certain that high expectations are communicated to all students, regardless of gender, race, socioeconomic status or other personal characteristics.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26. Parents support the school's instructional efforts.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
27. The school's homework policy is communicated effectively to parents.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28. The principal is a strong instructional leader.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
29. Both students and staff respect individual differences.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
30. One goal of this school is to provide an education that emphasizes basic skills.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
31. There are clearly stated school rules defining expectations of student behavior.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
32. The faculty takes collective responsibility for academic achievement regardless of family background.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
33. Conferences with appropriate personnel are held to resolve lack of student progress.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
34. Parents have opportunities to learn how to help their children be successful in school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
35. This school has a mission.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
36. The accomplishments of students, staff and the school as a whole are communicated to the parents.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
37. Special programs are thoughtfully coordinated with the regular school programs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
38. Teachers appropriately praise students for adequate and outstanding performance.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
39. Available resources are utilized to maximize student learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
40. Consistent discipline is applied equitably to all students by all staff members.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
41. Staff, students and the community know the scope of the curriculum and the priorities within it.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
42. All students are given sufficient time to practice and consolidate new instructional skills.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
43. The whole school emphasizes the reduction of interruptions during instruction.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
44. The building principal supports his/her teachers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
45. The building homework policy is implemented.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
46. Students work together to help each other learn.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
47. The faculty is committed to the task of helping all students master important learning objectives.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
48. The school has two-way communication with parents and community leaders.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
49. Loudspeaker announcements and other administrative intrusions are kept to a minimum and scheduled so as not to interfere with basic skills instruction.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
50. Teachers keep non-instructional time to a minimum by managing classrooms so as to minimize disruptive behavior.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
51. Teachers and building administrators demonstrate collaborative behaviors in their professional working relationships.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
52. The mission for this school serves as the basis for important actions and decisions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
53. Student behavior contributes to a safe and orderly environment.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
54. Teachers keep non-instructional time to a minimum by beginning and ending lessons on time.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
55. The staff collects and reviews performance data to ensure early identification and treatment of children with learning difficulties.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
56. The school provides additional time needed for students to reach mastery.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
57. The school provides enriching and stimulating activities in which all students participate.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
58. Teachers hold all students accountable for completing assignments, turning in work, and participating in classroom discussions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
59. Teachers select materials based upon student's instructional needs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
60. The principal communicates the school mission effectively to teachers, students, parents and support staff.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
61. Everyone believes that school is a safe place for learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
62. Students understand that the consequences of their misbehaviors are justified.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
63. There is ongoing monitoring of the student rate of learning to ensure that progress occurs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
64. The principal observes classroom instruction and provides appropriate feedback.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
65. Teachers frequently use a variety of methods to evaluate student progress and performance.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
66. There is a high commitment to achieve the mission of the school in spite of the frustrations and obstacles encountered.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
67. To assure that time is used productively, learning activities are presented at a level that is neither too easy nor too difficult for students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
68. There is a building-wide homework policy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
69. Prompt attention is given to needed repairs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
70. Student learning considerations are the most important criteria used in making decisions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
71. At-risk students are given additional learning time for priority objectives.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
72. The school prioritizes the content to be learned by all students at each grade level.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
73. Standardized tests (either criterion referenced or norm referenced tests) that match the learning objectives with what has been taught are used.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
74. Leadership is distributed among many staff members.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
75. The staff involves parents in selecting, evaluating and revising school activities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
76. Students have the opportunity to relate learning across subjects through interdisciplinary learning experiences.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
77. Teachers use strategies such as reteaching and regrouping to assure mastery for all students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
78. This school uses outside resources to support school goals and programs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
79. Hallways and classrooms are attractively decorated with student academic work, posters and seasonal artwork.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
80. Teachers learn and employ strategies that are effective for diverse learning styles and student needs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
81. One goal of this school is to develop multicultural understanding among staff and students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
82. This school promotes an academic learning climate by establishing high expectations for all students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
83. Successful school practices which have been evaluated are presented to the staff for their consideration.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
84. The school's mission is clearly focused on desired student learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
85. The principal protects teachers from external forces that threaten to reduce their commitment and limit their effectiveness.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
86. Careful frequent monitoring practices keep teachers aware of students having academic difficulty; problems are noted and needed help is provided.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
87. Appropriate time schedules to meet learning objectives are determined by the staff.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
88. This school provides an environment in which students can develop self-esteem.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
89. Interactive learning activities with teachers, aides, peer tutors, or remedial specialists are provided for at-risk students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
90. Discipline procedures followed are clearly linked to a student's inappropriate behavior.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
91. Each year all students are expected to learn what is needed in order to be successful at the next level of education.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
92. Teachers are involved in decisions about the scheduling of pupils and teachers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
93. This school has a workable plan for helping low achieving students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
94. Physical facilities are kept clean.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
95. The principal is viewed as an effective communicator.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
96. This school seeks and provides multiple methods to ensure learning success for all students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
97. The principal is a facilitator or coordinator of change.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
98. Student participation in special programs is communicated to parents of students involved.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
99. When taking disciplinary action, teachers focus on the inappropriate behavior, not the student's personality.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
100. Teachers are provided with a wide variety of instructional materials.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
101. Teachers use effective instructional techniques such as positive reinforcement, lesson sequencing and "wait time."	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
102. Students can earn recognition and rewards for appropriate behavior.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
103. School leaders work with parents to establish procedures that guide parent involvement.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
104. Teachers keep non-instructional time to a minimum by keeping transition times short.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
105. The school systematically and publicly recognizes students who improve academically and succeed academically.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
106. Analysis and discussion of test content are part of periodic curricular reviews.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
107. The principal discusses instructional matters with teachers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
108. The principal and all staff members hold high expectations for themselves.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
109. The staff works with parents to build a respectful climate where all can feel ownership.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
110. This school is a safe and secure place to work and learn.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
111. Students demonstrate respect for each other.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐



Association for Effective Schools, Inc.

"Setting the Course for Learning by All"

This survey is provided by the Association for Effective Schools, Inc., a not-for-profit organization located in Stuyvesant, New York. Our More Effective Schools Surveys and other research-based products and services help to develop and support the leadership and local capacity of schools, better enabling them to improve the achievement of all students. For information about More Effective Schools, please contact us. (800)-AES-9684 • <http://www.mes.org> • e-mail: acs@mes.org

Ben A. Birdsall, President

SI# 210 8/02



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Appendix G

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

<u>Correlates of Effective Schools</u>	<u>Areas observed</u>	<u>Description</u>
A Clear School Mission	<i>(Entrance, Office)</i>	
High Expectation for Success	<i>(Classrooms, Hallways, Cafeteria, Library,Gym)</i>	
Instructional Leadership	<i>(Office, Classrooms, Instructional Areas)</i>	
Opportunities to Learn & Time on Task	<i>(Classrooms, Instructional Areas)</i>	
Safe and Orderly Environment	<i>(Exterior, Entrance, Office, Classrooms)</i>	
Positive Home-School Relations	<i>(Office, Foyer, Classrooms, Common Areas)</i>	
Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress	<i>(Classrooms, Instructional Areas)</i>	

Appendix H

Clear School Mission Survey Results – Riverside Elementary

Question #	% Disagree	% Don't Know	% Positive
13	25	0	75
21	8	0	92
23	0	0	100
29	8	0	92
30	0	0	100
35	0	0	100
41	0	0	100
52	0	0	100
60	0	0	100
61	0	0	100
66	0	0	100
70	0	0	100
81	8	8	83
84	0	0	100
87	9	0	91
88	0	0	100

High Expectations for Success Survey Results – Riverside Elementary

Question #	% Disagree	% Don't Know	% Positive
1	8	0	92
14	0	0	100
18	0	0	100
25	0	0	100
32	0	0	100
47	8	0	92
57	0	0	100
58	8	0	92
77	8	0	92
79	0	0	100
80	0	0	100
82	8	0	92
91	8	0	92
105	0	0	100
108	0	0	100

Instructional Leadership Survey Results – Riverside Elementary

Question #	% Disagree	% Don't Know	% Positive
2	0	8	92
12	0	0	100
24	0	0	100
28	0	0	100
44	0	0	100
51	0	0	100
64	0	8	92
74	8	0	92
83	0	17	83
85	0	0	100
92	8	0	92
95	0	0	100
97	0	0	100
100	0	0	100
107	0	8	92

Frequent Monitoring Survey Results – Riverside Elementary

Question #	% Disagree	% Don't Know	% Positive
7	0	0	100
9	8	0	92
19	0	0	100
20	0	0	100
33	8	0	92
55	8	0	92
63	8	0	92
65	0	0	100
73	0	0	100
86	0	0	100
106	0	0	100

Opportunities to Learn Survey Results – Riverside Elementary

Question #	% Disagree	% Don't Know	% Positive
3	0	0	100
11	0	0	100
16	0	0	100
37	0	0	100
38	0	0	100
39	0	0	100
42	0	0	100
43	8	0	92
46	0	0	100
49	0	0	100
50	0	0	100
54	0	0	100
56	0	0	100
59	0	0	100
67	0	0	100
71	0	0	100
72	0	0	100
76	0	0	100
89	0	0	100
93	8	0	92
96	8	0	92
101	0	8	92
104	0	0	100

Safe & Orderly Environment Survey Results – Riverside Elementary

Question #	% Disagree	% Don't Know	% Positive
6	0	0	100
10	0	0	100
31	8	0	92
40	8	8	83
53	9	9	82
62	0	0	100
69	8	0	92
90	0	0	100
94	17	0	83
99	0	0	100
102	0	0	100
109	0	0	100
110	0	0	100
111	17	8	75

Home-School Relations Survey Results – Riverside Elementary

Question #	% Disagree	% Don't Know	% Positive
4	8	8	83
5	0	25	75
8	0	0	100
15	58	0	42
17	8	0	92
22	0	0	100
26	17	0	83
27	8	8	83
34	0	0	100
36	0	0	100
45	8	0	92
48	0	8	92
68	33	17	50
75	17	25	58
78	0	0	100
98	0	0	100
103	8	17	75

Appendix I

Clear School Mission Survey Results – Valley Crest Elementary

Question #	% Disagree	% Don't Know	% Positive
13	23	0	77
21	0	3	97
23	7	3	90
29	13	3	83
30	0	0	100
35	3	3	93
41	17	20	63
52	0	7	93
60	3	7	90
61	3	3	93
66	0	0	100
70	0	0	100
81	3	14	83
84	0	0	100
87	13	0	87
88	0	0	100

High Expectations for Success Survey Results – Valley Crest Elementary

Question #	% Disagree	% Don't Know	% Positive
1	0	0	100
14	20	3	77
18	0	0	100
25	0	0	100
32	0	3	97
47	0	0	100
57	23	0	77
58	3	3	93
77	0	3	97
79	0	0	100
80	0	0	100
82	0	0	100
91	3	0	97
105	0	0	100
108	0	13	87

Instructional Leadership Survey Results – Valley Crest Elementary

Question #	% Disagree	% Don't Know	% Positive
2	0	0	100
12	0	0	100
24	0	0	100
28	0	0	100
44	0	0	100
51	3	0	97
64	7	0	93
74	7	0	93
83	10	7	83
85	0	10	90
92	23	13	63
95	7	0	93
97	0	0	100
100	0	0	100
107	0	0	100

Frequent Monitoring Survey Results – Valley Crest Elementary

Question #	% Disagree	% Don't Know	% Positive
7	0	0	100
9	7	3	90
19	0	0	100
20	0	0	100
33	3	7	90
55	10	0	90
63	0	0	100
65	0	3	97
73	3	7	90
86	3	3	93
106	10	23	67

Opportunities to Learn Survey Results – Valley Crest Elementary

Question #	% Disagree	% Don't Know	% Positive
3	0	3	97
11	0	0	100
16	0	10	90
37	17	0	83
38	0	0	100
39	0	0	100
42	7	3	90
43	13	0	87
46	0	0	100
49	10	0	90
50	0	3	97
54	0	10	90
56	3	3	93
59	7	3	90
67	0	3	97
71	7	0	93
72	3	0	97
76	3	10	87
89	7	0	93
93	3	13	83
96	0	0	100
101	0	0	100
104	0	0	100

Safe & Orderly Environment Survey Results – Valley Crest Elementary

Question #	% Disagree	% Don't Know	% Positive
6	10	0	90
10	0	0	100
31	3	0	97
40	23	3	73
53	0	3	97
62	17	7	77
69	17	10	73
90	14	10	76
94	0	0	100
99	3	10	87
102	3	0	97
109	13	3	83
110	0	0	100
111	20	7	73

Home-School Relations Survey Results – Valley Crest Elementary

Question #	% Disagree	% Don't Know	% Positive
4	30	3	67
5	17	30	53
8	7	10	83
15	33	7	60
17	23	13	63
22	0	3	97
26	27	13	60
27	7	3	90
34	10	20	70
36	0	0	100
45	13	33	53
48	10	3	87
68	37	47	17
75	47	20	33
78	10	10	80
98	0	3	97
103	17	17	67

Appendix J

Clear School Mission Survey Results – Lakeshore Elementary

Question #	% Disagree	% Don't Know	% Positive
13	6	0	94
21	0	0	100
23	0	0	100
29	6	0	94
30	0	0	100
35	0	0	100
41	0	50	50
52	0	0	100
60	0	0	100
61	0	0	100
66	0	0	100
70	0	6	94
81	6	0	94
84	0	0	100
87	0	6	94
88	0	0	100

High Expectations Survey Results – Lakeshore Elementary

Question #	% Disagree	% Don't Know	% Positive
1	0	0	100
14	6	0	94
18	0	0	100
25	0	0	100
32	0	0	100
47	0	0	100
57	6	19	75
58	0	6	94
77	0	13	88
79	0	0	100
80	0	0	100
82	0	6	94
91	0	6	94
105	0	0	100
108	0	0	100

Instructional Leadership Survey Results – Lakeshore Elementary

Question #	% Disagree	% Don't Know	% Positive
2	0	0	100
12	0	0	100
24	6	0	94
28	0	6	94
44	7	0	93
51	0	0	100
64	0	0	100
74	6	0	94
83	0	6	94
85	13	6	81
92	0	6	94
95	13	0	88
97	0	0	100
100	6	19	75
107	0	0	100

Frequent Monitoring Survey Results – Lakeshore Elementary

Question #	% Disagree	% Don't Know	% Positive
7	0	0	100
9	13	44	44
19	0	0	100
20	0	0	100
33	0	6	94
55	0	13	88
63	0	0	100
65	0	0	100
73	0	6	94
86	0	19	81
106	0	19	81

Opportunities to Learn Survey Results – Lakeshore Elementary

Question #	% Disagree	% Don't Know	% Positive
3	0	0	100
11	0	0	100
16	0	19	81
37	0	6	94
38	6	0	94
39	0	7	93
42	0	13	88
43	7	0	93
46	0	0	100
49	0	0	100
50	13	0	88
54	0	13	88
56	0	7	93
59	0	6	94
67	6	6	88
71	0	0	100
72	0	13	88
76	0	6	94
89	0	0	100
93	0	0	100
96	0	0	100
101	0	19	81
104	13	0	88

Safe & Orderly Environment Survey Results – Lakeshore Elementary

Question #	% Disagree	% Don't Know	% Positive
6	0	0	100
10	0	0	100
31	6	6	88
40	25	13	63
53	6	0	94
62	0	6	94
69	6	25	69
90	6	19	75
94	13	0	88
99	6	6	88
102	0	0	100
109	0	0	100
110	0	0	100
111	13	0	88

Home-School Relations Survey Results – Lakeshore Elementary

Question #	% Disagree	% Don't Know	% Positive
4	19	6	75
5	6	13	81
8	0	6	94
15	19	6	75
17	0	13	88
22	0	6	94
26	19	31	50
27	6	25	69
34	0	13	88
36	6	13	81
45	0	69	31
48	6	19	75
68	56	13	31
75	6	50	44
78	0	6	94
98	0	0	100
103	0	25	75

Appendix K

Clear School Mission Survey Results – Mountain View Elementary

Question #	% Disagree	% Don't Know	% Positive
13	24	0	76
21	5	0	95
23	0	0	100
29	10	0	90
30	5	0	95
35	0	0	100
41	14	14	71
52	0	0	100
60	0	0	100
61	0	0	100
66	0	0	100
70	0	0	100
81	0	0	100
84	0	0	100
87	0	0	100
88	5	0	95

High Expectations Survey Results – Mountain Top Elementary

Question #	% Disagree	% Don't Know	% Positive
1	0	0	100
14	10	0	90
18	0	0	100
25	5	5	90
32	5	5	90
47	0	0	100
57	5	0	95
58	0	0	100
77	0	0	100
79	0	0	100
80	0	0	100
82	0	0	100
91	0	0	100
105	5	0	95
108	0	0	100

Instructional Leadership Survey Results – Mountain Top Elementary

Question #	% Disagree	% Don't Know	% Positive
2	0	0	100
12	5	0	95
24	14	0	86
28	10	0	90
44	5	0	95
51	0	5	95
64	0	0	100
74	0	0	100
83	5	0	95
85	0	0	100
92	15	10	75
95	14	5	81
97	5	0	95
100	0	0	100
107	0	5	95

Frequent Monitoring Survey Results – Mountain Top Elementary

Question #	% Disagree	% Don't Know	% Positive
7	0	0	100
9	5	14	81
19	0	5	95
20	0	0	100
33	5	10	86
55	0	0	100
63	0	0	100
65	0	0	100
73	10	10	81
86	0	0	100
106	0	10	90

Opportunities to Learn Survey Results – Mountain Top Elementary

Question #	% Disagree	% Don't Know	% Positive
3	0	5	95
11	0	0	100
16	0	0	100
37	10	5	86
38	0	5	95
39	5	0	95
42	10	5	86
43	0	0	100
46	10	5	86
49	10	0	90
50	0	0	100
54	0	14	86
56	10	0	90
59	0	0	100
67	0	0	100
71	5	0	95
72	0	0	100
76	5	5	89
89	0	0	100
93	0	0	100
96	0	0	100
101	0	0	100
104	0	0	100

Safe & Orderly Environment Survey Results – Mountain Top Elementary

Question #	% Disagree	% Don't Know	% Positive
6	0	0	100
10	19	0	81
31	0	0	100
40	10	0	90
53	24	0	76
62	14	0	86
69	14	5	81
90	5	0	95
94	24	0	76
99	5	0	95
102	0	0	100
109	5	0	95
110	5	0	95
111	43	0	57

Home-School Relations Survey Results – Mountain Top Elementary

Question #	% Disagree	% Don't Know	% Positive
4	67	0	33
5	19	24	57
8	24	19	57
15	71	0	29
17	19	5	76
22	14	0	86
26	29	19	52
27	5	0	95
34	10	0	90
36	5	0	95
45	0	5	95
48	14	5	81
68	0	0	100
75	19	10	71
78	5	0	95
98	0	0	100
103	24	5	71

VITA

John Dalton lives in Maryville, TN with his wife Shelly and two children, Ryan and Eliza. He is a 1994 graduate of Maryville College where he received his teaching certification and majored in Child Development and Learning. John also graduated from Lincoln Memorial University in 1996 with a Master's degree in Educational Administration and Supervision. He received his Doctorate in Education from The University of Tennessee, Knoxville in 2008. John began his teaching career in 1994 in the Blount County School System in Blount County, TN where he has been a middle school teacher, football coach, and assistant principal at both the high school and elementary levels. John currently serves as the principal at Townsend Elementary School in Townsend, TN.