



Research and Best Practices That Advance the Profession
of Educational Administration

Spring 2007 / Volume 4, No. 1

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A Message From the Editor

Frederick L. Dembowski
Southeastern Louisiana University

This issue contains five research articles and one book review. The first article studies conflict management, one of the skills necessary for the development of successful school leaders. This study reveals perceptions about the frequency of conflict encountered by respondents in their roles as school leaders.

The second article discusses the relationship between the principal and the school-based police officer, often called the school resource officer. This paper provides the necessary background and research related to the meaning of school culture, police culture, and school resource officer culture; discusses barriers to the development of the principal/school resource officer relationships; and offers immediate and practical strategies for developing positive relationships.

The third article investigates the relationship between poverty, school size, and charter designation on middle school achievement measured by the Colorado Student Assessment Program in both 2001 and 2004. In both years, poverty was found to have a very large negative effect size relationship with student achievement and the bivariate correlation of school size and student achievement was essentially zero.

The fourth research article studies action research as an effective method of improving student achievement. This study found it is important for principal preparation programs to include action research and the facilitation process throughout the learning process.

The fifth article compares selected full-service and traditional elementary schools in a medium-sized city in the southeastern United States on five school climate factors. This study helps clarify the differences between traditional and full-service schools, yields information on selection of traditional public schools that are *appropriate* for a full-service site, and illuminates relationships among school climate factors in the two settings.

Lastly, a book review of Sorenson and Lloyd's *The Principal's Guide to School Budgeting* concludes that the content is practical, not theoretical information, and can be readily understood and applied by the school principal.

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Published by the

American Association of School Administrators

801 North Quincy St., Suite 700

Arlington, VA 22203

Available at www.aasa.org/publications/jsp.cfm

ISSN 1931-6569

Principals and Conflict Management: Do Preparation Programs Do Enough?

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Introduction and Theoretical Perspective

Conflict management is among the skills necessary for the development of successful school leaders (Hoyle, English, & Steffy, 1998; Hoy & Miskel, 2005). Researchers have identified styles and strategies for managing conflict in organizations (Thomas, 1976; Katz & Lawyer, 1993; Deutsch, 1994; Putnam, 1997; Deutsch & Coleman, 2000). Effective approaches to conflict management training have also been developed and documented (Deutsch, 1994; Feeny & Davidson, 1996; Davidson & Versluys, 1999; Cornille, Pestle, & Vanwy, 1999; Raider, Coleman, & Gerson, 2000; Deutsch & Coleman, 2000).

Those in campus leadership positions are certain to face conflict situations on a regular basis (Martin & Willower, 1981; Putnam, 1997). Rodriguez-Campos, Rincones-Gomez, & Shen (2005) documented that principals in the United States today are highly educated, strong in classroom teaching experience and instructional leadership, and active in professional development. However, school leaders may not be receiving the preparation necessary to effectively handle conflict on the job (Daresh & Male, 2000; Barnett, 2004; Coleman & Fisher-Yoshida, 2004).

Conflict is specifically addressed in three of the Educational Leadership Constituency Council (ELCC) standards. Standard 3.2, regarding the management of campus operations, sub-standard (a) is defined by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2002) as follows:

“Candidates demonstrate the ability to involve staff in conducting operations and setting priorities using appropriate and effective needs assessment, researched-based data, and group process skills to build consensus, communicate, and resolve conflicts in order to align resources with the organizational vision,” (p.8).

Standard 4.2 addresses response to community interests and needs. Sub-standard (a) is defined by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2002) as follows:

“Candidates demonstrate active involvement within the community, including interactions with individuals and groups with conflicting perspectives,” (p.11).

Standard 6.1 addresses the campus administrator's ability to understand the larger context. Sub-standard (h) is defined by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2002) as follows:

“Candidates demonstrate the ability to explain various theories of change and conflict resolution and the appropriate application of those models to specific communities,” (p.14).

Standard 7.0 addresses the internship experience for aspiring principals. While conflict management is not mentioned specifically within the text, one element of the standard could impact principal candidates' skills in conflict management. Standard 7.4 prescribes that the internship experience should occur in a real-world setting. Sub-standard (a) is defined by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2002) as follows:

“Candidates' experiences occur in multiple settings that allow for the demonstration of a wide range of relevant knowledge and skills,” (p.17).

Furthermore, standard 7.4(b) is stated as follows:

“Candidates' experiences include work with appropriate community organizations such as social service groups and local businesses,” (p.17).

Despite the existence of standards for the clinical training of principals, opportunities for candidates to develop conflict management skills during the internship may be limited. Wilmore & Bratlien (2005) found considerable variation in the internship components of principal preparation programs across the nation. These variations included semester hour requirements, the ratio of interns to university

supervisors, and program accreditation status. Barriers to quality internship experiences were also documented. Notable among these were the lack of opportunity to engage in a full-time internship, lack of qualifications, dedication, or time for school-based administrators to be effective mentors, and insufficient involvement of university personnel as a result of financial constraints (Wilmore & Bratlien, 2005).

There is also evidence that mentoring/peer coaching is one of the least utilized professional development sources once candidates complete internships and begin work as practicing campus administrators. Rodriguez-Campos, et al. (2005) found that while nearly 100% of principals engaged in professional development activities during the 1999-2000 school year, only 38% identified mentoring or peer coaching as one of those activities. In contrast, 97% of principals attended workshops or conferences within that time period.

Research Questions

This study focused on four questions about conflict in the professional lives of campus administrators:

- What is the frequency of conflict encountered by principals and assistant principals in contexts involving students, parents, teachers, and district-level administrators?
- What is the perception of principals and assistant principals regarding the importance of conflict management skills in their roles as campus leaders?
- What is the perception of principals and assistant principals regarding the extent of conflict management preparation they received in their university-based principal certification programs?

- What is the perception of principals and assistant principals regarding the extent of conflict management training provided by their school districts?

administrators were asked to take part in this study by completing questionnaires. A total of 119 respondents completed usable surveys, resulting in a 39% response rate.

Study Participants

From the Dallas-Ft. Worth area, 255 campus

Table 1 shows the breakdown of respondents by school district enrollment.

Table 1

Conflict Study Subjects' School District Enrollments

	10,000 and greater	9,999 to 1,600	1,599 and fewer	Total
n	77	31	11	119
%	65	26	9	100

The subject pool was almost evenly divided in regard to position, as sixty respondents served as principals and fifty nine served as assistant principals. Table 2 shows the breakdown of respondents by campus grade level assignment.

Table 2

Conflict Study Subjects' Campus Assignments

	Elementary (P-6)	Mid-Level (7-8)	High School (9-12)	Total
n	57	29	33	119
%	48	24	28	100

Instrumentation and Data Analysis

Subjects were asked to complete a four-part questionnaire. The first section consisted of open-ended questions regarding the extent of participants' training in conflict management, as well as the sources of that training. Section

two consisted of forced-choice response items about the frequency of conflict administrators face within various contexts. Contexts were defined as the following sources of conflict: students, parents/guardians, teachers, and supervisors. Supervisors were defined as

superintendents, assistant/associate/deputy superintendents, executive directors, directors, and principals (for respondents working as assistant principals). The frequency choices were defined as follows: routine (daily); somewhat regular (weekly, but not daily); limited (monthly, but not weekly); and very rarely (less frequently than monthly).

In the third section, subjects were asked to indicate the importance of conflict management skills in their roles as principals and assistant principals using the following one to ten scale:

- 1 to 2 not important
- 3 to 4 marginally important
- 5 to 6 somewhat important
- 7 to 8 important
- 9 to 10 very important.

Subjects were also asked to indicate the extent of conflict management training they received as part of their university-based preparation and certification, as well as the extent of conflict management training provided by school districts.

Subjects were asked to use the following one to ten scale to describe the extent of their training from universities and school districts:

- 1 to 2 very little to no conflict management training
- 3 to 4 limited conflict management training
- 5 to 6 some conflict management training
- 7 to 8 considerable conflict management training
- 9 to 10 extensive conflict management training.

The last section consisted of the following demographic information: gender, age, experience, current grade level assignment, school district size, and past employment in careers outside public K-12 education. Responses for items in sections one and two were compiled and categorized for frequency tabulations. Frequencies were also tabulated for the demographic response items in the last section. Percentages were calculated from the frequency data. The Spearman’s Rho correlation procedure was used to determine the existence of relationships between responses and demographic factors.

Findings

Ninety-two percent of subjects indicated that they encountered student-related conflict on a routine or somewhat regular basis.

Table 3 shows the frequency of conflict encountered by campus principals and assistant principals within the student context.

Table 3

Frequency of Student Conflict Encountered by Campus Administrators

	Routine	Somewhat Regular	Limited	Very Rare	Total
n	88	22	8	1	119
%	74	18	7	1	100

Eighty-six percent of subjects reported that they routinely or somewhat regularly encountered conflict while dealing with parents. Table 4 shows the frequency of conflict encountered by campus principals and assistant principals within the parent context.

Table 4

Frequency of Parent Conflict Encountered by Campus Administrators

	Routine	Somewhat Regular	Limited	Very Rare	Total
n	46	56	15	2	119
%	39	47	13	1	100

Fifty-two percent of subjects reported routine or somewhat regular conflict encounters with teachers. Forty-eight percent indicated that they encountered teacher conflict issues on a limited or rare basis. Table 5 shows the frequency of conflict encountered by campus principals and assistant principals within the teacher context.

Table 5

Frequency of Teacher Conflict Encountered by Campus Administrators

	Routine	Somewhat Regular	Limited	Very Rare	Total
n	23	39	52	5	119
%	19	33	44	4	100

Twelve percent of subjects identified conflict with supervisors as occurring routinely or somewhat regularly. Eighty-eight percent reported that they encountered conflict with supervisors on a limited or rare basis. Table 6 shows the frequency of conflict encountered by campus principals and assistant principals within the supervisor context.

Table 6

Frequency of Supervisor Conflict Encountered by Campus Administrators

	Routine	Somewhat Regular	Limited	Very Rare	Total
n	5	10	57	47	119
%	4	8	48	40	100

Subjects were asked to indicate the importance of conflict management skills in their roles as principals and assistant principals using the one-to-ten scale described earlier. The overall mean was 9.65 (n = 119). Ninety-one percent of subjects indicated that they considered conflict management skills to be very important, while seven percent of subjects indicated that conflict management skills were important. No respondents chose a value less than six.

Subjects were asked to indicate the extent of conflict management training they received as part of their university-based preparation and certification programs. Subjects used the one-to-ten rating scale described earlier. The overall mean was 4.97 (n = 119). Table 7 shows the extent of conflict management training provided through university-based preparation and certification programs, as perceived by respondents.

Table 7

University-based Conflict Training received by Campus Administrators

	Extensive (10-9)	Considerable (8-7)	Some (6-5)	Limited (4-3)	Little to none (2-1)	Total
n	7	32	36	18	26	119
%	6	27	30	15	22	100

Respondents were also asked about the extent of conflict management training they received in the form of staff development from school districts using the one-to-ten scale described earlier. The overall mean was 5.89 (n = 119). Table 8 shows the extent of conflict management training provided through school district staff development, as perceived by respondents.

Table 8

School District Conflict Training received by Campus Administrator

	Extensive	Considerable	Some	Limited	Little to none	Total
n	13	44	35	13	14	119
%	11	37	29	11	12	100

Discussion

This study revealed these perceptions about the frequency of conflict encountered by respondents in their roles as school leaders:

1. School leaders face student conflict issues on a routine basis.
2. School leaders face parent conflict issues to a lesser degree than student conflict issues; however, they encounter

parent conflict issues on a regular to routine basis.

3. School leaders encounter teacher conflict issues on a regular to limited basis.
4. School leaders encounter conflict with their supervisors (superintendents, assistant/associate/deputy

superintendents, executive directors, directors) on a limited to rare basis.

5. Principals and assistant principals perceive conflict management skills to be very important in their roles as campus leaders.

6. School leaders receive some conflict management training from school districts and university principal preparation/certification programs; however they do not consider this training to be very extensive.

Correlation analysis showed that administrative assignment, whether elementary, middle, or secondary, did not appear to be a factor in subjects' perceptions of the frequency of conflict within varied contexts. Nor was assignment a factor in subjects' perceptions of the importance of conflict management skills. Age, administrative and teaching experience, and gender did not influence respondents' perceptions about the frequency of conflict within different contexts or the importance of conflict management skills.

University-based principal preparation programs and school districts provide some conflict management training to practicing and aspiring school leaders. The internship component of principal preparation could be an ideal vehicle for the development of conflict management skills. Wilmore & Bratlien (2005) emphasized the need for authentic, field-based experiences for aspiring principals that include all campus leadership contexts and skills sets. However, in the open-ended response section of the questionnaire, many subjects indicated that their conflict management skills were developed primarily through "on-the-job training" after securing their first campus administrative positions. Considering this condition, along with evidence that school

districts find it necessary to provide staff development in conflict management to their campus administrators, university-based preparation programs should improve efforts to prepare school leaders for conflict.

As principal preparation programs undergo review through continuous improvement processes, conflict management should be addressed as a strand running through at least three elements defined by the ELCC: operations management, school community leadership, and understanding of the larger context, or "the big picture." It is important to approach conflict contexts (student, parent/guardian, teacher, supervisor/central administrator) as functions within one or more of these elements as courses and modules are designed and updated.

The student conflict context could be addressed within both operations management and school community leadership. The parent/guardian conflict context could be addressed as a function of school community leadership. The teacher conflict context fits within operations management.

The central administrator/supervisor conflict context may best be approached in activities designed to help educational leadership students to understand the "big picture." Harris, Ballenger, & Leonard (2004) conducted a study to determine the degree to which mentor principals modeled instructional leadership competencies for aspiring principals.

Age, years of experience, and gender emerged as significant factors in the modeling of instructional leadership behaviors (Harris, et al., 2004). A similar study with the focus on conflict management skills of principal mentors may reveal important considerations in the selection of mentors for the principal internship.

Future research should also address the following questions:

1. Will one particular type of training suffice in our efforts to help campus leaders develop conflict management skills for all contexts or do various conflict contexts require specific training methods?
2. Is “on-the-job training” the most effective way to develop the conflict management skills of campus administrators?
3. Is the principal internship being utilized to its potential as a vehicle to develop conflict management skills in principals?

If principal preparation programs effectively address these questions, candidates for principal certification will receive better preparation as they step into campus leadership positions. Furthermore, these candidates may develop into excellent mentors, able to model effective and ethical conflict management practices for aspiring campus leaders.

Author Biography

Michael Anderson is an assistant professor of educational leadership and policy studies at the University of Texas at Arlington with research and expertise in the following areas: conflict management including conflict management skills for principals and developing conflict management skills in teachers; instructional supervision and documenting student success on the Texas professional development and appraisal system; and the practices of Texas school districts in the superintendent search process. He has published two articles, participated in numerous projects, and delivered several presentations.

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Effective Strategies for Developing and Fostering Positive Relationships Between Principals and School-Based Police Officers

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Background

In the past ten years, a growing number of school-based police programs have been instituted because of an increase in school crime and a resulting demand from communities wanting pro-active approaches to school safety. However, a 2004 report on the National Survey of School-Based Police Officers, (NASRO, 2004) found little-to-no positive change in school safety threats, preparedness or funding from prior years. “It would be expected that three years after 9/11 and five years after the Columbine high school attack, the preparedness level of schools should have improved. Yet the 2004 NASRO survey results find very significant percentages of school-based police officers telling us that the threats to school safety are ever-strong” (p. 7).

Critical to the success of these school-based police officers is the leadership onsite at the school, and yet one of the most challenging aspects of implementing a school-based police program is the development of a positive relationship between the school resource officer

(SRO) and principal (Finn, Shively, McDevitt, Lassiter & Rich 2005).

In a meta-analysis examining 30 years of research on the effects of leadership practices on student achievement (Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2003), order and discipline were among the 21 leadership responsibilities that were significantly associated with student achievement. Just as a school principal might look to hire a math specialist on the faculty to raise student achievement in math, principals today look to specialists in order and discipline to help encourage a safer environment. Enter the school resource officer.

Unfortunately, the relationship between the principal and school resource officer is often hindered by a clash between an existing school culture and the police culture that the school resource officers bring to the school setting (Dickmann, 1999). Research related to the unique cultural shifts and barriers of placing

police in school settings is limited, but suggests there is a need for training, dialogue, and other factors necessary for a positive relationship.

School Culture

Schools are complex systems of social interaction characterized by an interdependence of parts, a clearly defined population, differentiation from its environment, and a complex network of social relationships (Mitchell, 1989). In addition, schools are public organizations and are often politically vulnerable. Schools are not monolithic. They are comprised of several different populations and subgroups or cultures. As Catherine Marshall (1988) points out, even among the school adult population of teachers and administrators, the professions and the cultures differ. The values, beliefs, norms, and meanings of events for the members of both adult and student subgroups within schools can vary greatly.

According to Sashkin & Wahlberg (1993), most important to the discussion of developing relationships between principals and police officers is the belief that principals shape culture in schools both formally and informally by:

1. Developing a sense of what the school should be and could be.
2. Recruiting and selecting staff whose values fit with the school.
3. Resolving conflicts, disputes, and problems directly as a way of shaping values.
4. Communicating values and beliefs in daily routines and behaviors.
5. Identifying and articulating stories that communicate shared values

6. Nurturing the traditions, ceremonies, rituals, and symbols that communicate and reinforce the school culture (p. 92).

Deal and Peterson (1991) believe that the school principal is the “builder” of school culture and that culture can be read by watching, sensing, listening, interpreting, and using all of one’s senses, and even employing intuition when necessary. Sergiovanni (2006) agrees that the principal is the one responsible for schools which function exceptionally well, and where school achievement reaches high levels. “Most successful principals will tell you that getting the culture right and paying attention to how parents, teachers, and students define and experience meaning are two widely accepted rules for creating effective schools” (p. 127).

Police Culture

Police organizations are often viewed by outsiders as a single community of like-minded individuals dedicated to the performance of specific tasks. In reality, police organizations are a conglomerate of many communities that work in varying degrees of cooperation to accomplish a wide variety of tasks. These communities are contained within a bureaucracy, often considered quasi-military, that is dedicated to maintaining discipline and accountability (Mayhall, Barker, & Hunter, 1995).

Society has begun to recognize the burden placed on police and the many paradoxes they face. Officers are expected to cope with on-going changes in society while, at the same time, serving in a wide variety of roles such as counselor, human services representative, human relations expert, decision maker, and change agent.

As a career, policing involves many social hazards including: alienation from the

public, isolation from family, salary limitations, career limitations, liability issues, violence, accidents, and contact with contagious diseases, emotional distress, mental illness, suicide, and substance abuse. Researchers have documented that police officers see their working environment as filled with danger. “Officers have often been described as being ‘preoccupied’ with the danger and violence that surrounds them, always anticipating both” (Paoline, 2003).

Police often use their enforcement culture as a “tool kit” to bring a sense of order. The constant telling of the culture is, in fact, a transmission of the culture, not through socialization and the internalizing of rules, but rather through a collection of stories, which instruct officers how to see the world and act in it. Stories prepare officers for police work by providing a vehicle for thinking and a vocabulary of precedents.

Thus, cultural knowledge in the form of police stories presents officers with ready-made scripts to assist individual officers in particular situations, to limit their search for information, to organize information, to create sense out of a range of acts, and to provide a way to legitimize their actions.

School Resource Officer Culture

Police who are housed and assigned to schools have rarely been studied. Their role in this unique environment is often seen as dual and conflicting as they support students and staff on one hand and enforce the law on the other. The National Institute of Justice (1996) found that it was difficult to convince police officers to accept the new roles and behaviors required to work in a school setting.

This conflict was first documented by Mathews (1995) who conducted a study in Canada of school-based policing programs. He found that, although supportive of each other,

educators and the police in their schools had conflicting needs.

Mathews’ study found that schools and school resource officers have different mandates and political practices while, at the same time, they both struggle to meet the needs of students, parents, teachers, and community. He concluded that successful school-police partnerships are built on many things including the continuity in the relationship between the officer and the school.

Confirming Mathews’ findings, Pamela Riley, former director of the North Carolina Center for the Prevention of School Violence (1995), believes that it is critical that school resource officers and principals develop a close working relationship that includes expectations and formal meetings as well as casual interactions.

Communication is the key to a good relationship between SRO officers and administrators, and informal communication is seen as more valuable (North Carolina State Dept. of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2002). Riley points out that principals need to remember that school resource officers are not assistant principals. In addition, the role and culture of school resource officers mandates that they maintain their relationships outside the school. Their relationships with the law enforcement agency and the community are vital to their success (Riley, 1995).

Methodology

The purpose of this ethnographic study was to examine the culture of school resource officers housed in and providing law enforcement services to schools. The two overarching research questions that guided this qualitative study were: 1) What does it mean to be a school resource officer? and 2) What do school resource officers do?

Qualitative methods were used for gathering and analyzing data. Three specific data sources were used in this research. The first source was information obtained from observations of a school resource officer; the second source was in-depth interviews of the observed school resource officer and two additional school resource officers; and the third source was in-depth interviews of 18 participants including a total of four school resource officers.

Specifically, the data included observation of a school resource officer in a Colorado high school for a period of 17 days during April and May of a school year.

Interviewed individuals included other school resource officers; an ex-supervisor of the school resource officers; school counselors; spouses of the school resource officers; and school district administrators. Field notes were written throughout the day and final writings related to each day were completed before the start of the next day of observation. Data was analyzed using codes or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information.

All codes were based on the research questions, personal interviews, and were developed from words, lines, sentences, or paragraphs from field notes or interviews (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Findings

Nine primary themes emerged from the study. The following are the five themes related to the structure/descriptive area of the study: 1) School resource officers are isolated; 2) School resource officers deal with many aspects of politics that are considered negative; 3) A school resource officer's primary job task is to provide a safe environment; 4) School resource officers believe their job is hampered by site-based management at the schools; and 5)

School resource officers are focused on students.

Four themes related to the dynamics of the school resource officer's role emerged from the data as follows: 1) A day in the life of the school resource officer is unpredictable; 2) There is ambiguity related to school resource officers living in both cultures; 3) Stress is common for school resource officers; and 4) Teasing is an integral part of the school resource officer culture.

Recommendations/Strategies for Change

The finding from this ethnography of school resource officers led to the following recommendations and strategies for school districts and law enforcement agencies as they struggle with the development, implementation, and modification of school resource officer partnerships.

School districts

1. Prior to implementation of school resource officer partnerships, school districts must define the formal and informal cultures in the affected schools and be able to communicate the culture to law enforcement agencies and school resource officers.
2. School districts should consider the implementation of a school resource officer liaison team that focuses on and assists with the defining, interpreting, and communicating of school culture, police culture, and school resource officer culture.
3. School districts should become aware of the criteria for the development of a successful school resource officer partnership as described in this study.

Law enforcement agencies

1. Prior to the implementation of school resource officer partnerships, law enforcement agencies must define their culture to school principals and staff.
2. Law enforcement agencies should provide and encourage opportunities for the development of good school resource officers as described in this study.
3. Law enforcement agencies should develop structures to support school resource officers in an effort to combat feelings of isolation.

Conclusions

In order to foster shared beliefs and encourage a sense of community and cooperation in a school, principals must pay attention to issues of order and discipline. A school resource officer can help protect teachers from issues and influences that detract from their teaching

time or focus, and may ultimately affect student achievement. Relationships with the school resource officer must be developed and nurtured. Several best practices have emerged from this study. The most important best practice is that principals, as school leaders, must initiate conversations and continue to create avenues for productive dialogue with school personnel and school resource officers. There are differences in the school culture and the police culture that must be explored together.

Often-times these differences related to having a school-based police officer presence or program, if not acknowledged, can create negative outcomes and consequences for the principal, school community, and parents. This discussion can be developed around the recognition of cultural differences and similarities for schools, police, and school resource officers. Since the benefits for schools, teachers, and students are great, the ongoing reluctance to have these potentially difficult conversations must be reduced.

Author Biographies

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Poverty, School Size and Charter Designation as Predictors of Student Achievement on a Statewide High-Stakes Testing Program

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Introduction

Education leaders across the country are challenged with current mandates from federal legislation titled, “No Child Left Behind” or “NCLB” to improve student achievement on statewide high-stakes testing programs. The testing programs are being implemented differently in each state to hold public schools accountable for student learning. The test results are often used to publicly rate schools, compare results with nearby schools, and determine school accreditation status.

Over the past five years the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) has used the results of the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) to rate public school performance on the School Accountability Report (SAR). The public often considers the school ratings as indicative of the school’s quality. There appears to be a lack of quantitative research that examines the relationship between poverty, school size, and

charter designation and Colorado middle school (CSAP) achievement.

Purpose of the Study

The first purpose was to investigate the relationship between poverty, school size, and charter designation on Colorado middle school ($N=357$) CSAP achievement in both 2001 and 2004. This study also determined whether the school’s size and designation as a charter school would add significantly to the prediction from poverty of middle school CSAP achievement in both 2001 and 2004. A second purpose was to investigate whether there was a change in middle school CSAP achievement between 2001 and 2004. The study also determined if there was an association between the 2001 and 2004 student CSAP results. Finally, the study investigated whether changes from 2001 to 2004 in individual school’s CSAP performance could be predicted from poverty, school size, and charter designation.

Context

Most longitudinal research on the relationship between poverty and student achievement on statewide high-stakes assessment programs is just emerging as these programs have been implemented over the past five years. Overall, the relationship between poverty and student achievement has been found to be large and negative. Hertert and Teague (2003) assert that, "Poverty is the single best explanation research has found for why children differ in the ways that affect school performance, both before they enter school and once they are enrolled" (p.3).

The issue of school size appears to have a strong relationship to student achievement as well; but the relationship is not necessarily linear and varies greatly by the level of school poverty. School size researchers Howley and Bickel (2000) found that the correlation between poverty and low achievement was as much as ten times stronger in larger schools than in smaller ones. Research has also found that after controlling for socio-economic status, the variables of school size and average daily attendance were the two strongest predictors of student achievement (Miller-Whitehead, 2001).

A charter school is not a kind of school but rather an institutional structure allowed by law. Charter school teaching approaches and curriculum come from what the organizers of a charter school implement. Therefore, charter schools have been developed to serve a wide variety of purposes across the country.

In a comprehensive review of the research on charter schools, Bulkley & Fisler (2002) reviewed 25 studies on charter school achievement. They did not find any conclusive data to indicate that charter schools on the whole were failing students compared to non-charter schools or out performing non-charter schools. Rand researchers also concluded that the "evidence on the academic effectiveness of

charter schools is mixed" (Gill, Timpane, Ross & Brewer, 2001, p.95).

Colorado's Statewide High-Stakes Assessment Program

Colorado's high-stakes testing program has taken shape over the past ten years. The CSAP is described as "the longest-standing, standards-based accountability assessment program in the United States and is often praised as a model assessment program nationwide" (CDE Feb. 2005, p.19). Similar to other states, Colorado adopted statewide standards, required assessments on those standards, and implemented accountability measures based on the results of the assessments.

The CSAP started in 1997 with two tests and in 2006 it included 29 tests. Students are tested in reading (grades 3-10), in writing (grades 4-10), math (grades 4-10), and science (grades 5, 8 and 10). The test is standards-based and criterion referenced. The reading and writing tests include multiple choice, short answer, constructed response questions, and an essay. The math and science tests include multiple choice, short answer, and constructed response. Students' raw scores are converted to scale scores, and performance is reported as unsatisfactory, partially proficient, proficient, or advanced. Students in each category score points used for the calculation of the school's Overall Academic Index score (OAPI). The OAPI is used to determine the school's rating on the annual School Accountability Report (SAR).

Schools are rated as excellent, high, average, low, or unsatisfactory. A school that is rated as "unsatisfactory" for three consecutive years is converted to a charter school by CDE. Schools are also compared to 10 other schools within a seventy-five mile radius on the accountability reports.

The Colorado legislature, along with a handful of other states, has led the way in implementing statewide high-stakes assessments. In Colorado, the high-stakes are placed on teachers and administrators because of the ability of CDE to convert the school to a charter for “unsatisfactory” performance. Students in schools labeled as “unsatisfactory” are given vouchers to attend another public or private school of their choice (CDE, 2005). Colorado is among one of the first states in the nation to convert a public school into a charter school for failing to improve on the statewide high-stakes testing program.

Research Method

The researcher used existing data on the percent of students on free and reduced meals, school size, and charter designation collected by the Colorado Department of Education in 2001 and 2004; thus, the study can be described as ex-post-facto. The researcher utilized the percent of students on free and reduced meals (FARM) as a proxy for poverty.

A simultaneous multiple regression analysis was used to predict the OAPI based on student poverty levels, school size, and charter designation in both 2001 and 2004. A simultaneous multiple regression analysis was also used to predict the change in OAPI scores from 2001 to 2004 based on student poverty levels, school size and charter designation. In order to compare OAPI scores from 2001 to 2004 the researcher used a paired sample *t*-test for analysis.

The amount of time between comparison years was deliberate in the research design because the students in the school that made up the sample in 2001 were different than the students who made up the sample for the 2004 data; thus, theoretically, the three-school attributes are more independent than a year-to-year comparison design.

Results

Illustrated in Table 1, poverty was found to have a very large negative effect size relationship with student achievement in both 2001 and 2004 ($r=-.77$ and $r=-.75$ respectively). For both years 2001 and 2004, the bivariate correlation of school size and the OAPI was essentially zero, and charter schools performed slightly better than non-charter schools in 2001 and 2004 ($r=.18$ and $r=.17$ respectively).

The multiple regression analysis showed that poverty, even in combination with school size and charter designation was a very strong predictor of student achievement in both years. School size barely added to the prediction model when combined with poverty. Small schools with low poverty scored higher in both years. Interestingly, charter school designation in combination with poverty and school size showed a small *negative* relationship to student achievement in 2004. There was no relationship between poverty, school size, and charter designation and the change in scores from the 2001 middle school CSAP to the 2004 middle school CSAP as depicted in Table 1.

A paired sample *t*-test indicated that overall Colorado middle school CSAP scores improved from 2001 to 2004. With a $t(357)=2.89$, $p=.004$, $d=.15$, the difference, although statistically significant, was small using Gliner and Morgan’s (2000) guidelines. The paired sample correlations found a correlation of $r=.88$ between the 2001 and 2004 OAPI scores. This indicated that the relative ranking of the school was very similar in both years. The 2001 scores were highly correlated with 2004 scores with approximately 80% of the variance accounted for by the 2001 score.

Table 1

Correlations and Multiple Regressions Using Poverty (Free and Reduced Meals), School Size and Charter Designation to Predict Middle School Performance (OAPI) in 2001, 2004 and Change in OAPI (N=357)

	2001 OAPI correlation	2001 OAPI Beta	2004 OAPI correlation	2004 OAPI Beta	OAPI Change Correlations	OAPI Change Beta
FARM	-.77*** VL-	-.80*** VL-	-.75*** VL-	-.78*** VL-	-	-
Size	-	-.12** S-	-	-.10** S-	-	-
Charter	.18** SM/ME +	-	.17** SM/ME +	-.08* S-	-	-

Note. (-) = no significant statistical relationship
 (VL-) = very large negative effect
 (S-) = small negative effect
 (SM/ME+) = small to medium positive effect

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Implications and Recommendations for Practice

Since school achievement on the CSAP test was highly predicted ($r = -.77$ and $r = -.75$) by the percent of students on free and reduced meals in both years this confirmed that the higher the average poverty level in a school, the lower the student achievement. The Colorado accountability program seems to make the presumption that all students come into the educational system as equals and that the school system can control all of the variables

that impact student learning. While these accountability measures were intended to leave no children behind, the accountability reports (SAR's) may have simply identified schools with the most disadvantaged students. Using student assessment data that controlled for socio-economic status or by using individual and longitudinal (value added) assessment data, the school accountability reports might communicate more clearly to the public about the quality of the school program based upon the clientele the school serves.

The combination of school choice options in Colorado's charter law and a one-dimensional student achievement measuring system like the OAPI may be causing an unintended consequence of statewide high-stakes testing – “socio-economic segregation.” According to Hadderman (2002), North Carolina experienced socio-economic segregation with the phase-out of busing programs to end racial segregation, the implementation of high-stakes testing programs and school choice options.

This researcher would recommend that some urban school districts, (i.e. Denver Public Schools) with high pockets of socio-economic segregation, consider adopting “socio-economic integration” as a model to overcome the unintended consequence of the charter school movement and high-stakes testing programs. For example, school attendance boundaries and attendance choices could be re-configured based upon a balance of students from varying socio-economic backgrounds. According to Hadderman (2002), this approach of reconfiguring school choice plans would give all students access to schools that have a core number of middle-class families which has been shown as a reliable predictor of school quality.

Since poverty accounted for 57% to 61% of the variance in student achievement in this study, and the literature determined that

poverty levels were highly correlated with parent education levels, then a possible long term solution to improving student achievement across the board would be to decrease the number of students living in poverty. This could be accomplished by focusing reform efforts on adult continuing education, access to affordable higher education, as well as expanding educational options for high school students at risk of dropping out of school.

After four years of implementation of the CSAP, this study found that the scores have not improved significantly and the correlation with poverty was very large and negative in both years. The use of the CSAP in Colorado to mandate school improvement seems to be missing the mark. The use of testing data in Colorado and across the country should help inform educators and the public about the challenges faced in raising student achievement, and guide best practices to overcome the obstacles of student achievement. Instead, the current system appears to punish schools for failing to control *all* of the variables that impact student achievement. As other states implement high-stakes accountability programs to meet “NCLB,” they should use the assessment data to report student achievement better than Colorado's program which appears to be little more than a statewide “neighborhood school” real estate market analysis.

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Action Research an Effective Instructional Leadership Skill for Future Public School Leaders

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Principal Preparation Education

Public school leaders have many roles and responsibilities in the improvement of student learning in schools. A significant responsibility is the role of instructional leadership. Instructional leadership involves implementing appropriate and effective curriculum, in a school, in collaboration with all stakeholders in the school, including children (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2004; Grundy, 1987; Sagor, 2000). No one instructional leader in isolation improves learning for all children; therefore, the role of the instructional leadership requires skills of facilitation and empowerment, under a unifying vision, to provide effective learning experiences for students. Instructional leaders, as teachers of adults, may approach this role with a learner-centered approach (Conti, 1985; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2004).

In the learner-centered approach adult learners, in this case teachers, are empowered to take ownership of their learning by actively participating in the decision-making process of the content and process of the learning experience for their students (Conti, 1985; Cross, 1981; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2004; Knowles, 1984). Therefore, teachers with the support of an instructional leader are provided support and direction

necessary to address learning in their classroom.

Learner-centered leadership promotes the facilitation of action research in the classroom as a method of improving teaching and learning. Action research is a classroom research process in which educators study their students' learning related to their own teaching (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2004; Rawlinson & Little, 2004; Sagor, 2000). This process allows teachers to reflect on their own instructional practices and to continue to improve student learning (Alford, Ballenger, & Austin, 2006; Calhoun, 1994; Sagor, 2004, Schmuck, 1997).

As school leaders, it is important to understand the action research process as an effective tool for improving teaching and learning. In doing so, instructional leadership incorporates collegial discussions and action planning, with measurable results of instruction and learning among teachers and students (Calhoun, 1994; Sagor, 2004). In this age of state-mandated curriculum standards and high-stakes testing dictating the curriculum in our schools (Grundy, 1987), an instructional leader's role includes strengthening teachers' self-confidence and self-efficacy through action research.

Through the process of action research, teachers are able to take a well-grounded stance on the learning that is taking place in the classroom. This article explores how a higher education institution has incorporated the study of action research into its curriculum and instruction course for principal preparation, as well as the effects of this study on future administrators' perceptions of the efficacy and benefits of action research.

The process of action research may seem abstract and complex, yet when internalized in teaching practice it is a powerful tool for teachers. Schmuck (1997) defines the process as a planned inquiry in search of information and knowledge. It is an informal process by which teachers reflect on their teaching practices and analyze the effects of these practices on student learning. Some would say that action research is an extension of "good teaching." In effect, this process validates teachers' effective practices in the classroom.

From an administrator's perspective, it is "good teaching" in action; a method that systemically addresses learning issues simultaneously motivating teachers intrinsically to continue improving their teaching practice. In this era of accountability, a process that involves observing students closely, analyzing students' needs and adjusting the curriculum to fit the needs of all students are important goals of fine teaching as well as sound reporting (Hubbard & Power, 1999). Therefore, this action research process offers a win-win proposition through action research's primary goal to improve student learning by developing and refining the skills of teaching (Calhoun, 1994; Sagor, 2000).

Action research is grounded in scientific inquiry that tackles learning concerns in a case-study approach. The steps in action research

include identifying a classroom learning problem, developing and implementing an action research plan, collecting and analyzing data, and evaluating and sharing results (Calhoun, 1994; Sagor, 2000). This is a process that takes time to develop, implement, and complete. It is also a process that requires support at several implementation levels, from facilitating to coaching (Calhoun, 1994; Sagor, 2000). For example, when identifying a classroom problem, support could be assistance in reviewing individual student cumulative folders, interviewing previous teachers, and designing informal assessments to determine where there are learning problems.

Administrator support is essential, not only in allowing time to initiate an inquiry, but also in developing in teachers necessary inquiry skills to pinpoint the issue to address (Calhoun, 1994; Sagor, 2000). This process requires reflection time and knowledge of resources that assist teachers in narrowing a classroom learning problem to a workable classroom action research project. (See Appendix A) Although school administrators typically have not learned this process in their principal-preparation programs, it would be beneficial to include this concept in such programs.

Educational leadership and principal-preparation programs should incorporate instruction in the action research process as a model to improve instruction and student learning in learner-centered leadership (Alford, Ballenger, & Austin, 2006). Typically, pre-service programs concentrate on courses that range from management to policy to school law and usually include one required course that addresses curriculum and teaching issues. Because there is a plethora of concepts to be learned in a one-semester course on curriculum and instruction, the in-depth study of action research as an instructional leadership skill is easily overlooked.

In a study conducted by Alford, Ballenger, and Austin (2006) to determine the benefits of including the study of the action research process in a principal-preparation program, students reported that the process increased data analysis skills through a systematic approach to problem-solving and decision-making. Additionally, students in this study indicated that action research posed as a means for professional development focusing on school improvement.

Instruction/Delivery

The instruction and curriculum course entitled “Learner-Centered Leadership” described in this paper was taught in the Masters of School

Administration (MSA) at East Carolina University. Students in the MSA program primarily were teachers from school districts located in the eastern North Carolina region whose professional goals were to become school administrators. The majority of these non-traditional students worked as teachers during the day and attended evening classes to attain an MSA degree as a partial requirement in obtaining a principal’s licensure. A few students enrolled in the course already have obtained a provisional license and were employed as assistant principals. Table 1 below describes the employment of the students described in this paper.

Table 1

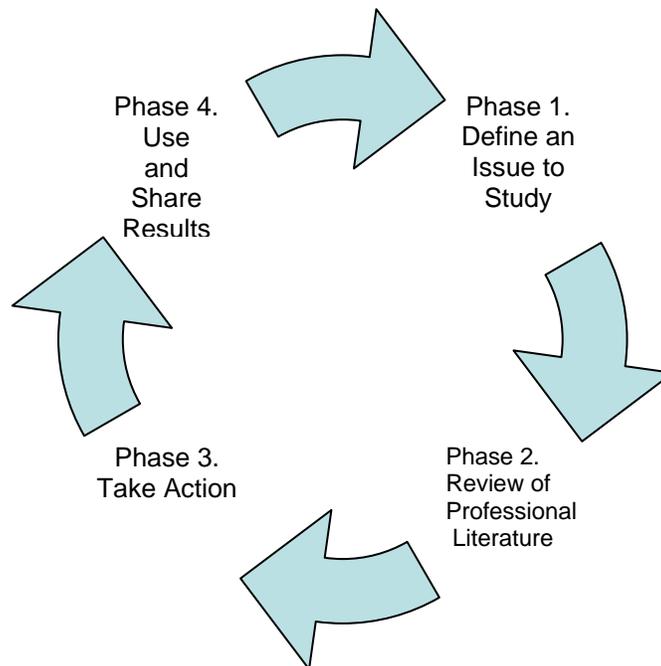
Students Completing Action Research

Number of students	Job Title	Action Research Plans
16	Teachers	Developed a plan to implement in their own classrooms
8	Assistant Principals (provisionally licensed)	Worked with a classroom teacher to facilitate the process

In this course, field experiences were designed around individual action research projects that incorporated adult learning practices. According to sound andragogical methods, adults learn by problem-solving and by addressing relevant learning experiences (Knowles, 1984). Therefore, if this course were to prepare future educational leaders to facilitate the action research process then each student was required to experience the process intimately, to be able to speak from experience. More importantly, after pre-assessing the students’ level of knowledge of action research,

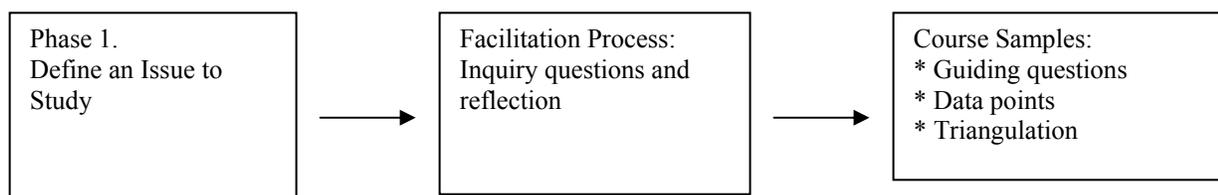
no student reported any knowledge or experience with the process of action research. The course included a required action research project to be implemented for approximately 12 weeks. The instruction of the action research process was designed to model the facilitation process as the students completed the project. The action research process modeled was adapted from the work of Calhoun (1994). Figure 1 provides an illustration of the phases involved in the action research process that were required of students to properly assimilate the action research process.

Figure 1. Action research process.



Phase 1. Define an Issue to Study

The initial phase of classroom action research is to select an area of interest and/or focus on a student or a group of students (Calhoun, 1994; Sagor 2000). The facilitation process should help teachers ask critical questions assisting in the reflection of learning issues or concerns present in the classroom. Typical areas of concern for further exploration may include some common learning problems in the subject of instruction.



Facilitation Process

At this first phase, the facilitator's role is to help shape the inquiry, especially when the action research process is implemented for the first time. Recognizing that a teacher may need support in determining assessments to help pinpoint a classroom learning problem is one example of facilitation. Facilitation should include assisting and encouraging teacher collaboration with counselors, fellow teachers, coaches, curriculum specialists, university resources, personnel, and others to discuss areas of concerns, and to attempt to identify the causes of the learning problem. Additionally, teachers may need assistance in determining sources of data to gather information on the area of concern. It is important to collect readily available data as well as data easily collected via several sources such as observations, rubrics, informal assessments, and even counting instances (Calhoun, 1994).

Analysis of data at this stage should aim at determining the areas where students are having learning difficulties, as well as determining instructional strategies that may address the area of concern. Therefore, assistance with organizing data is a valuable facilitation skill. By organizing data in an effective manner, analysis is made simpler. Thus, at the conclusion of this phase teachers should have priority areas for action.

Course Samples

The course instruction prompted some sample inquiry questions to help initiate reflection and understanding of this initial phase. An example posed by the instructor:

Inquiry Samples:

- Why are my students having difficulty understanding their text? I wonder what kind of strategies my students are using to monitor their understanding.

- I wonder why students are unable to translate the word problem into an equation.
- Administrator and teacher: The data show that Sally scored at the lowest reading level, what have you noticed are some skills that she needs help with (i.e., vocabulary, fluency)?

The inquiry questions posed above led to many discussions on the areas of concerns. To shape the concern, sources of data were an important discussion. During the instruction of this course, it was a common trend among students to only rely on standardized testing scores, school report data, and disaggregated data generated from the standardized tests, primarily in reading and mathematics. These discussions proved to be powerful teaching moments to illustrate how data generated by schools were sources of readily available information that mostly screened student learning.

Students in the course determined that additional data would be necessary to address an individual learning need or the need of a group of students. Additional data needed were pre-assessments and diagnostics to determine gaps between student knowledge and expected performance. Learning about a variety of assessment tools and approaches gave students more confidence that decisions were based on accurate evidence and triangulation of data (Hubbard & Power, 1999; NCTM, 1989; Sagor, 2000). It was essential to emphasize that sources of classroom data may include observations, portfolios, student samples, informal assessments, and student interviews, to name a few.

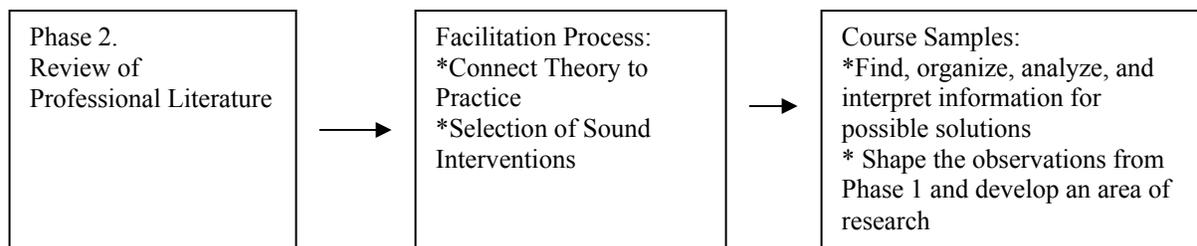
The data collected by students were organized and arranged in formats that allowed for analysis of trends or patterns. Students then

determined particular areas of student performance that needed improvement. Once learning needs were determined, there was a need to focus on instruction to address the area of focus identified in this phase. In order to

focus on instructional strategies, the facilitation process proceeded to the second step in action research that involved investigating possible solutions from a review of resources and research.

Phase 2: Review of Professional Literature

Reviewing and researching an area of interest can clarify possible learning problems exhibited by students and provide evidence of the solutions to be implemented to address the problem (Calhoun, 1994; Sagor, 2000). There is a plethora of research, reports, articles, and materials that relate to many educational topics. The purpose of this step is for educators to seek assistance in addressing an area of concern and to find a promising action to address the concern. This information may help shape the observations and reflections on an area of concern in the classroom.



Facilitation Process

Principal-preparation programs typically instruct in many leadership theories. A key skill in the facilitation process is making connections between theory and practice. Principals are bound by accountability. Accountability in instructional interventions is enhanced by selecting scientific or evidence-based practices proven to show positive results. Thus, a review of literature locates evidence of successes as well as implementation guides of instructional strategies that address the area of focus (Calhoun, 1994). In addition to facilitating the selection of sound instructional interventions, a facilitator's role is to identify the topics in the professional literature and gather the information of instructional practices for review. Organization of these materials is an effective strategy for analyzing and interpreting the information. This organization clears the clutter of resources and links the

materials to be reviewed with the area of focus. Effective facilitation should result in teachers determining from all the readings a selected few promising actions to strongly consider implementing.

Course Samples

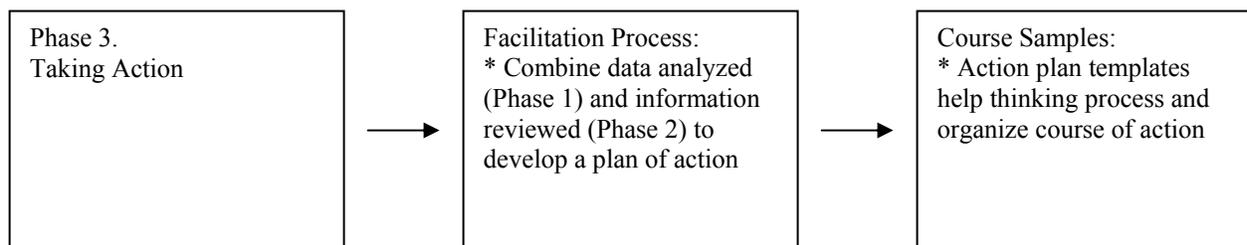
The second phase was the most challenging for students in the principal-preparation program. At the beginning, students did not understand the value of reviewing literature because the majority wanted to use resources already available at the school to address the area of concern, bypassing the individual student learning concern. One typical example that arose in this course was the tendency to implement a program just because it was a reading remediation program and the school district had purchased it. The issue with this approach was that the use of the program becomes driven by the program and not driven

by the alignment of instructional content and strategies with the area of concern. By requiring a review of literature, students became familiar with helpful websites and governmental resources that were available to educators. The instructor learned that students were not inclined to search the Internet or rely on their district resources to address a learning area of concern. Instead, students tended to argue issues that impeded professional growth and placed blame on common barriers, such as lack of time, too many responsibilities, or simply that not all students can learn everything. As the review of literature progressed, the value of the process became

apparent, which resulted in the timeless cliché: why re-invent the wheel? Students discovered that someone somewhere had grappled with a similar area of study in a similar situation and was sharing the results. Additionally, students found many valuable resources, but more importantly, the sharing of information was the one tool that helped them to collectively and individually select several promising actions to consider. Students reported to the instructor that the opportunity to share with one another their review of literature evolved into professional discussions and collaboration on courses for action.

Phase 3: Taking Action

In this phase, educators have had a chance to analyze student learning, reflect on teaching, and narrow down an area of interest. Additionally, educators have had a chance to read interventions implemented by educators in similar situations and have reviewed the results as they applied to student learning. Next, teachers as researchers develop a plan of action to address the area of concern or focus (Calhoun, 1994; Sagor, 2000).



Facilitation Process

The facilitation process at this stage involves combining the data analyzed in the initial phase of defining an area of study with the information reviewed in the study of professional literature (Calhoun, 1994).

Teachers should be guided in the process of selecting the best option by considering many criteria: planning time, resources, professional development needs, and implementation time, among others. It is inherent to this phase that the facilitation of this phase should result in a

generated plan of action with teacher ownership that is strongly supported by the administration. Several facilitation skills to use during this stage include crafting “do-able” plans where actions are implemented immediately as well as long-term, and assessments performed at regular, selected intervals. Effective facilitation also includes providing templates for action plans. These templates simplify the thinking process and organize the course for action to be selected for implementation.

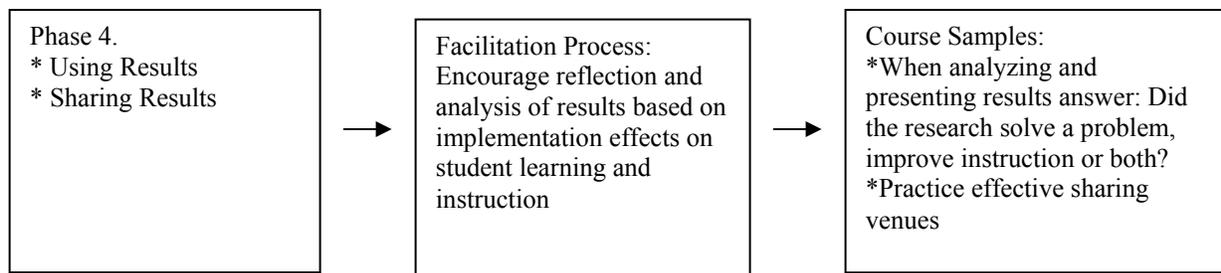
Course Samples

Students at this stage were able to develop 12-week plans that delineated a timeline with activities and tasks throughout the implementation process. It was clear to the instructor that once the challenging phases of determining an area of focus and considering several options for action were accomplished that developing a “do-able” plan was a much simpler process. At this phase, students were genuinely interested in implementing a course

of action to determine if the area of concern for a student or group of students would improve learning. The plan of action simulated a professional growth plan, the reason being that each action plan incorporated a change in instruction to address students’ learning needs. Inherent to this process is the study of teacher instruction related to improvement of student learning. Therefore, in addition to plans to address learning concerns for students, these action research plans were also professional development plans for students in this course.

Phase 4: Using and Sharing Results

In this phase, the action researcher assesses the effects of the implementation of the plan action (Calhoun, 1994). The results help identify the impact on student learning and determine the success in addressing the identified area of focus. Also in this phase, sharing of the action research process and action research results yields many benefits to teachers as professionals. Sharing action research influences teachers’ thinking skills, sense of efficacy, willingness to communicate with colleagues, and attitudes toward professional development and the process of change (Sagor, 2000). Professional and collegial dialogue among teachers results in improved teaching as well as a systemic approach to improving student learning.



Facilitation Process

At this final stage of the action research process when students use and share results, there are two distinct points to emphasize. First, it is important to review results and analyze them in terms of student learning effects, teaching effects, and actual implementation of the plan. Facilitators at this stage focus on encouraging teacher reflection based on analysis of data obtained throughout the implementation process (Calhoun, 1994). To assist in this phase, a template for reporting the data and/or

guiding questions to assess the process and results are helpful tools.

The best possible results would be that the plan of action solved a practical classroom problem and at the same time improved instruction. If this is the case, the action researcher reached the goals of this action research process and may decide to repeat the process for another classroom learning problem. If the plan of action did not improve student learning then revisions to the existing

plan may pose the solution to the original goal. The revisions should be made by revisiting data (Phase 1) and reviewing of literature (Phase 2) to develop a new plan of action (Phase 3). Reflection is a key process in the evaluation of the action research results and the revision of a plan. Inherent in reflection is the process for improving instruction. Because teachers are interested in improving learning, a facilitator that understands action research may provide a venue for professional growth that aligns with the constant demands of today's teaching profession. If so, it is likely that teachers will engage in the action research process.

Equally important in the facilitation process is the ability to empower teachers to share the results of their action research with teachers, students, parents, and other administrators. Sharing the process and results encourages the informal processes of learning communities where colleagues learn from each other. In addition, teachers engaged in action research depend more on themselves as decision-makers and gain more confidence in what they believe about curriculum and instruction (Sagor, 2000). As an instructional leader, it is advantageous to facilitate opportunities to share results and discuss the

implementation of the action research process. School leaders are encouraged to facilitate collegial sharing of action research experiences at faculty meetings, learning teams, and school professional development, to name some possible venues. Sharing is a way to show how teachers are implementing effective practices and to foster professional learning among peers.

Course Samples

At the beginning of the learner-centered leadership course, students were provided with a template to assist in reporting on their action research project. This template facilitated the writing process and thus allowed for emphasis to be placed on analyzing the project and writing the results. The template provided a place to describe the area of focus, describe the action plan, and summarize results. All the students ($n = 24$) in class indicated that their action research project resulted in helping students. More specifically, five students in this course indicated that the action research project solved a practical problem; eleven students indicated that this project improved instruction; and eight students indicated that the action research project resulted in both solving a practical problem and improving instruction.

Table 2

Summary of Action Research Projects

Number of students indicated that action research:	Solved a practical problem	Improved instruction
5	X	
11		X
8	X	X
Total students: 24		

The most significant results of requiring an action research project were the reflections shared by the students in the course. The majority of the students expressed their support of implementing action research in schools and, due to this action research project, they felt that it would be likely that they would implement this in the future as school principals. Additional reflections included:

- “This process is a very good way to provide individualized interventions for students with teachers who are willing to provide the time and individual attention.”
- “Action research is time-consuming but beneficial. I saw how my kids benefited from what I implemented.”
- “Action research made me look at my teaching style more critically and it was concrete evidence that changed by teaching style.”
- “I found this process to be much simpler than I anticipated in the beginning. All of the data that I needed was [already being collected and the analysis seems to boil down to the question of] ‘Is what I’m doing differently making a difference?’”
- “The most difficult part of the process seems to be accurately identifying the problem and strategy to research.”

- “Having taken the time to get and to help them grow academically has proven to be very beneficial to the students and me.”
- “This process is in alignment with our school improvement plan and is a working component of the learning process.”

Summary

There are many benefits to including the study of action research in principal-preparation programs. A major benefit inherent in the process is the improvement of teaching when focusing on improving student achievement. This process can be extensive, especially the first time, but it is a process that any good teacher follows when adjusting instruction to meet the needs of students. Facilitating the process as case studies, whole class, or whole school can be effective strategies for teachers’ professional growth and accountability. As this process is implemented time and time again it becomes second nature, yet effective in documenting the interventions addressing students’ areas of learning concerns that were addressed and implemented successfully. Therefore, learning to use action research and how to facilitate this process in schools are effective tools to include in the curriculum and instruction courses within principal-preparation programs.

Author Biography

Marjorie Ringler is an assistant professor in the educational leadership department in the College of Education at East Carolina University (ECU). She teaches primarily in the masters of school administration program core courses and supervises student internships. Dr. Ringler obtained her EdD from the University of Florida, her masters in educational leadership from Stetson University, and her bachelor’s degree in mathematics education from Florida International University.

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APPENDIX A

ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

Title of Action Research Project: Improving Basic Mathematical Computation Skills

Name: 7th Grade Math Teacher
Principal Intern

Action Research Dates: September 13, 2005 through November 22, 2005

Classroom Problem

Students in a second period 7th grade math class were identified as having difficulty mastering course objectives. EOG test scores, benchmark testing, and classroom performance have indicated an inconsistency in students' ability to perform at grade level for Objective 1.02. There are some students in this particular course who have identified learning disabilities, which explain the deficiency in skills. In order to meet school improvement plan goals of expected growth, all students must be capable of performing basic mathematical computations in a consistent and timely manner. Classroom teachers have identified in their Individual Growth Plans (IGP) a need to implement new and/or different strategies that will assist students in achieving growth. Strategies have also been identified in the School Improvement Plan (SIP) to utilize exceptional teachers in the classroom as a resource for students with identified needs within a heterogeneous classroom environment.

An exceptional children's teacher has been made available as a resource to one of the 7th grade math classes which contains students who need improvement in the area of basic mathematical computation skills. It has been determined that the primary learning style will be identified for students to assist in establishing strategies for remediation. Two students (a white female and a black male) were selected to monitor and track for this project. Time will be made available during the class for both the classroom teacher and resource teacher to work individually and as a class with the students utilizing strategies that will appeal to their learning style. The goal is for students to increase performance on Objective 1.02, which should result in improved EOG scores.

Research Process:

The research activity began through a collaborative discussion between the classroom teacher, resource teacher, and myself as the administrative representative. In order to be abreast of curriculum requirements, I researched information on the 7th grade curriculum objectives and End Of Grade test question composition.

Based on the classroom problem described above, we determined our research question to be: *Will adaptation of teaching strategies based on individual learning styles improve a student's ability to perform basic mathematic computations?* We established the following steps and completion dates:

1. Conduct a simple Learning Styles Survey that was currently used in Career-Technical Education (CTE) curriculum. Tally the results of the survey and select the learning style that was most prominent. (completion date 9/20/05)
2. Select two students that the classroom teacher and resource teacher felt would benefit most from the individualized instruction and were reflective of the classes' prominent learning style. Identify the basic math skill on which we would focus. (completion date 9/23/05)
3. Conduct Internet research on the learning style and basic math skill. Determine which new strategies would be utilized. (completion date 9/30/05)
4. Implement strategies and begin weekly assessments. (completion date 11/18/05)
5. Meet to reflect on process and outcomes. (completion date 11/22/05)

As you will see in the following Data Collection and Analysis section, the auditory learner was the prominent learning style of the classroom. There were two specific pieces of Internet research that we agreed to use and implement. This research resulted in implementation of these two new strategies:

1. Math Think Alouds: This strategy consisted of verbalizing problem solving and was discovered during the Internet research. A link has been included below for the article entitled *Math think-alouds: Build essential daily math skills through verbal problem solving*. It was introduced through teacher modeling then guided practice. The resource teacher also utilized this strategy when working individually with the two selected students. Independent practice was implemented through class work and homework assignments. This strategy was used at least once a day by the teacher and/or students.
2. Facts Baseball (obtained from <http://www.multiplication.com/index.htm>): This strategy was used at least one time per week. If time was available, the game was played more frequently.
 - Choose two teams
 - Set up 3 bases, teacher is the pitcher (with flashcards)
 - Students are shown fact card, he states the fact and the answer. If he is correct he moves to 1st base. If he misses it, he goes to the end of the line for the next student to try. (use a different flashcard).
 - Each time a student answers correctly, the runners move around the bases. The only time the team scores is if someone makes it all around to home plate. You may want to add some doubles, triples or homerun cards (challenging) for a variation. Three strikes and you're out
 - The next team plays. Use the chalkboard (or a homemade board) to keep up with the score and outs and innings.
 - The team that is up to bat stands in a line. The other team sits in their desks until their turn to bat.

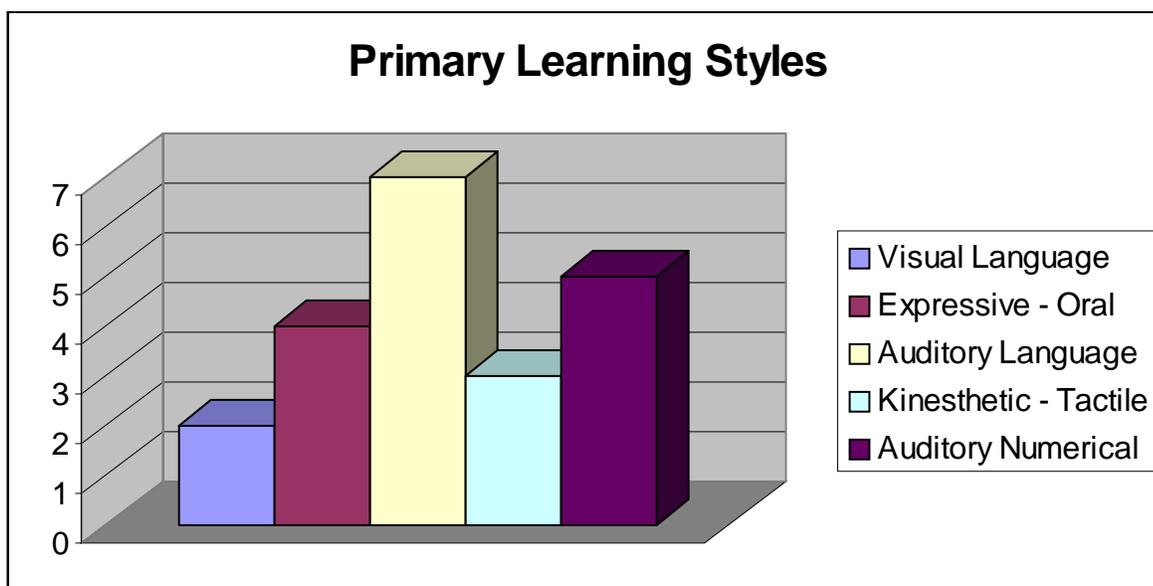
Assessments were also taken from the web site <http://www.multiplication.com/index.htm>. Under the worksheet section you will find copies of the pre and post test as well as quizzes. Our schedule was as follows:

Week of Oct. 3	Pre Test
Week of Oct. 10	Quick Quiz 0-6
Week of Oct. 17	Quick Quiz 0-7
Week of Oct. 24	Quick Quiz 0-8
Week of Oct. 31	Quick Quiz 0-9a
Week of Nov. 7	Quick Quiz 0-9b
Week of Nov. 14	Post Test

Student results are documented in the Data Collection and Analysis section.

Data Collection and Analysis

To determine which learning styles we would address when selecting strategies, we used the prominent learning style from the class survey. There were 21 students surveyed. The following chart illustrates that auditory language was the primary learning style for the class.



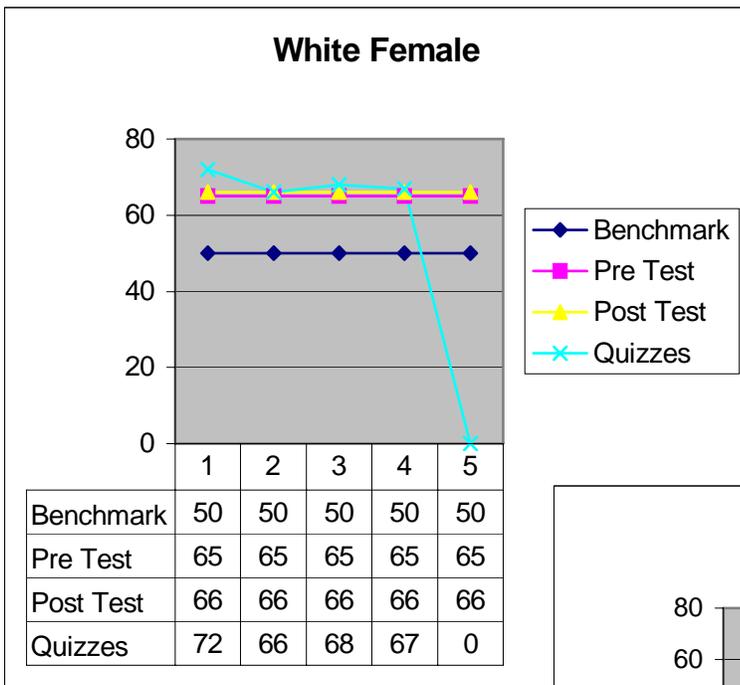
In looking at those students whose survey results indicated auditory language as their primary learning style, we selected one male and one female student. This selection was based on the previous year's EOG scores, a test magic baseline test given at the beginning of the current school year, and classroom observation by the teacher.

	<u>EOG</u>	<u>Benchmark</u>	<u>Classroom Performance</u>
White Female	III*	50%	Failing
Black Male	I	36%	Failing

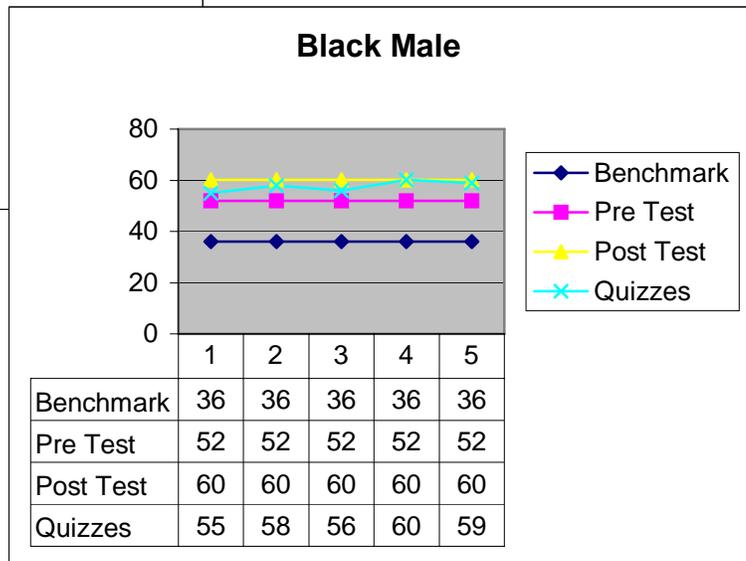
* Level III range begins at 254, student scored 254

We did not want to rely on the benchmark exam as our baseline because of the limited number of questions given on this test for Objective 1.02. It was determined that we would focus on multiplication only and determined that the pre and post test found on the web site accompanied by quizzes would fit our needs better.

The charts below depict the pre and post scores as well as the weekly quiz scores. Scoring for all assessments were based on percent right.



During the week of November 7, this student was suspended from school and did not take the Quiz 0-9b. She returned the following week in time to take the post test.



Implications for Supervisory Practice

I believe that more time and/or data collection is necessary to determine if the strategies alone were responsible for the results. The female student showed a greater variation in performance, which we attribute to disciplinary problems and poor attendance. There was noted improvement in the male student's results when looking at pre and post test scores. Both strategies implemented provide a teaching method that would be applicable to all math objectives. Therefore, using these strategies throughout the year on more than one objective would be feasible. Perhaps through consistent use of these two strategies, auditory learner's skills would be enhanced. I believe the next step in the project would be to determine the length of time and frequency of review necessary to maintain a student's skill level in regards to a basic math skill such as multiplication. What would be the breakeven point? The time spent tracking data on only two students was burdensome during some weeks for the classroom teacher. If we were to use processes such as this more frequently, it would behoove us to purchase software, scanners, etc. that would assist with the automation of data collection and analysis. There were several free web based games that could be utilized during instruction if there was sufficient equipment in a classroom.

As an administrator I found this project interesting as it forced me to do some research on curriculum and learning styles. Locating free materials on the web sites was also beneficial. However, there would need to be a personal desire on behalf of the classroom teacher or an extrinsic motivator in order to generate interest within the existing school culture. I could see this process working well within the SACS model of continuous improvement. Implementation as a department or providing staff development training on the method utilizing one of the SIP goals could be a way to introduce action research. Based on my current internship, I perceive that many teachers feel they already know the strategies that work, and if they do implement new strategies the data collection is too time consuming. If your school culture is not data driven and is not visionary, I do not see action research being implemented. An administrator would have to be a strong leader in the area of curriculum and staff development to be able to facilitate and lead this process.

School Climate Factors in Selected Full-Service and Traditional Elementary Schools in a Southeastern City: Contrasts and Comparisons

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Over the past two decades (Smith, 2004), positing the primacy of a child's more basic needs—such as safety and nourishment—over success in school (Swanson, 1991; Dryfoos, 1994; Kronick, 2000), some educational stakeholders have questioned the sufficiency of the customary pattern of educational service provision of traditional public schools. With acknowledgment that many “high-risk” children and youth needed a range of welfare and health services to maintain their resilience (Linquanti, 1992), as well as a concern about the fragmentation of services (Intriligator, 1990), they began developing full-service schools as “one-stop shopping” sites (Veale & Morley, 1996) for community intervention (Dryfoos, 1994, 1995; Goodlad, 1990; Griffith, 2000; Elias, Zins, et al., 2003; Shaw 2003).

Full-service schools are open after school hours and partnered with non-school organizations to provide student and family support, and to address the nonacademic barriers to student learning (Bundy, 2005). Catering to the “whole child” (Watnick & Sacks, 1999), advocates of full-service schools seek to lower the risks associated with the

customary social and economic barriers to academic success collaboratively (Comer, 1990; Conwill, 2003; Dappen & Isenherm, 2006; Institute of Medicine, 2004; Kronick, 2000).

Approaches to Defining Risk

“*At-risk*” is a term that often encompasses issues such as substance abuse, risky sexual behavior, violence and crime, as well as poor academic performance. Several approaches to defining risk can be identified (Furlong & Morrison, 2000; Gibson, 1997; Hixson & Tinzmann, 1990; Natriello, McDill, & Pallas, 1990; Partee, 2003; Peterson & Skiba, 2001; Richardson & Colfer, 1990; Swanson, 1991).

Originally, “*at-risk*” referred to students with sensory deficits and to those who did not achieve their learning objectives due to individual and environmental factors. The *predictive* approach defines at-risk students as those with certain characteristics that already have been related to poor academic performance and low achievement. Predictive variables may include race, ethnicity, family composition, and socioeconomic status.

The *descriptive* approach labels students at risk when they have school-related problems, such as poor grades, truancy, and excessive tardiness. The *unilateral* approach considers *all* students to be at risk, regardless of descriptive or predictive indicators. Full-service schools, for example, represent *universal* prevention, to reduce the risks to all students in the school.

The *school factors* approach understands students to be *at risk* because of problems such as rigid schedules, ineffective teaching methods, inadequate facilities, and inappropriate assessments (Hixson & Tinzmann, 1990; Kronick, 2000) that are inherent in the school itself.

Finally, we can understand a student's risk as *the difference or mismatch between the school's expectations and the family and the community's ability to react* (Richardson & Colfer, 1990; Natriello, McDill, & Pallas, 1990; Hixson & Tinzmann, 1990; Comer, 1990). In this case, the level of student risk can co-vary with a combination of factors related to the school, the make-up of the student body and their families, and the community's resources (Dappen & Isenherm, 2006).

The student's risk is, then, in large part, determined by the interactions of systems of social inequality such as gender, racialized ethnicity and class as they intersect to create differences in the way people experience their lives (Malveaux, 2002; Manson, 1999; Natriello, McDill, & Pallas, 1990; Orland, 1990; Taylor, Tisdell, & Hanley, 2000). In practical experimental terms, this *intersectionality* paradigm—in contrast to a *comparative race* paradigm, for example, that would attribute group differences to race—examines students' lived experience to understand the way systems of social inequality interact to create advantages or disadvantages

on a day-to-day basis, so that we can reduce risk. Full-service schools are intended to provide a preventive solution to these risks and their sequelae (Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002; Kronick, 2005). Little research, however, assesses the differences between full-service and traditional public schools (Dryfoos, 1994; Griffith, 1999; Kronick, 2000), and we risk the tautology that the distinction is simply the provision of medical and other human services at the latter. Kronick (2005) suggested that school climate differentiated the two.

Purpose of This Study

This exploratory comparison of traditional and full-service schools' climates is an initial step in determining their differences. We establish whether selected full-service and traditional elementary schools differ on five school climate factors indicating the student and teacher body composition, the students' socioeconomic status, and the students' disruptive behaviors.

Hypotheses

We hypothesized that we would find the following differences between full-service and traditional elementary schools:

1. Full-service schools will have more classroom teachers, more students, more non-white students, more students with free and reduced meals, and more suspensions than traditional schools.
2. The number of total students and the number of suspensions will be positively related.

Method

Participants

We looked at data from three full-service schools and four traditional elementary schools in a city (population about 174,000) in the southeast.

Procedure

The county schools' coordinator of research and evaluation allowed us to use their official website (<http://www.kornet.org/kcschool>) containing the schools' report cards for the current year and links to the schools' websites. We conducted a secondary data analysis on the five school climate factors of the seven schools reported on the individual schools' websites. We then ranked the schools graphically from largest to smallest on each school factor, and

entered the data into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to conduct a Spearman rank-order correlational analysis (Table 1). This test yields *Rho*, a nonparametric rank statistic that measures the strength of the associations between two variables (Lehmann & D'Abbrera, 1998, pp. 292, 300, 323). It is useful when the distribution of the data make Pearson's correlation coefficient problematic or misleading.

Table 1

Full-service and Traditional Elementary Schools' Rank-Orders for Selected School Climate Factors

Suspensions	Classroom Teachers	Students	Free & Reduced Meals	Non-white Students
B	C	A	C	C
A	A	C	A	B
W	W	B	W	W
C	B	W	B	A
Y	X	X	Y	Y
Z	Y	Z	X	X
X	Z	Y	Z	Z

Note. A, B, and C refer to full-service schools. W, X, Y, and Z refer to traditional elementary schools.

Results

The mean climate scores for full-service schools were greater than the mean climate scores for traditional elementary schools, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Mean Climate Factor Scores for Full-service and Traditional Elementary Schools

Climate	Full-service	Traditional
Number of Classroom Teachers	38	23
Total Number of Students	624	418
Number of Non-white Students	401	116
Number of Students with Free and Reduced Meal Plans	548	266
Total Number of Suspensions	64	20

We determined that full-service schools had higher school climate scores than traditional elementary schools, according to the results of our one-tailed Spearman correlational analysis ($\alpha=.05$). Table 3 lists the correlation coefficients among the school climate factors.

Table 3

Spearman 's Rank-order Coefficients for School Climate Factors of Full-service and Traditional Elementary Schools in a Medium-sized City in the Southeast

School Teachers	Suspensions	Classroom Teachers	Students	Free & Reduced Meals
Classroom Teachers	.571			
Students	.679*	.893*		
Free & Reduced Meals	.643	.964*	.821*	
Non-white Students	.714*	.821*	.679*	.857*

* $p < .05$.

There were significant relationships among the following climate factors: number of students and number of suspensions; number of students and number of classroom teachers; number of students with free and reduced meal plans and number of classroom teachers; number of students with free and reduced meal plans and number of total students; number of non-white students and number of suspensions; number of non-white students and number of classroom teachers; number of non-white students and number of students; and number of non-white students and number of students with free and reduced meal plans.

After finding a significant relationship between the number of non-white students and number of suspensions, we conducted a two-tailed Spearman correlational analysis on the number of black students suspended, the number of white students suspended, and the number of suspensions to determine whether a relationship exists among the three factors. We found significant relationships between the number of black students suspended and the number of suspensions (r_s , or $Rho = .893$, $p < .05$).

Discussion

We expected full-service schools to have more teachers, students, non-white students, students with free and reduced meals, and suspensions than traditional elementary schools. The results supported our hypotheses, and also indicated a significant relationship between the number of total students and the number of suspensions. The significant positive relationship between the number of suspensions and the number of non-white students supports previous reports that non-white students are more likely to be suspended than white students (Townsend, 2000; Sautner, 2001).

This disproportion of suspensions between whites and non-whites was

demonstrated in our sample as well. The high number of suspensions and relatively low number of non-white students in School “A” might lead to the assumption that since there is a higher percentage of white students, more white than non-white students would be suspended, but this was not the case. One out of 25 white students was suspended, whereas one out of five black students was suspended in School “A.”

Furthermore, Schools “A” and “C” are both full-service schools with high rankings in the number of classroom teachers, number of students, and number of students with free and reduced meals. However, they differed in number of suspensions and number of non-white students. School “C” had a high number of non-white students and a relatively low number of suspensions. The likelihood in School “C” that a black student would be suspended was one out of 20, whereas in School “A,” the likelihood was one out of five.

The difference between the likelihood of a black student suspension in schools “A” and “C” raises the question, “What is the difference between these two full-service schools?” School “A” has a white, female principal and School “C” has a black, female principal. Does school leadership explain suspension rate differences? Some research suggests that groups that have similar members are more cohesive and more effective than groups that do not have similar members (Griffith, 1999).

Does group homogeneity, that fact that a black principal serves a predominately black student population, account for the difference between Schools “A” and “C?” Or, do the principals in schools “A” and “C” have different leadership styles? We need further research to answer these questions of whether group homogeneity, leadership styles, or both

influence how principals discipline their students.

Limitations to This Study

This study has limitations. Its small sample size threatens its internal validity, but allows us to hold school system factors constant. Our use of secondary data analysis poses a minor methodological limitation, in that we must trust the accuracy of the county schools' database. To maintain data consistency across all schools, we used the percentages of the school climate factors and the number of students enrolled as the source for all calculations. Our concern about the external validity of our study is based on findings from a limited number of schools from one city in the southeast. Our sample may not be representative of urban schools in other parts of the country.

Despite these limitations, however, this study confirms that school climate differentiates full-service school and traditional schools, and suggests that administrative leadership may play a key role in children's disciplinary experiences in full-service and traditional schools. Future studies that replicate

these findings can use the differences to determine their weights when evaluating the effectiveness of full-service schools. We also raise questions for future research regarding school leadership, group homogeneity, and discipline. This study also informs schools on how they might compare with each other, and suggests how leaders in the school system might reevaluate their own disciplinary practices.

Summary

School factors can be used to determine and examine differences between schools. This study provides evidence that there are, in fact, salient climate differences between full-service and traditional schools in the same city. Full-service schools have more students, more non-white students, more students with free and reduced meals, more school suspensions, and more classroom teachers than traditional schools. In the future, we should look to determine how the differences between full-service and traditional schools might translate into improved administrative effectiveness in dealing with students with particular risks.

Author Biographies

William Conwill is an assistant professor in counselor education in the College of Education at the University of Florida. He is also an assistant professor in the African American studies program in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Florida.

In 2005, with R. F. Kronick, Dr. Conwill wrote "Serving the public in inner-city schools: Some pragmatic ways to improve low performance" which is included in Dr. Kronick's book titled *Full Service Community Schools: Prevention of Delinquency in Students with Mental Illness and/or Poverty* published by Charles C. Thomas Publisher, LTD.

Dr. Conwill also wrote "Consultation and collaboration: An action research model for the full-service school" for the fall 2003 volume of *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*.

Alicia Parks is pursuing her master's degree in public administration at Georgia College and State University. She has a BA degree in psychology. Ms. Parks is a former University of Tennessee McNair scholar. She received six awards at the finish of her summer stay, including best score for use of technology in library research, best overall pre-post gains in GRE scores, and the top award, Exemplary Scholar. William Conwill was her faculty mentor.

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Book Review

The Principal's Guide to School Budgeting

by Richard D. Sorenson and Lloyd Milton Goldsmith

Reviewed by:

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It is refreshing to open a book aimed at the school administrator and find that a beginning administrator was given the manuscript to offer opinions and make comments before the book was published. The review and contributions of the practitioner are a positive step in terms of producing books that can be applied in the field of the school principal.

The book is written intentionally for the practicing school administrator and is not intended to be an exhaustive, in-depth analysis of the school budgeting and planning processes. However, it is not just a basic understanding of these processes. The content of the book walks the line of presenting ideas that can be applied and incorporated into the budgeting and planning processes in a practical manner.

The book consists of seven basic chapters focusing on the budgeting process, national standards, using data effectively in a

school culture, a model for integrating the budgeting processes, effective and efficient practices, building the budget and modeling ethical leadership in the process. It must be noted that the authors provide a summary of each chapter in their preface to the book. It would have been helpful to have a summary at the end of each chapter within the contents of the book. The authors did have a Final Thoughts section at the end of each chapter with the notable exception of the last chapter which deals with ethical leadership. The lack of Final Thoughts here is perplexing given their stated need for ethical and moral leadership in the budgeting and planning processes.

Case studies are presented for each chapter to give the reader the opportunity to apply the content of the chapter to the school setting. However, again it is perplexing that this is not done for the last chapter on ethical and moral leadership. The ability to apply the learning from case studies in ethical and moral

leadership is of utmost importance for the school principal.

The resources presented at the conclusion of the book are invaluable to the school principal. The resources include spreadsheets, accounting codes reference sheets, a budgeting checklist and a listing of each of the state department of education websites. Included in the resources are templates that the school principal can readily use.

The book contains over eight pages of references which are current ranging from publications in 1985 to 2005. The vast majority

of the references are since 2000. This listing is a valuable source for seeking additional information on leadership, budgeting and planning in the school setting.

In conclusion, the content can be readily understood and applied by the school principal. It is practical, not theoretical information, that the school principal needs. The book is a resource that school principals should put on their desks, not their bookshelves. Additionally, the university professor may want to consider the book as a reference for students of a practical application guide. It would not be the main textbook, but could serve as a supplemental text.

Reviewer Biography

Kenneth Lane is a professor and the coordinator of the doctoral program in education leadership at Southeastern Louisiana University. His teaching expertise is in the areas of school law, school facility planning and fiduciary management. His research interests are in the areas of the integration of technology into principalship practice and legal issues in education.

Reference

Richard D. Sorenson and Lloyd Milton Goldsmith. *The Principal's Guide to School Budgeting*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press; 2006; 232 pp; \$32.95 softcover.

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